

THEIR LAST HOPE BEGINS IN
THIS ISSUE

THE
ARGOSY
FOR MARCH



Single Copies, 10c. THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 115 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK. By the Year, \$1.00

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LIII

MARCH, 1907.

THE PLACE, THE TIME, AND THE MAN.

BY E. V. PRESTON.

A railroad story, involving a difficult problem to solve and powerful enemies to be beaten.

(Complete in This Issue.)

CHAPTER I.

TAKING A CHANCE OUT OF A TIGHT PLACE.

"THERE is just one man I know who might be able to turn the trick," suggested President Judson half hesitatingly, "and that is Gardiner Davis."

"Gardiner Davis?" echoed his confrères, the directors of the Spring Creek Railway Company. "Gardiner Davis?" in tones reflecting every shade of surprised deprecation. "Why, he is nothing but a kid!"

"I know that," declared Judson stubbornly, now that he felt himself compelled to justify his selection; "but he is a kid with a mighty shrewd head on those young shoulders of his. None of us is what might be considered a slouch on a business proposition, yet we have all been outgeneraled by him in lumber deals when he used to operate around here, and he was even more of a kid then than he is now."

"Still," objected one of the party, "you must remember, Judson, that in this case mere shrewdness isn't the only requisite demanded. If we are going to back an engineer's plans with our money, I for one want to be sure that the man knows what he is talking about."

"Has Davis a diploma?" put in another member of the board, with decidedly sarcastic inflection.

And so it went around the circle, all venting from the president's propo-
sitive one, a director from New

York, who, knowing nothing of the person under discussion, naturally kept silent.

"Who is this Gardiner Davis?" he finally asked, a bit curiously, when the hubbub had somewhat subsided.

A half-dozen voices started to answer him, but the president, rapping for order, took it upon himself to reply.

"Gardiner Davis," he said, "is a young chap who came up here to the coal country with his parents some seven or eight years ago. The father had invested in a little sawmill back in the hills, but he was inexperienced, and sickly besides, and he didn't seem to make much of a go at it. Fact is, he didn't make any go of it at all, for at the end of six or seven months, worn out with the struggle of trying to make both ends meet and failing to do it, he took to his bed and died.

"Well, everybody supposed then that there was nothing ahead of the family except the poor-farm, for there was no estate left save the mill, and that was mortgaged to the ridge-pole; but Gardiner quietly stepped to the front and fooled the wiseacres.

"A mere boy—he was only eighteen at the time—he yet assumed the entire direction of the mill, and what's more, he put so much ginger into his management that he made the darned thing pay. He was the boss, all right; and let me tell you that's something to say when a fellow is dealing with a lot of loggers and timbermen. In handling a bunch like that you've not only got to know when to fight, but also when not to, for

although there are times when the only argument worth using is a swift smash in the jaw, there are likewise times when to invoke force would only render them mutinous and ugly.

"But Davis seemed to have an instinctive knack about it. He got more work out of his hands than any other two sawmill men in the woods, and he did it with less fuss. Inside of two years he was out of debt and had begun to enlarge his field of operations. It was about this time, too, that, as I have already intimated to you, he succeeded in skinning some of us old-timers out of some rather profitable contracts.

"Still, he was too sharp not to realize that sooner or later we would get back at him, so he evolved a plan for consolidating all the warring timber interests of the locality in one controlling company. I laughed at him when he first outlined his proposition to me. 'It's a good scheme, all right,' I had to admit, 'but the millennium will be here and the lion and the lamb trotting in double harness before you ever get it accomplished.'

"I didn't prove much of a prophet, though," Judson grinned. "In less than six months Gardiner had all our signatures to an agreement, and we, who had been at loggerheads for years, were duly organized into the Spring Creek Timber Company, from which, as you are aware, came the Spring Creek Railway Company, in order that we might have an outlet for our lumber and coal."

"Yes," broke in one of the others spitefully, "and you might also mention that at the consolidation Davis unloaded his old mill on us at a price three times its value."

"Well, I don't know," argued Judson. "He held out for a pretty stiff bargain, I'll admit; but he made no false claims in the matter. He told us that if properly managed the plant would earn five per cent on our investment. Where we fell down was in not figuring that his management was accountable for four and a half per cent of the five."

"He did not remain with you, then, I gather?" observed the director from New York with an appreciative smile.

"Oh, no," rejoined Judson. "Gardiner had always looked forward to be-

coming a civil engineer, and as soon as he got rid of the mill he went right off to New York to start his education. He's been over at Columbia four years now."

The director from New York contemplated the toes of his boots for two or three minutes in silence; then he glanced up with quick decision at the little circle regarding him.

He was the representative of the moneyed interests which had furnished the bulk of the Spring Creek's backing, and his word was to a certain extent authoritative.

"Gentlemen," he said trenchantly, "I am inclined to think that the suggestion offered by our president is decidedly in point, and that this board cannot do a wiser thing than adopt it."

He paused a moment before the little gasp of amazed dissent which swept the room; then his face hardened into resolute lines.

"What is our situation?" he demanded, stepping to the table, and pointing significantly to a blue-print map there spread out. "Here we are a little stretch of track originally built, as has been stated, to afford you men transportation facilities for your coal and lumber, but afterward, with our aid, extended in a direct line westward to the Great Lakes.

"Your only Eastern outlet has been over the Pennsylvania Midland, and in completing the extension we had no doubt but that the same arrangement would be continued, and that we would thus be enabled to compete for through business to and from the East. I recall these facts merely to make clear the point at which I am driving, for I am aware that the dilemma we are facing is only too well known to all of us.

"To resume, then, the Midland, or rather Sylvester Burns, who is its controlling spirit, recognizing the value of the extended Spring Creek, has repudiated its covenants with us, and winning out against us in the courts by means of a technicality, has left us stranded up here in the mountains with no possible way of getting our freight to tide-water.

"The motive of all this is very plain, in fact, the same which actuat

Ahab in his little real estate deal for Naboth's vineyard. In other words, Burns wants our road for himself, and in order to get it as cheap as possible has taken this method of depressing our stock on the market and forcing us to sell.

"Meanwhile, we who are occupying the unhappy rôle of Naboth have one possible alternative.

"At Berkely, here on our line," placing his forefinger at the spot as designated on the map, "our right of way is but fifteen miles distant from Melton, the terminal of a thirty-mile spur running up from the main line of the Southeastern system. All we have to do, then, to secure our Eastern outlet is to connect up Berkely and Melton," tracing a line between the two points, "for the Southeastern has already assured us of satisfactory traffic arrangements whenever the link is made.

"But, alas, what looks so easy on paper is, as we know, well-nigh impossible in fact. That intervening fifteen miles covers a rugged mountain range, impassable to even the most adventurous sort of railroad construction, except at the cost of an outlay not to be considered.

"We have laid the problem before skilled engineers. One after another, the foremost authorities in the country have tackled it; yet all we have to show for the thousands of dollars we have paid them in fees is a stack of plans for elaborate systems of tunnels and grade work, and a bunch of estimates which would bankrupt the national treasury.

"And still I believe there is a way. One of those big fellows as much as confessed to me that it might be done at a reasonable cost; but he said he would never risk his reputation by fathering any such dubious scheme. That has been the trouble with all of them. They are wedded to their traditions, and they are afraid to take a chance.

"Now, it strikes me, gentlemen, that what we want in this emergency is a man with a reputation to make rather than one who has his reputation already made; not a scatter-brained fool, of course, but one who is willing to concede that some cases may require a little departure from the conventional rules; in short, a man who will mix his engineering with a bit of common sense.

"From what has been said, the young chap mentioned by the president seems to be just such a character—keen, self-reliant, resourceful.

"I move, therefore, that this—what's his name?—Gardiner Davis be made chief engineer of the road!"

One or two of the directors still hesitated, but the man from New York was in no humor for debate.

"It is Hobson's choice," he declared curtly; "for it is manifestly useless to employ any more of these so-called experts. We can either try the boy or sell out to Burns; and since the few months required to see whether or not he can make good will have no appreciable effect on the price, I am in favor of trying the boy.

"Furthermore," he added significantly, "unless you do try him, or somebody like him, I shall advise my principals to withhold all further support of your enterprise."

The final argument was a clincher.

"Question!" roared every other man in the room; and without a dissenting vote Gardiner Davis was elected chief engineer.

CHAPTER II.

THE START OF A CAREER.

MOST people were prone, like the president of the Spring Creek Railway, to date Gardiner Davis's rise in the world from the time that he assumed control of his father's sawmill; but he himself always insisted that he had tumbled into success through a hole in the ice on Rossmore Pond.

Yet, if so, he was very far from realizing it at the time. As he rose from his freezing bath, with chattering teeth and garments rapidly congealing in the nipping air, to hear the shouts of laughter which greeted his grotesque appearance, he would willingly have sold himself for two cents, and have considered the buyer cheated in the exchange.

There had not been even a spice of danger to lend a thrill to his mishap; for everybody knew that Rossmore Pond was scarcely deep enough to drown a flea, much less a gawky lad of seventeen, built on the general architectural plan of a flagstaff.

No; Davis's predicament was one only to excite ridicule, as he stood there shivering on one foot like a sick chicken, his numbed fingers fumbling vainly to loosen the straps of his remaining skate. His eyes were red, his nose blue, his tow hair was streaked over his forehead, and he dripped forlornly from every angle of his lank, ungainly figure.

At last, however, the stubborn buckles gave way, the skate released its hold, and he was free to shuffle off across the ice and leave behind the mocking mirth which was sounding so hatefully in his ears.

But ere he gained the shore, Fate had one more rankling dart to implant in his sensitive soul.

Phœbe Stonefield, the acknowledged belle of the academy which they all attended, attracted by the noisy merriment, came whirling up from the lower end of the pond to inquire eagerly into the cause of the fun.

"Oh," explained one of the hooting crew with a sparkle of malice, "that was your particular swain, Gardiner Davis. He was mooning along in his usual dopey fashion, and skated squarely into an open hole. Why don't you go and comfort him, Phœbe? See, here he comes now."

The girl cast one look at the bedraggled form slouching past her and tossed her pretty head underneath its jaunty fur cap.

"Is that all!" she cried, with a flash in her dark eye. "It's a pity, then, that he didn't go under the ice and stay there. Come on, George," turning to George Burns, the boy whom above all others in the school Davis had most cause to detest. "I will race you to the other end of the pond."

And with a flutter of her trim skirts and a tantalizing glance back over her shoulder, she glided fleetly away, the lad she had challenged in eager pursuit.

Miss Stonefield, of course, never intended her harsh retort to reach the ears of its object, but she could not bear teasing, and in her exasperation had spoken more forcibly than she was aware.

A wave of crimson swept up over Davis's pale cheek at her contemptuous words, and in his tingling humiliation he no longer was conscious of his wet, cold condition.

Like a shock, the comprehension broke upon him that his unspoken worship of Phœbe Stonefield, which he had thought a delicious secret shrined within his own bosom, was known to all the school, was the subject of whispered jests among the scholars, had probably been the cause of annoyance and irritation to her.

He writhed in mortification at the thought, and as though the derisive cries of the others had been whips to lash him on, hurried faster than ever to the shore and up the snowy road until he was safely out of sight and hearing.

Arrived at home, he scarcely waited to change his drenched clothing before he pulled out a drawer in the table and began dragging from it reams upon reams of manuscript. Verses they were, for Gardiner's ambition had been to become a poet, and he had lavished all his spare time upon stringing together these rimes.

Crude, boyish effusions without particular originality, they yet represented the outpourings of his shy, lonely heart, the ardor of his callow passion for Phœbe Stonefield.

They meant much to him, those halting stanzas—hours of laborious effort, the joy of the artist soul in creation; but in the resentful fury that was now surging through his veins he hesitated not a moment. With vindictive energy he tore every poem into shreds and tossed them into the fire, not satisfied until he had seen the last tiny fragment consumed to ashes.

At supper, that evening, he sat in moody silence for the most part, merely toying with the food upon his plate; but finally he raised his eyes toward his father with a flash of determination.

"Pa," he said, a trifle bitterly, "I've decided to follow your advice and go to work. To-morrow shall be my last day at the academy."

The mother gave a little fluttering gesture of dissent. This had been the subject of a good deal of discussion between Gardiner's parents, and she had rather sided with the boy in his desire to take a college course and so prepare for the literary career upon which he had set his heart.

Mr. Davis, on the other hand, had opposed the idea, chiefly because of their

financial circumstances. He had formerly been well-to-do, but becoming reduced through a series of business misfortunes, and being, moreover, in poor health, had been compelled to accept a minor position in the Pennsylvania Midland Railway offices at Rossmore.

The meager salary he received was barely sufficient for their needs, and he realized that if anything were to happen to him the family would be brought to a point of absolute destitution. Therefore, he thought it high time that Gardiner, instead of wasting his time upon dreams of future fame, should rather be learning how to make his living, and so be able to care for his mother in case the necessity arose.

He had not insisted upon his views, however, but after making plain the situation, had left the decision to the boy himself.

Accordingly, it was with a feeling of distinct relief that he now heard his son's choice, and he began to compliment the latter upon the wisdom he was displaying; but Gardiner's heart was too sore over the cause which had brought about the relinquishment of his cherished hopes to bear any probing of the wound. He made an excuse that he had a declamation to prepare for delivery at the academy on the morrow and hurriedly left the room.

Still, his parting statement was not entirely without foundation; for although he had already selected and committed to memory those exquisite lines from "Romeo and Juliet" beginning,

But, soft, a light from yonder casement
breaks;

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

as a sort of subtle tribute to his own "ladye faire," the rancor which was seething in his breast toward his fellow students moved him now to alter his choice.

He picked out instead, as more appropriate to the occasion. "Catiline's Farewell to the Romans."

Gardiner had never been popular with his schoolmates—indeed, on account of his dreamy, abstracted ways, he had been the almost constant butt for pranks and practical jokes among them—and he

thought the savage eloquence of the "Farewell" would express his scorn for them in a way that even the dullest among them must comprehend.

Far into the night, then, he kept his light burning while he conned over the rounded periods and rehearsed suitable gestures before the mirror; and as a consequence, when he woke up in the morning he felt the effect of so overtaxing his powers. His head ached, his throat was sore, and he experienced sharp twinges of pain in every part of his body.

Nevertheless, he made no mention of his disability at breakfast. If he said that he was sick his mother might make him stay at home, and he was unwilling to forego the revenge he had arranged upon the students who had so often twitted him.

He set off for school at the regular hour, and somehow dragged himself through the weary session until the time for the elocutionary exercises arrived.

At last his name was called, and he advanced to the platform; but suddenly all recollection of what he had to say left his brain. His head whirled dizzily, and his throat felt like a coal of fire. He swayed waveringly upon his feet, and his eyes opened and shut with spasmodic flutterings.

"Looks like a hen taking a drink of water," commented George Burns in an audible whisper. "If he wants to have a fit tell him to go outside and have it and then come back and speak."

A suppressed titter ran through the benches at the heartless flippancy, and was borne to Davis's dulling ear. It brought him back to consciousness, and steadied him like a draft of wine.

He straightened up at once and began to speak: but, borne away by excitement, he first interpolated a few words of his own to the set address. It was a boyish outburst, mock-heroic and hysterical, and in after-years Gardiner often wondered how he could have been such a fool. But at the time, he thought himself a veritable Jeremiah rebuking a froward generation.

"I am leaving Rossmore Academy to-day," he said, "and without one pang of regret. In the two years that I have been among you, I cannot recall one friendly word or kindly act that has

been extended to me. Yesterday, when I suffered an accident upon the pond, I heard one of you expressing disappointment that I had not been drowned"—Miss Stonefield crimsoned and bit her lip under his accusing glance—"and that one is an officer of the local S. P. C. A., who would no doubt shed tears over the woes of a homeless dog or a stray pussy-cat. To-day," flashing his eyes upon Burns, "when weak and sick I faltered here for a moment, I was made a target for a silly gibe which started you all cackling. Listen, then, to the sentiments I entertain toward you."

And with that he plunged into Cati-line's scathing denunciation of the Roman Senate. On he stormed through the fiery passages, his voice vibrant, his clenched fist brandished toward them, while his auditors sat open-mouthed, stunned by the sheer surprise of so vigorous a tirade from this unkindly source.

At last he came to the striking peroration.

"Banished from Rome?" he cried, his voice ringing high and clear. "Banished?" He paused to laugh defiantly. Then, with arms tossed wide and head thrown back: "What's banished but set free?"

He stopped, swept the assembly with a mocking bow, and started to leave the platform. But, the spur of excitement gone which had held him up for this supreme effort, he stumbled on the step, tottered, and falling prone, measured his length upon the floor.

All the students started up in quick alarm, but Phœbe Stonefield was the first to reach his side.

"Oh," she cried, with keen self-reproach, as she pillowed the unconscious lad's head upon her lap, "among us, we have killed him!"

CHAPTER III.

BACK TO THE TALL TIMBERS.

IN a small town, especially a college town, such a scene as that which had taken place at the academy could hardly fail to arouse an immense amount of comment and speculation. Mr. Burns and Mr. Stonefield were the big men of Rossmore—the former vice-president

and general manager of the Pennsylvania Midland, while the latter was a division superintendent—and it was not believed that either of them would overlook this public attack upon their children.

Nor did they. In fact, Gardiner's "Banished from Rome" speech proved in a sense prophetic, for when he recovered from the brief illness resultant upon the exposure and excitement he had undergone and, true to his determination, started out to seek work he found every opportunity for employment closed to him. No one was willing to risk offending the magnates.

Nor only that, but within a very short time his father also was let out of the position he had held in the railroad offices.

"Father been discharged?" repeated the boy in astonishment when his mother told him the bad news. "Why, how did that happen? It was not on account of his health, was it?"

"No," she confessed reluctantly. "I am afraid, dear, it was due entirely to that unfortunate speech you made on your last day at school. I know you did not intend to cause any trouble, and you had suffered great provocation, but, oh"—the tears came into her eyes—"if you only had been more discreet. Mr. Burns and Mr. Stonefield were both deeply incensed over the affair, it seems, and having no direct way of reaching you, took it out on your father."

Gardiner made no comment for a moment; then he said, with a scowl: "And so we have Phœbe Stonefield to thank for this blow also, eh?"

"No," disclaimed his mother, "you are wrong. Mrs. Farrow, who is quite intimate with the Stonefield family, tells me that Phœbe attempted to shield you in every way. It is George Burns whom we must primarily blame for our misfortunes. He carried the tale home, I understand, and worked upon both his father and Mr. Stonefield until he had induced them to take action. Mr. Burns, you know, is the superior officer, and Mr. Stonefield would not have dared oppose him in the matter even if he himself had not been affronted over it."

"And what does father propose to do now?" asked Gardiner after a little.

"Heaven knows," and again she fell to sobbing. "In his poor state of health, and with the enmity of these people against him, it seems almost useless for him to attempt to get a position here. And yet, where else can we go?"

Nor did her gloomy forebodings prove exaggerated. Rossmore turned as deaf an ear to the petition of the father as it had to that of the son. No business house, office, or store in the whole town would touch either of them with a ten-foot pole. What was going to become of them all was growing to be a serious question.

At this juncture, however, Mr. Davis heard of a little sawmill for sale up in the hills back of his old home, and in default of any better opening decided to buy it in. It was a precarious venture at the best, for the savings were small and he would be compelled to borrow almost the entire amount for his purchase, but he calculated that with Gardiner's aid he might be able to grind out a living.

Accordingly, the mill was bought, and two weeks later, all preparations having been completed, the family were ready to move to their new home.

No one in Rossmore took much interest in their leaving. The Davises, in the expressive slang phrase, were "dead ones" so far as that community was concerned, for, like the rest of the world, it had small sympathy to waste upon those who had been shoved aside in the procession.

There was one exception, however. The day before Gardiner's departure he chanced to encounter Phœbe Stonefield on the street, and although he would have passed her by with a mere stiff nod of recognition, she forced him to stop and speak to her.

She was evidently embarrassed, for it was the first time they had met since the episode at the schoolhouse, but she held her head up bravely while she bade him good-by.

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am, Gardiner," her voice faltering a little, "that we shall have no chance to make up to you for all those horrid things we did while you were at the academy, and I want you to know that I, for one, am awfully ashamed of my part in them.

I just hope you'll have all the good luck there is in your new home."

By this time Gardiner was blushing and fluttering even more than the girl.

"Oh, Phœbe," he stammered, "you don't know how you are making me ashamed of that beastly speech of mine! To think that you could ever forgive it, and even consent to wish me luck for the future!"

"I—I——" His voice trembled and broke as he clasped the hand she had outstretched to him. "Your kindness more than makes up to me all that was done by the others, for you have no right to take any blame upon your shoulders," forgetting in his exuberance that unlucky tumble into the pond. "And I want to tell you, Phœbe"—eagerly—"that I am going to show the people around here that I'm not the numskull they think me. When I come back here again——"

But just then George Burns turned the corner and halted in surprise at the sight of these two shaking hands. He paid no attention to Davis further than to bestow a black scowl in his direction, but he came directly up to Phœbe and took her arm in masterful fashion.

"Come on," he urged. "The crowd is all ready to go coasting over on Round Top, and we have been looking everywhere for you."

"Very well," she assented; "I am ready."

But before she left she turned to Gardiner and once more placed her hand in his.

"Good-by again, Gardiner," she said; "and remember, I wish you the very best of luck."

He stood there watching her as she tripped off down the street, his face still glowing, a sparkle of happiness in his shy, wistful eyes.

Even Burns's contemptuous frown, which was borne back to him upon the breeze, could not dampen his jubilant spirit.

"Well, you are a softy," the magnate's son was angrily chiding his companion. "Not satisfied with letting that vicious cur snap at you as he did, you deliberately go out of your way to pat him on the head and say 'Good doggie.' Why should you wish him luck? Everybody

else in town is saying, 'Get out! And glad you are gone!'"

The girl threw back her head laughingly and drew away from her escort. Gardiner could not catch her words, but it was evident from her manner that in unmistakable terms she was informing Burns he had neither authority over her actions nor right to employ such a tone toward her.

This was borne out also by the other's attitude, and by the sentence or two of surly apology which were carried back to the listener's ear. It was a somewhat grudging atonement the fellow made, as well as Gardiner could judge; yet she graciously accepted it, and amicable relations having been restored, the two hurried on to join the coasting party.

"When I come back here again," said Gardiner Davis, finishing to himself the sentence which Burns's arrival had interrupted, "Phœbe Stonefield and I are going to meet upon a different footing!"

Oh, the optimism of youth! At seventeen, Fortune seems to be waiting with outstretched hands only just around the corner. But years were to pass and many things to happen before Davis should return to Rossmore.

CHAPTER IV.

A MATTER OF SMEARED INK.

WHEN the New York director of the Spring Creek Railway—Alton Stearns, of Stearns, Cummins & Beck, Wall Street, he was, by the way—when he returned to the city, he was formally deputed to apprise the new chief engineer of his appointment.

Accordingly, in response to a brief note of invitation, Davis presented himself at the offices of the noted firm and underwent a close scrutiny.

What Stearns saw was a clean-looking, well-set-up young fellow, cool and self-possessed, yet without any trace of assumption, and somehow by his quiet manner giving the impression of reserves in latent power.

In short, his training at the saw-mill, with its actual manual labor, its open-air life in all sorts of weather, the hearty appetite it engendered for coarse but nourishing fare, had made a man-out

of Gardiner Davis, transforming him from the pale and attenuated student of Rossmore Academy into a vigorous young Sandow, with thews of hardened steel, lungs like a pair of bellows, back broad and straight, and a step light and springy.

Nor was it only his body that had benefited by the discipline. His mind, also, had forsaken its former flaccid, dreamy course, and become keen and self-reliant. He still retained his lively imagination, but he had found better uses for it than in adding to the world's stock of bad poetry.

Moreover, the fact of having been "boss" at his little plant had given him a certain habit of authority, while at the same time broadening his outlook and sharpening his faculties. His four years' experience in New York had smoothed off the rough spots and added the necessary poise to his character.

All this Alton Stearns, keen judge of men that he was, took in with one swift, comprehensive glance.

"Judson was right," was his unspoken comment; "this is the man we have been looking for."

Accordingly, he waved his visitor to a chair, and plunged at once into his subject.

"Mr. Davis," he said, "in my note, as you are aware, I merely stated that I wished to consult you on a professional matter, without specifying the explicit character of the work I had in view. It may surprise you a bit, therefore, when I tell you that I am empowered to offer you the position of chief engineer of the Spring Creek Railway."

Surprise was hardly the word. Flabbergasted would more nearly express Gardiner's condition of mind. He stared at the other as though uncertain whether to believe him crazy or jesting. "Chief engineer?" he gasped at last. "Why, I have had no experience!"

"I am aware of that," rejoined Stearns; "and, strange as it may seem, that is exactly the reason we want you. Make no mistake, though," quickly; "it is no sinecure we are offering you. You will be expected to succeed where a dozen of the biggest men in the country have already failed. Do you think you can fill the bill?"

Gardiner, who by this time had somewhat recovered his equanimity, let a smile flicker over his lips.

"That is a pretty large order," he said; "yet I suppose no success was ever achieved except on the same terms. If you are willing to risk it, I certainly ought to be. I have everything to win and nothing to lose."

"Exactly my argument," assented the director. "Still," cautiously, "you may be less eager when you learn precisely what is going to be required of you. The situation is this," starting to unroll his blue-prints.

"I think I understand the situation," interposed Gardiner quietly. "You want me to contrive a link connecting Melton and Berkely, so as to hook you up with the Southeastern, and thus save you from being gobbled in by Burns and the Pennsylvania Midland crowd?"

Stearns whirled around in his chair and stared at him.

"How did you learn all that?" he demanded sharply. "Have some of these experts we put on the proposition been talking?"

"No; or at least not to my knowledge. But I am familiar with the territory out there, you must remember; and when I observed an unaccountable sagging in the price of your stock it did not take me long to put two and two together."

"You keep yourself informed on financial matters, then?" interestedly.

"Yes, in a measure. You see," with a little burst of confidence, "I have an ambition to become a figure in the railroad world some day, and I have realized that to do so I must know more than merely how to build a line. I must also acquaint myself with the processes of control. Therefore, I have tried to keep in touch with the financial end of the game. I consider it in a way so much schooling."

"But a little different sort from the kind you got up at Morningside Heights, eh?" quizzically.

"Slightly," assented Davis, with feeling. "Up there we had professors, textbooks, and courses of study, but down here in Wall Street a man's only guide is the fluctuation of the ticker. Still," he added, a trifle assertively, "I have no particular cause to complain. My chief

purpose, as I said, has been education rather than profit; yet I have managed to land on the right side in most cases."

"Yes," agreed Stearns, although more as if to himself. "I can well believe it of you. You are one of those cool-headed yet nervy chaps who— Excuse me," as the telephone-bell on his desk tinkled sharply, and he turned to take up the receiver.

A moment's conversation over the wire in brusque, hasty sentences, and he turned to Gardiner again with a little frown of irritation creasing his brow.

"A very important matter has just come up, Mr. Davis," he explained, "which necessitates my leaving you at once, and will, I expect, occupy the greater part of my day. It is very annoying, for I wanted to go over this Spring Creek project with you in detail, in order that you might get on the ground as quickly as possible. However, I suppose there is no help for it, and I shall have to ask you to defer our consultation until to-morrow.

"Or stay," struck by a sudden thought; "would it be convenient for you to drop around to my house this evening? My wife has some sort of little festivity on hand, I believe, but you needn't mind that. Just tell the man at the door to show you to my 'den,' where we will be entirely free from interruption and can discuss the thing at our leisure. Here is the address," picking up a sheet of paper from the desk and scribbling the number across it.

In his haste he folded the sheet without blotting it, and Gardiner, who was slipping into his coat at the time, stuffed it into his pocket without taking the trouble to examine it.

A trivial incident, apparently, yet one that caused the young engineer a considerable amount of perplexity that evening when he started out to keep his appointment; for Stearns's chirography, none too legible at the best, was in this case still further obscured by being smeared with ink.

Davis studied the hieroglyphics for quite a time under the light of a street-lamp, and finally managed to decipher that the address given him was either 827 or 829 Fifth Avenue. The exact nature of that curl on top of the final

numeral would have puzzled a bank cashier.

"It really makes very small difference, though," reflected Gardiner, "for of course the two places are side by side, and if I don't find my man at the one I shall certainly land him at the other."

But, as it happened, he was not put even to that recourse, for when he turned into the block for which he was heading he found a much simpler solution to the problem. The front of 827 was all aglow with lights, a canopy extended down from the door to the curb, and a strain of dance-music floated lilt-ingly to his ears.

The "little festivity" which Stearns had mentioned was evidently in progress.

Without further hesitation Davis mounted the steps and confronted the Cerberus on guard.

"I am here by appointment," he explained. "Please show me to the 'den,' and let Mr. Stearns know that I have arrived."

The man bowed, and throwing open a door on the left of the wide hall, motioned him to enter; but Gardiner halted abruptly at the threshold, for he saw that the room was already occupied.

A young lady in a ball gown, startled by the interruption, had risen hastily from the divan upon which she was seated and now stood facing him.

A moment they gazed at each other thus, while a mutual recognition dawned slowly in their eyes. Then almost simultaneously each uttered the other's name.

The girl was Phœbe Stonefield!

CHAPTER V.

IN THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY.

AFTER that first surprised outcry, Gardiner stood silent—overwhelmed by a rush of sensations, blinking and dazzled before the radiant vision he had so unexpectedly encountered.

This goddess-like creature little Phœbe Stonefield? He could scarcely believe it.

David had, of course, long since outgrown the "puppy-love" of his teens, and in his busy career the object of that youthful passion stood for no more than a pleasant memory; yet in her presence

once more he found himself flushing and trembling as he had in the old days whenever she cast a careless glance in his direction.

Had he ever given thought to the matter, he must have realized that she, like himself, would grow up; but not even in the wildest flight of his imagination, he told himself, could he have pictured her as the woman she had become.

Her neck and shoulders gleamed like ivory above the laces on her bodice; she had drawn off her long white gloves, and her two bare arms were extended to him in welcome; her lovely face was irradiated with a smile, and her cheek glowed with pleased excitement.

And now that he came to look more closely, he could see in her much of the child he once had known.

True, the dark, glossy hair, which in those days she had worn down her back in two beribboned plaits, was now coiled coronetwise about her head, and the immature figure had rounded out into a model of slender grace, but the general cast of her features remained the same, and her clear eyes had lost nothing of their frank, straightforward gaze.

"Yes, it is Phœbe," murmured Gardiner rhapsodically. "It is really you! I little thought when Mr. Stearns invited me up here to-night that there was any such pleasant surprise in store for me."

"Mr. Stearns?" repeated the girl questioningly, as she withdrew the hand he had continued to clasp.

"Yes, your host. He asked me to drop up here to-night to discuss a matter of business with him."

A sparkle of amused comprehension crept into the girl's eye.

"Do you happen to mean Alton Stearns, the banker?" she asked quickly.

"Certainly. This is his house, isn't it? He told me that his wife was going to have some kind of a party, but not to mind that, as we would be quite uninterrupted in here."

She smiled at the positiveness of his manner.

"You have made a mistake, Gardiner," she said. "Mr. Stearns lives next door. This is our home, and the ball is to signalize my return from Europe. I have been traveling abroad for the last three years."

Davis knew in a vague way that there had come great changes in the lives of the people he had formerly known at Rossmore. The Pennsylvania Midland had prospered enormously in the time that he had been away, and both Mr. Burns and Mr. Stonefield had prospered with it.

He was aware that the former was now the controlling factor in the councils of the big corporation, and that Stonefield, his pliant instrument, had been advanced to the road's presidency.

He had heard, too, somewhere, that with the rise in their fortunes both men had taken up their residence in New York, but, engrossed in his own activities, he had paid but little heed to these shreds of gossip, and it was with a distinct shock that he now realized he had actually invaded the premises of his ancient enemy.

Overcome with confusion, red and mortified, he tried to stammer out his excuses.

"Why," he exclaimed, "I asked distinctly at the door for Mr. Stearns, saying that I had an appointment with him. The man should have corrected me."

"Ah," she cried, with a sudden elevation of her brows, "perhaps he understood you to say Mr. *Burns*. You remember George Burns, of course? Well, he is very often here, and it is no infrequent thing for people to ask for him at the door. That is undoubtedly the way in which the mistake occurred."

Gardiner noticed that as she spoke the name of their quondam schoolmate her tone grew cold and an unconscious flash sprang to her eye, and knowing the boy-and-girl friendship that had formerly existed, he wondered a little at the manifestation.

As a matter of fact, the explanation lay in events which had immediately preceded his own appearance upon the scene, for it was through Burns that she had happened to be in the little room where Gardiner so unexpectedly found her.

George had inveigled her there upon a plausible pretext, but his real purpose, as the girl soon discovered, was to ratify a betrothal between them, for it was evident from his manner that he had no more doubt of her accepting his

proposal than he had of the sun's rising on the morrow.

The friendship and the many mutual interests of their parents made it an eminently suitable match, and one that had always been looked forward to by both families as sooner or later certain of accomplishment; and in addition, Phœbe's charm and beauty since her return had stirred George's cold, selfish nature as much as it was capable of being stirred by anything.

Therefore, he had seen no necessity of delaying matters, and easily confident of a favorable answer, had taken this first opportunity of pressing his suit.

Miss Stonefield, on the other hand, had striven in every way to avoid or postpone the inevitable hour. Burns's appearance and conversation, both of which betrayed signs of the fast life he was leading, had awakened an aversion and distrust in her soul, and although for the sake of old times she was willing to maintain a friendly bearing toward him, she was determined there should be no closer relation.

Sedulously she had fought shy of private interviews, and had been able by strategy hitherto to restrain the proposal trembling on his lips, but now at last she found herself trapped—forced into a position where she had to listen.

As a last resort she feigned a sudden illness, drooping weakly toward the divan and raising her hand to her head, and to her gratification the ruse proved successful.

"What is the matter?" questioned Burns anxiously. "Are you ill, Phœbe? Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes, yes," she rejoined hurriedly. "I think I am a trifle faint. These rooms are unbearably warm. Go, George," pushing at his arm, "and bring me a glass of water. Or, better still," with an inspiration, "send my maid to me. In that case, you need not trouble to come back."

It was at that moment, when he had hurried off and Miss Stonefield was just rising to make good her escape, that Gardiner Davis entered.

Now, a woman might have deduced all these circumstances from that quick change of expression on the part of Miss Stonefield, as the scientists are said

to reconstruct a complete animal from a single fragmentary bone; but Davis, it must be remembered, was a "mere man." Besides, he was fully occupied, for the moment, with his own predicament.

"Please pardon my blunder," he pleaded awkwardly. "I know I must seem a perfect imbecile to you, but really, it was the ball that was to blame. Had it not been for Stearns's unfortunate remark about his wife's entertainment, I should have been more careful in making my inquiries. I—I—well," backing toward the door, "I can only ask forgiveness and say good night."

But she stayed him with a smiling gesture.

"Aren't you a bit precipitate?" she asked ingenuously. "One doesn't meet an old friend so often that one wishes to part from her with a mere 'How d'y' do?' Can't you stay at least long enough to tell me what you have been doing with yourself in the years since we have seen each other? Come, sit down," and she drew her skirts aside to make a place for him on the divan, "and let us have a long, confidential chat."

Gardiner was due at Stearns's, and it was one of the rules of his life never to be late at an appointment, but he would have been more than human had he been able to resist this arch appeal. He succumbed to the temptress without a struggle.

"And now I want to hear everything," she said, when at last he had seated himself beside her. "Do you know, Gardiner," with an approving glance at his stalwart proportions, "you have improved wonderfully in looks. There is an air of power and achievement about you, so different from the vapid, weary expression one sees on the faces of the men in society. Tell me, do you ever write verses any more? I remember the day you bade me goodbye you said you had forsworn all your ambitions in that direction, but I have often wondered if the itch in your fingers would not prove too strong a temptation."

"No," he smiled, "I have been too busy since I left you to find any time for stringing my poor little lyre. Indeed,"

he added in a low voice, "the first time I have felt any poetic impulse is since I came into this room to-night."

She hurriedly averted her eyes, and a touch of color flamed out upon her cheek, but she did not seem displeased. She hastened, however, to restore the conversation to a less ticklish basis by again asking him what he had been doing.

"You can't imagine," she said, "how often I have thought of you, and have wondered if you would be able to carry out the brave sentiments you expressed to me the day of our parting. But you have succeeded," she cried; "it needs only one glance at you to assure me of that. And now I must know how you did it. Start at the beginning and tell me every step of your upward progress."

Thus adjured, Gardiner related his story, not boastfully, nor with any undue stress upon the obstacles he had overcome; but the girl, with quick intuition, read between the lines and drew her own deductions as to the character of the fight he had put up.

"Oh," she exclaimed, with parted lips and hands enthusiastically pressed together, "that was worth hearing. I had almost forgotten in my little, narrow, restricted world that there was another world outside where men were actually at work, and where the old eternal problems had to be met and grappled with.

"And to think," her eyes shining upon him like stars, "that you have grappled with them, and in so short a time have conquered. I am proud of you, Gardiner Davis—proud of your pluck and perseverance, proud because I am able to claim one friend, at least, who is a *man*."

Thrilled to the soul by her praise, his heart all on fire with the nearness of her glowing beauty, it was all that Gardiner could do to keep from snatching her to his arms then and there; but he restrained his ardor and strove modestly to temper her eager encomiums.

"Ah, Phœbe," he disclaimed, "you give me too much credit. What I have been able to do is, after all, very little. The obstacles still loom large ahead, and success—the real success—sometimes seems a long way off."

"Nevertheless, you will gain it, Gardiner," she insisted. "You have accomplished too much ever to falter or fall back now. You cannot deceive me with any pretended assumption of faint-heartedness. I will wager that your ultimate goal is plainly before your sight right now, and that you will never rest until you attain it."

"Well, perhaps," he admitted, thinking of the chance which had opened up to him that very day; then, with an audacious inspiration, although secretly he was trembling a bit at his own temerity, he added:

"But in the days of old, Phœbe, when a lady sent a knight forth to fight dragons and to perform other deeds of valor she always gave him some guerdon to inspire him at critical moments. I think," insinuatingly, "that I shall succeed much better in my battles if I have some such token from you—a glove from your hand, say, or a rose you have worn in your hair."

The significance of his request, for all its bantering tone, was not lost upon her, and again her flower-like face glowed crimson under the flame of his ardent eyes; but she did not hesitate.

Quickly she raised her hand to her shoulder and unpinned a knot of ribbon resting there. This she fastened to the lapel of his coat, at the same time saying, with a laughing affectation of ceremony, as though to rob the incident of any deeper meaning:

"There, take your guerdon, Sir Knight. Fight under my colors, and be you gentle, brave, and courteous!"

Gardiner caught her hand as she finished and raised it to his lips.

"You have given me my inspiration!" he cried. "May I——"

But he failed to end the sentence, for at that moment the door banged open and there entered upon the scene Mr. Stonefield, closely followed by young George Burns.

CHAPTER VI.

DECLINED WITHOUT THANKS.

PHOEBE'S explanation of the mistake which had admitted Gardiner into the house turned out, as the sequel proved, to be correct. The man at the door, un-

derstanding it was Burns who was wanted, had raised no question, but had despatched another servant to look up the young fellow and inform him that a caller awaited him in Mr. Stonefield's "den."

Accordingly, George, having been notified after some delay, proceeded thither at once, and naturally was somewhat surprised to find the girl he had left in a swooning condition only fifteen minutes before now chatting in a lively and apparently intimate fashion with an utter stranger.

So engrossed were the two in each other's society, he also observed, that they had completely failed to mark his entrance, and he therefore quietly retired behind the portières, in order that, himself unseen, he might learn the significance of their *tête-à-tête*.

He had not long to wait before he discovered the identity of the other man, and then, with the old dislike for Davis fanned into fresh activity by jealousy, he had softly withdrawn to seek the girl's father and inform him of what was taking place.

Mr. Stonefield more than once during his upward career had suffered uneasy twinges of conscience over the persecution he had inflicted upon the Davis family; and as it is an undeniable axiom that we most hate those whom we have most injured, the news aroused in him an anger wholly disproportionate to its cause.

"That contemptible scoundrel here in my house," he exclaimed, "and mingling unbidden among my guests! It's like his brazen impudence; but what can Phœbe be thinking of to permit it, if she really knows that it is he?"

"Oh, she knows, all right," Burns assured him. "I heard her calling him by name."

"Ah!" rejoined the other; "I remember now she used to have, as a girl, an utterly unwarranted sympathy for the cur on account of the troubles he brought upon his family. Believed him to have high ambitions, and noble ideals, and all that sort of thing.

"Well, she'll not indulge in any such mawkish folly here, I can tell her." determinedly seizing a big stick out of a rack and starting for the den. "Per-

haps she'll not put so much stock in his valor when she sees him ignominiously kicked out of doors. Come on, George; we'll soon show up the insolent puppy in his true light!"

"Had we not better call in some of the servants?" demurred Burns prudently. "The beggar has grown a lot since you saw him last, Mr. Stonefield, and he may attempt to put up a scrap. There's no use in running any risk in a case of this sort."

"Nonsense," snorted Stonefield. "I could handle an army of such white-livered rascals all by myself. There will be no necessity to resort to violence, as you'll see; more's the pity. He will probably break and run before I fairly open up on him."

This being the man's mood, it may be imagined how he was affected when he burst into the room and found the individual he had come to eject actually kissing his daughter's hand.

"You—you——" he sputtered, for once unable to light on an expletive forcible enough to express his feelings. "I'll teach you to come sneaking into my house!"

With uplifted stick, he was advancing toward the intruder, when Phœbe sprang toward him and stayed his onset.

"Why, papa, what does this mean?" she demanded. "You must be laboring under some terrible mistake. This," with a wave of her hand toward her visitor, "is Gardiner Davis, who used to be our neighbor at Rossmore."

"I know well enough who he is," stormed her father, abating not a whit in his hostile attitude. "No one except he would have had the audacity to butt in here uninvited."

"Mr. Davis entered the house through a mistake," interposed his daughter. "He has remained on my invitation."

"On your invitation!" cried Stonefield. "Have you no self-respect, Phœbe? This fellow publicly insulted you at Rossmore, yet you weakly condoned his affront. I am surprised at you!"

"And I am surprised at you," the girl retorted with spirit, "cherishing resentment for that thoughtless schoolboy act after all these years, especially when you avenged it so harshly upon him and his

people at the time. As for the rest, I have already explained to you that I invited Mr. Davis to stay; and since he is my guest, I insist that he be accorded courteous treatment so long as he remains."

Her air of offended determination carried the day. The father choked up, started to speak, reconsidered his purpose, and finally weakened.

"Well, of course," he at last grudgingly admitted, "if he is your guest, Phœbe, that puts a somewhat different face on the matter. I was misled as to the status of his presence here, otherwise I would not have interfered."

"But I would," broke in George Burns viciously. "I would. The presence of this fellow is extremely distasteful to me, and I insist that he not only leave the house at once, but that he hold no further communication with Miss Stonefield."

Gardiner whirled on him like a flash.

"And by what authority do you lay down any such injunctions?" he demanded. "What relation exists to give you the right?"

"That is possibly none of your business," rejoined Burns; "but," with a sneer of malicious triumph, "I don't mind telling you that Miss Stonefield is to be my wife."

Phœbe went white to the lips at the man's supreme assurance.

"Why, George Burns," she gasped, "what a wicked, wicked falsehood! You have never even asked me to marry you."

"No," he said carelessly, "but I was just about to ask you when you were taken with that sudden attack of faintness this evening. It has always been understood, anyway."

"Not with me, I assure you," she blazed forth. "You may have thought there could be no doubt of my accepting so flattering an offer, but, strange as it may seem, there is. You may spare yourself the trouble of putting your proposal into words, Mr. Burns. When I marry, it will be with a *man*!"

And with head held high, her eyes alight with indignation, she swept out of the room like an empress.

Her father hurried after her, leaving Burns and Davis alone. Gardiner picked up his hat and started to leave, but a

sudden impulse stopped him at the door, and he turned back.

"George," he said, tapping the other on the shirt-front with his forefinger as he towered above him. "you were slightly in error to-night. Although it is possibly none of your business, I don't mind telling you that Miss Stonefield is to be my wife!"

"You?" sneered Burns. "Why, you are a pauper!"

"Oh, not quite. And besides, the wedding is not coming off just now. When the time does arrive, I will be ready to give her all the luxuries to which she has been accustomed, and more. And unless I miss my guess, it will not then be I, but somebody else, who will be rated as a pauper."

With that parting shot, he took his leave; and although Burns tried to laugh mockingly, the other's prophetic words continued to ring in his ears like Cæsar's fateful "Beware the Ides of March!"

CHAPTER VII.

DIPLOMACY WITH A DAUGHTER.

SOON after breakfast, the next morning, George Burns sought an interview with Mr. Stonefield.

The latter, looking at things in a sane and conservative light, was rather inclined to pooh-pooh any suggestion of a serious outcome to the affair of the previous night, but Burns waxed so persistent in his representations that the elder man finally agreed to have a talk with Phœbe.

"She is a good girl, and I will have no difficulty in securing her compliance with any request I may make," he assured his companion. "But really, George, I think you are unnecessarily alarmed. Davis's impudent boast that he would marry her counts for no more than does her little show of temper when she thought you took too much for granted, and that means simply nothing at all.

"Women are curious creatures, my boy, and when you get to know them as well as I do you will understand that such little flare-ups are not to be taken in sober earnest. You may have to eat humble pie for a day or two, and per-

haps even have to go on your knees to sue for forgiveness, but in the end you will find that Phœbe likes you as well as ever, possibly even better on account of the quarrel."

"I only wish I could be as sure as you are of that," rejoined Burns, still vaguely dubious. "She's romantic and high-strung, you know, and this fellow's swaggering air seems to have caught her fancy. Why, look how she kept him there last night, whereas if she finds herself alone with me for a minute she immediately makes an excuse to get away, or else calls some one else in to play gooseberry."

Stonefield laughed at this rueful description.

"A regular daughter of Eve," he chuckled. "Why, lad, don't you see that is the best proof in the world that things are coming your way? Phœbe wouldn't be a true woman if she didn't keep you on tenter-hooks. Girls like to have their lovers seek them, you must understand, and overcome all manner of obstacles in order to win them. You didn't expect her to do the courting, did you?"

"No-o," granted Burns; "but she might at least give me a chance to speak, and not fly off like a startled pigeon every time we are left to ourselves."

"All in good time," counseled the other. "These preliminaries are merely a part of the game. Some moment, when you least expect it, she will give you your opportunity, and then you will be surprised to find how easily she consents. She will engineer the affair all right, never fear; all you have to do is to keep patient and humor her along until she is ready to give you a lead."

And Mr. Stonefield, recalling the experiences of his own youth, believed every word he said. He did not take into account the peculiarly frank and direct temperament of his daughter, but ascribed her behavior solely to those instincts of coquetry and evasion which he regarded as characteristic of her sex.

Indeed, it rather amused him than otherwise, for to his mind it predicted a certain acceptance of Burns, and that, as has been indicated, was what he most desired.

True, certain reports had come to him concerning the habits of his young friend,

habits which were not altogether to his liking, and he knew for himself that the chap was wedded to a life of idle pleasure, but he silenced any misgivings with an optimistic belief that marriage would cure all such follies.

Accordingly, it was in a playfully facetious humor that he prepared to carry out his promise to the sighing swain and have a talk with Phœbe.

"I had rather an early call from a friend of yours this morning," he announced at dinner that night, when the butler had withdrawn and the two were alone together, "and I'm free to confess that I have seldom encountered a more dejected or wobegone Romeo."

Mr. Stonefield regarded this opening as a rather neat bit of diplomacy. Flattering himself upon a knowledge of feminine foibles, he had no doubt but that the first sentence would arouse his daughter's curiosity, and the second excite sympathy in her heart for poor Burns.

But Phœbe, strange to say, neither pricked up her ears at the one statement nor allowed her cool gaze to soften at the other.

"Ah," she commented uninterestedly, "George Burns, I suppose? Pray don't speak of him as a friend of mine, though, papa," with a shrug of her shoulders. "After last night, the term would hardly apply."

"Oh, come," urged her father, "you don't want to be too hard on the boy. Had you seen him as I did this morning, with his eyes all red from loss of sleep, and his hair ruffled, and the deep lines in his face, you would have forgiven him a much greater offense than he committed. After all, were you not the most to blame, little girl? Your arrant flirtation with that Gardiner Davis roused poor George to such a pitch of jealousy that he was hardly responsible for what he said. He is certainly penitent enough about it."

"My flirtation?" repeated the girl, going white, as she hastily set down her coffee-cup. "Is that the construction you and he have put upon the little chat I had with Gardiner? You believe that I kept him here merely in order to work George Burns up to the point of an avowal?"

"Well, not exactly that," hurriedly

temporized Mr. Stonefield; "but I did take it to be a spice of coquetry," attempting to pinch her cheek. "All's fair in love and war, you know, and——"

Phœbe drew back sharply.

"And you believe that?" she demanded, with angry eyes. "You permitted George Burns to believe that?"

It was now the father's turn to wax peremptory.

"What else was I to believe?" he inquired pointedly. "You don't want me to think that you meant anything more by your treatment of Davis, do you?"

"Oh, no, no!" she protested. "It was simply that I was so surprised at seeing an old schoolmate that I asked Mr. Davis to stay. Then, after he got to talking, I became interested, and the time passed more rapidly than I imagined."

"What was he talking about?" eying her narrowly.

"Oh, old times," she faltered, "and things like that."

"H'm. Well, Phœbe, that sort of thing would do well enough if you were still boy and girl down at Rossmore; but in your present position, and entirely outside of my personal feelings toward the fellow, you must recognize that any intimacy with a man in Gardiner Davis's station is out of the question for you. I heard some time ago, if I am not mistaken, that he was a sawmill hand or something of the sort: is that still his vocation, may I ask?"

"Oh, no, papa," quickly. "He became the head of the sawmill and of other business interests, and in addition has educated himself to be a civil engineer. But sawmill hand or not, he has shown himself to be more of a gentleman than any of the men to whom you have introduced me."

"Nevertheless," broke in Stonefield coldly. "he is no fit associate for you, and I want you to promise me to see nothing more of him. So long as I considered your entertainment of him last night a mere girlish caprice I was willing to overlook it, but since your tone and manner both indicate to me that you have become unduly interested in the fellow, I should be lacking in my duty to permit it for a single instant. This is my house, you must understand, and so

long as I am able to prevent it Gardiner Davis shall never enter it again."

"And I suppose," she retorted, with satiric emphasis, "George Burns will be welcome to come as often as he may see fit?"

"Certainly. George is the son of my oldest and most valued business associate, and in addition possesses my regard on his own account. He will be admitted here whenever he chooses to call, and I shall expect every member of this household—every one, mind you," with stern significance—"to treat him with due consideration."

"And yet," she sneered, "you bar Gardiner Davis, and call him no fit associate for your daughter. Why, father, you know that George Burns is a notorious idler and spendthrift, if not worse."

"I know nothing of the kind, and I am surprised at your repeating such slanders. No rich young man can be free from calumny, but I thought you had certainly too much sense to put any stock in baseless reports of that sort.

"I will admit," more placatingly, "that he was very wrong to make the unjustifiable assertion concerning you that he did last night, but, as I have explained, he did this in a moment of passion, and when he was scarcely responsible for his words.

"Such being the case, and on account of the peculiarly intimate relations which have always existed between the two families, I wish, for my sake, if for no other reason, Phœbe, that you could find it in your heart to pardon his transgression and receive him once more upon a friendly basis. As he himself said to me, he has learned his lesson, and it is very unlikely that he will offend again."

Mr. Stonefield continued in this pacific strain, and as he had always been an extremely kind and indulgent father, Phœbe, much as she objected to George Burns, and deeply as she felt herself affronted, could not bring herself to refuse his request.

"And just one thing more," went on the old man, pressing his advantage, "promise me that you will have nothing further to do with Gardiner Davis. In spite of what I said just now, he is no doubt a very—er—estimable young

man"—Stonefield had to make a pretty wry face before he could get this out—"and all that sort of thing, but in view of the boasts he has been making, any attentions from him now could not well be otherwise than compromising."

"Boasts?" interposed Phœbe sharply. "What boasts?"

"Ah, did I not tell you? Why," with a flash of the eye, "the cheeky upstart had his head so turned by your reception that he actually announced to Burns his intention of some day marrying you. And he has no doubt been getting off the same kind of fairy tale to others. Give a chap like that an inch, you know, and he will always take an ell.

"So, you can see for yourself, my dear, how very indiscreet it would be to encourage him in any way; and it is for this reason that I ask your promise not to see him any more."

Phœbe did not answer at once. Her face was flushed and her eyes shining over the intelligence given her; and the father, noting these signs, congratulated himself that he had turned her indignation from Burns toward this more presumptuous culprit.

When she did speak, however, her tone was enigmatic, and her face curiously void of expression.

"I hardly think it will be necessary to exact that promise, father," she said quietly, "as it is extremely unlikely we shall be troubled by any visits from Mr. Davis in the future. I received a note from him this morning in which he told me that he had accepted a position as chief engineer of the Spring Creek Railway and was leaving immediately for his post of duty."

She did not mention it, but in the note to which she referred, and which was at that moment tucked safely away in her bosom, Davis vouchsafed the further information:

"I will not disguise from you that it is more of a fight than an opportunity that I am taking on. The chances are about a thousand to one against me; but if I do win a victory, it will be a big one. And since I fight under your colors, my lady, how can I despair of success? That knot of ribbon shall be an inspiration to me, a certain talisman to guard me from defeat!"

But her father, the president of the Pennsylvania Midland, was smiling with cynical satisfaction over the news she had given him.

"So, they've made a mere boy their chief engineer, have they?" was his comment to himself. "Well, that looks as though they were about ready to give in."

CHAPTER VIII.

PERPLEXITIES AND PERILS.

IT will be gathered from his message to Phœbe that, despite the delay *en route*, Gardiner had not failed to reach No. 829 in ample time to confer with Mr. Stearns and close up the business between them.

As a matter of fact, when he bade the banker good night everything had been settled, and it was agreed that Davis should set forth upon his mission by the first train in the morning.

Amid all his rush and bustle, however, he had found time to pen that brief note of farewell to Phœbe, and, as will be recalled, he had imparted rather a cheerful tone to it. Yet even while he was writing he had to confess that nothing save the most sanguine of temperaments could extract much hope from the situation which Alton Stearns had outlined to him.

Against him were to be opposed, not only the stubborn obstacles of nature, but also all the impediments that could be arranged by the wealth, power, and prestige of the mighty Pennsylvania Midland, a corporation which completely dominated two sovereign States, and, it was even whispered, had the national government at its beck and call.

And here was he, with the ink scarcely dry upon his diploma, lacking both name and influence, sent out as a forlorn hope against such a Goliath of hindrances.

Verily, as he wrote to Phœbe, it was a fight, and not an opportunity, which he had undertaken.

Could he make good? That was a question omnipresent in Gardiner's mind from the moment he accepted his commission, and it remained with him during the weeks he spent in careful investigation of the actual conditions.

As the difficulties rose larger and more

insurmountable in his path, as one after another of the hopes he had formed collapsed, it was often only the presence of that knot of ribbon he wore next his heart that kept him asking the question and urged him on to his seemingly futile endeavor.

There was one point, however, which impressed itself upon him, and which in a way was a result of the schooling he had given himself in the methods of Wall Street.

He took this up one day with Mr. Stearns and the president of the road when he happened to be up at headquarters for a conference.

"I am quite free to confess that I have failed, so far, to discover a feasible plan for the link," he reported, "but that is certainly no reason why we should advertise the fact to the world. If the worst comes to the worst, and you be ultimately forced to sell to the Midland, you want to get the best possible terms from them, don't you? Well, then, why are you letting your stock depreciate on the market and your road become classed in people's minds as a failure?"

"What you want to do," he advised, "is to put up a bluff. 'Assume a virtue, though you have it not.' Make the public think the outlet to the Southeastern has been found."

"Yes, but how?" inquired the president.

"Well, I notice, for one thing, that since your disagreement with the Midland you have suspended all the operations that you started toward double-tracking the line and putting in those new bridges. That gives a bad impression, and there is absolutely no need for it. The rails and material are all on hand, piled up along the right of way, and it will take very little money to proceed with the work.

"Such activity, especially if coupled with some spectacular buying of your securities by brokers known to be acting in your interest, will start going a dozen rumors of your having found the outlet, and will bring the Midland people hustling to you for terms.

"Then refuse to treat with them, hold them off diplomatically, and by the time you get ready to sell you will be able

to secure something like the road's value."

Stearns looked up with a quick glance of inquiry.

"I gather, then, that you have about given up hope of ever finding the outlet?" he remarked.

"Well," answered Gardiner, with a grim smile, "it's only fair to tell you that if that hope was a cat eight of its lives would be already gone. Still, I won't go so far as to say I utterly despair. So long as there remains a flicker in the ninth life, I'll stay by the job.

"In the meantime, however, if you people will back me up, I propose to make the Midland push believe I've found my outlet. I'll make a pretense at bridging the creek beyond Berkely and starting a tunnel at Rattlesnake Knob. The scheme is utterly impracticable; but if I am not mistaken, it is good enough for them to bite on."

"Who?" cried the other two incredulously. "Sylvester Burns and the Pennsylvania Midland crowd? Guess you don't know what you are stacking up against."

"Oh, yes, I do," answered Gardiner confidently. "They aren't the first gang of Wall Street wise guys who have been landed on a Western gold brick."

And time proved that Davis was not mistaken in his calculations. A month or two later, on one of those infrequent occasions when old Sylvester Burns was dining with his son, he glanced up suddenly at the latter with a peculiar expression on his wrinkled face.

"George," he observed reflectively, "I am informed that an old friend of yours is making some very rapid strides up the ladder."

"Who is that?" asked George languidly.

A drone himself, he took but little interest in the affairs of people who were really trying to accomplish anything. Besides, his father's satiric tone had warned him that it was an enemy rather than a friend to whom reference was made.

"Gardiner Davis," rasped the other; "the chap who made that vicious attack on you when you were a student at Rossmore. Judson and that fool crowd

controlling the Spring Creek have made him their chief engineer, it seems, and from secret information which came to me to-day I understand he has hit upon a practicable method of hitching them up to the Southeastern."

"And what does that mean?" queried George, betraying a livelier concern. "Is it anything to his credit?"

"Anything to his credit!" the old man exclaimed. "Well, I should rather guess. By it he leaps at one bound into the front rank among the civil engineers of the country. But, worse than that, he also gives the Midland the hardest rap it has ever received."

"Whew!" George turned pale, and began to gnaw at the corner of his mustache. "By Heaven, he said he'd do it," he muttered; "but I never believed there was anything back of his boast except hot air."

"Said he'd do it?" sharply interrogated the old financier. "Said he'd do what?"

"Make paupers out of you and me before he was done with us. It was one night up at Stonefield's," he explained—"the evening of their big ball—and he had butted in there, although he claimed it was through a mistake. At any rate, Phœbe happened to run into him, and she kept him there talking to her. She always did have a kind of sneaking fondness for the beggar, though why, I can't understand, since he has always taken care to give her a dig every time he's a chance."

"Yes, yes," interrupted the old man impatiently. "Go on. What happened after he was inside?"

"Why, he and Phœbe were chinning away, and I guess getting a little spoony. At any rate, they didn't see me when I came into the room where they were, although I made enough noise to rouse up anything except a deaf asylum. That made me think it was time to interfere, so I hunted up her father and steered him against the pair."

"And what did Stonefield do?" eagerly. "Kick him out of the house?"

"No." George became rather red-faced and confused at this point in the narrative. "Er—why, you see, Phœbe got mad because we came in, and, wom-

anlike, she took it out on me. And then she marched out of the room with her head up, and the old man followed her, leaving Davis and myself alone there together. That was when he said to me what I told you."

"Ah! That before he was through he'd make paupers out of both you and me, eh?" Old Sylvester's voice was low and menacing, like that of an enraged tiger.

"Yes, and that it would do me no good to pay any attention to Phœbe Stonefield, as he intended to marry her himself."

The elder Burns surveyed his son across the table from under frowning brows.

"Why wasn't I told something of this before?" he demanded sharply. "Didn't you think it might possibly have some interest for me?"

"Why, Mr. Stonefield said it wasn't worth while to bother you with it. There was nothing in it but a lot of silly boasting."

"Stonefield is a fool," succinctly. "Nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand he would have been right; but a chap like this Gardiner Davis is the exception, and he ought to have had sense enough to see it. Had I been told, I bet you I'd never have made such a mistake."

He relapsed into silence and sat a long time, his head sunk upon his chest, his knotted old fingers drumming thoughtfully upon the table-cloth.

At last, George ventured to break in upon his meditations.

"Well," he asked, a quiver of anxiety in his voice, "are you going to let him get the best of you, father?"

The other raised his head, and smiled in a way that was not good to see. He suddenly fixed his eyes upon his son, and leaning across the table, began to speak in a low but imperative tone.

"My success in life, George," he said, "has been due to the fact that I never take chances and indulge in no half-way measures. As I understand this situation which threatens us, it rests solely upon the ability of Gardiner Davis to finish what he has started. No other engineer would consent to hazard his reputation on such a scheme even

if he had Davis's plans to work by, and my information is that Davis has not yet confided the details of his project to any one. Do you follow my drift?"

He paused; but the pause was so full of sinister meaning that involuntarily the son dropped his eyes, while a cold shiver coursed down the length of his spine.

"I—I suppose I do," he faltered. "You mean that he is to be abducted and held prisoner some way until the Spring Creek people have been forced to come to a sale?"

The other answered with a contemptuous sneer.

"Didn't I tell you that I indulge in no half-way measures?" he demanded. "Perhaps, though, I may make my meaning clearer by referring you to the proverb about the kind of people that tell no tales."

There was a rapid interchange of glances between father and son.

For a moment George had paled as the full significance of the old man's purpose burst upon him; then, with a recollection of the bitter animosity he had always held toward Davis, his nerves steadied, and a malevolent gleam shot into his eye curiously like a reflection of that in the glance so warily regarding him. After all, these two were of the same blood.

"How?" the son whispered, thrusting himself forward across the table. "Can it be managed without danger?"

Sylvester permitted a brief smile of satisfaction to flicker across his face. He had not reckoned in vain upon the other's assistance.

"Absolutely," he answered. "There will merely be a deplorable accident up in the Spring Creek country some day, and Gardiner Davis will be the victim."

"Ah!" George breathed a deep sigh of relief. He had thought, from his father's manner, that possibly he himself might be asked to take an active hand in the enterprise.

"And can you arrange for such an accident?" he inquired.

The other hitched his chair a foot or so nearer.

"Listen," he explained. "There is a society up in the coal regions organ-

ized for just this sort of work. A survival of the notorious 'Mollie Maguires' which once terrorized that section, it works according to infinitely more subtle and secret methods. When the 'Mollie Maguires' wanted to put a man out of the way they sent him notices warning him of his end, and then, when opportunity offered, boldly shot or knifed their victims, trusting to the fear which their exploits inspired to keep them from answering for their crimes. Their leaders were well known, and made no secret of their affiliation with the 'Mollies'; they owed their long immunity from punishment simply to the difficulty of getting witnesses to testify against them.

"The new organization of which I am telling you follows, however, no such crude system. Its members are linked in an oath-bound band, and the direst penalties would fall upon any one of them who should even hint that such a fraternity existed."

"How, then, did you ever learn of it?" broke in George curiously. "Somebody must have told you."

"Never mind that," returned the old man grimly. "Suffice it to say that I do know, and that any order that I give will be instantly heeded."

"No warnings are sent," he continued, resuming his narrative tone; "the pistol and the knife are eschewed except in cases of absolute necessity. The victim is simply found dead, either as the result of accident or suicide, or else unaccountably disappears, never to be heard of again. We leave no clues or traces by which even the cleverest of detectives could lay responsibility to our doors."

"*Well?*" hoarsely ejaculated George, believing his father to have made a slip of the tongue. "Then you, too, are a member of this fearsome gang?"

He glanced quickly about him, almost as though expecting to find an assassin lurking at his elbow.

"Are you not afraid to have told me this," he added, "when, as you say, the direst penalties are inflicted for betrayal?"

A glint of amusement came into the deep-set, heavy-browed eyes bent upon him.

"No," answered the old man slowly; "for you are now one of us. As supreme head of the society, I have added you to our membership. I will instruct you in the oath, passwords, and means of recognition later."

"I?" George recoiled, trembling and shaking. "No, no," hurriedly. "I couldn't think of it. I am not at all the sort of chap for anything of the sort. I would be sure to bungle and make a mess. Please, father——"

"There is no other way," interrupted the financier sternly. "Being aware of our secret, you must either join us or——" He gave a significant gesture which left no doubt of his dread meaning. "We have but one motto, the same I repeated to you a bit ago, 'Dead men tell no tales!' and should you hold out, even I could not shield you from the consequences."

"However," the solemnity of his tone verging into a sort of cynical contempt, "you need not be afraid that I shall call upon you for any active service. The only use I shall make of you is to act as an intermediary between me and the men. The methods of communication I have hitherto employed are becoming slightly unsafe, and I have hit upon this plan as the one least likely to arouse suspicion."

"By giving you some sort of position at the mines—oh, you'll not be called upon to do any work," in answer to the other's quick look of alarm—"your coming and going would never excite suspicion, and a reliable chain would be established for the transmission of my orders. Under these conditions, do you agree to join the society?"

"Oh, I suppose so," dejectedly. "In fact, there doesn't seem any other course open to me. But I must say, father," with sulky resentment, "I think you have taken a very unfair advantage of me. Had I imagined for one moment that this was why you wanted to see me to-night, I should have taken precious good care to remain at my club."

But old Sylvester paid small heed to his son's grumblings.

"You didn't, however," he rejoined, "and consequently, I shall expect you to leave for the Spring Creek country the first thing to-morrow morning. Ar-

riying at Berkely, you will inquire at McCann's saloon for a miner named Jim Spear, to whom, having made yourself known as a member of the society, you will transmit my orders."

"And what are your orders?"

"That Gardiner Davis shall be safely put out of the way within the next ten days. Tell Spear, further, that the case is an imperative one, and that I will tolerate no excuses. The price will be five thousand dollars."

CHAPTER IX.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

AT Billy McCann's Red Onion Saloon, in Berkely, there appeared on the following day a young man bearing the unmistakable imprint of New York in manners and attire. He was as much out of place in that squalid barroom with its dingy little fixtures and its groups of rough-garbed miners as would have been the Flatiron Building itself, and his advent created almost as much excitement.

Well-dressed strangers were not utterly unknown at Berkely, and Burns might have escaped with no more than passing comment had he not shown so plainly that he was there for a purpose.

He fidgeted uneasily about, stole furtive glances at every man in the room, and ordered whisky only to empty his glass in the cuspidor after a single sip—a proceeding which required no excuse, indeed, had it not been that he immediately repeated the program.

Finally, when he had succeeded in attracting to himself the attention of the entire assemblage, he corraled the bartender in one corner and made some whispered inquiries with the air of a conspirator.

But the bartender scorned subterfuge.

"Do I know Jim Spear?" he bawled out in stentorian accents, to George's manifest consternation. "Why, cert'nly. That's him settin' at the fur table.

"Jim," calling lustily to the man in question, a tall, gangling individual with an ill-favored countenance and a cast in one eye, "it's you that Cha'ncy Depew, here, has been tryin' to flag all this time. Better come forward and see what it is he wants."

The fellow rose slowly at the summons and slouched forward, meanwhile eying George with malevolent suspicion.

"Ah, Mr. Spear," began young Burns, striving to appear at ease but failing lamentably in the attempt, "I am just over from Pittsburgh, and I was told to look you up by a friend of yours I met there. His name was Jack—Jack——"

He glanced toward the other as though expecting him to help out.

But the suspicion in Spear's glance only deepened.

"I don't know nobody in Pittsburgh named Jack," he growled.

Then the emissary suddenly remembered his instructions. He raised his left hand and scratched the right side of his head, as if making an effort to recall the forgotten name.

Instantly the miner's face cleared.

"Might it be Jack Potts that you was thinkin' of?" he questioned sharply.

"Certainly," with intense relief. "That was it—Jack Potts. How stupid of me to forget. He sent a message, and if you'll step outside where we can be alone I'll try to give it to you."

The fellow followed him docilely enough from the place, but when they had walked a hundred yards or so up the road he turned suddenly upon George with an expression of supreme disgust.

"Well, you cert'nly did all you could to give the snap away," he exclaimed. "And now," distrust showing again in his glance, "who be you, and what did you mean by them words down in the saloon?"

George had intended to assume rather a high and mighty tone with these ruffians who were under his father's orders, but face to face with one of the scowling band up here in the lonely mountains, and taken sharply to task, he deemed it wiser to put his dignity in his pocket.

Almost pleadingly, therefore, he explained who he was, and the mission which had brought him into the wilds.

Gradually, as he presented convincing proofs of his identity, Spear's doubts vanished, and when he finally made known the name of their prospective victim his surly companion even condescended to show satisfaction.

"Gardiner Davis, eh?" the man commented, baring his teeth in a wolfish grin. "Well, the old man couldn't have picked out one that would suit me better. I've got some old scores to settle with that same party on my own hook."

"How is that?" asked George.

The truth of the story was that in Gardiner's old sawmill days he had once discharged this man, and afterward finding him sneaking about the plant at night, evidently bent upon mischief, had given him a merited trouncing; but as Spear related the tale it took on a different complexion.

"Why," he lied, "one time him an' his gang got it in for me, an' jumped me when I wasn't lookin'. I could 'a' handled ary one of 'em, man to man, an' I begged 'em to give me fair play; but they was afeared. Hammer an' tongs they all went at me together, an' when I give in, more dead 'n alive, an' hollered 'nough, this here Gardiner Davis still wasn't satisfied. He kept on kickin' an' poundin' at me till he got tired. I guess he thought he'd done for me; but I pulled through somehow, an' I swore then I'd get even with the cowardly hound if it took me to the last day of my life.

"Now I've got my chance, sonny, an' you kin tell that pap of your'n that he needn't be a mite worried. I'll guarantee that this'll be one of the surest jobs we ever put over the plate."

Convinced, accordingly, as much by the ferocious glare of hate which sprang into Spear's glance as by the fellow's spoken assurances, George left the matter in his hands, and proceeded on to the coal company's headquarters to inform the superintendent that he was ready to assume the sinecure job which his father had provided for him.

On the way, as it happened, he ran plump into Gardiner Davis, who was for the present making his headquarters at Berkely, and George scowled at him blackly in passing. Gardiner having no favors to ask of the Burnsers, either father or son, merely smiled at the episode, and then, as he was very busy, let it pass from his mind.

But it was destined later to be recalled to him in rather startling fashion.

That afternoon, as he was setting out alone upon a visit of inspection to a

tunnel in course of construction a few miles from Berkely, he discovered to his chagrin that he had no matches wherewith to light his candle. With an exclamation of impatience, he started hastily to retrace his steps; but he had not gone a dozen rods before there came a roar like a broadside from the guns of a battle-ship, and with the soil rocking and shaking violently under his feet, he was hurled to the ground.

The place where he had been standing a moment before showed an immense hole. Had he remained where he was, or gone into the excavation, his death would have been almost inevitable.

It did not take the young engineer long to determine that the occurrence was due to a blast of dynamite; but how the explosive had chanced to be at that point, or who could have set it off, remained a puzzle.

There were, as it happened, no men employed in the tunnel at the time, and it seemed impossible, therefore, to ascribe the affair to oversight or carelessness.

True, as Davis had staggered to his feet after the accident he had caught, or so it seemed to him, a half-fleeting glimpse through the dust and haze of two wires being rapidly dragged away from the mouth of the tunnel into the underbrush of the hillside overhead. Still, as a careful examination of the ground showed no trace of any such apparatus, nor of any person having been recently in the vicinity, he was rather inclined to set down this impression to sheer fancy.

Not so with Berschwind, his bright young assistant, for when Gardiner chanced to mention his trick of faulty vision the latter gave a quick start and his face assumed an expression of grave concern.

"That may have been an hallucination," he said thoughtfully, "and again it may not. The very fact that none of our men were at work there, and that we had used no dynamite at that point for over ten days, gives a suspicious tinge to the incident at the start; but I have even stronger reasons for believing the affair may have been a plant. I was down at the Red Onion this morning, hunting up some of our men, when a stranger

came in, who, after acting very peculiarly, asked to have Jim Spear pointed out to him."

"Oh, I think you are going out of your way to find a mare's nest," interrupted Davis, with a smile. "True, Spear claims to have some sort of a grudge against me; but I am very positive that he had nothing to do with firing this blast. In fact, I saw him seated safely in the Red Onion when I came back from the tunnel, and it is certain that he could not have gone up over the hill and reached there ahead of me."

"Wait a minute; I am not through yet," persisted Berschwind. "Very likely Spear did not personally touch off the charge, but it would take a good deal to convince me that he was not cognizant of it. When he and that stranger met this morning there was a sort of dialogue carried on between them which sounded suspiciously like the shibboleth of a secret society, and you know there is a bit of gossip current among the men—especially since the accident which befell poor Slawton, and the mysterious disappearance of Agent Blackburn—that the infamous Mollie Maguires have been resurrected and set going in more atrocious form than ever. Furthermore, I have heard it intimated that Spear is one of the ringleaders of the new organization. You know he never does a tap of work, and yet he always seems well supplied with money."

"All that may be so, my dear fellow," admitted Gardiner, still skeptical; "but granting your point, I cannot conceive why the Molly Maguires or the Mollie anything else should seek deliberately to blow me up. Surely even Spear would not regard the little misunderstanding we had years ago as sufficient motive for so dastardly—"

"Or stop," he cried, sharply interrupting himself. "You spoke of a stranger whom you also suspected. What sort of a looking chap was he? About my age, but shorter and slenderer, with a little dark mustache, and wearing a gray suit with a light overcoat on his arm?"

"That's he," assented the other. "You've described him down to the last detail. Why? Did you see him, too?"

"I not only saw him, but I recognized

in him an old schoolmate and acquaintance. That, Berschwind, was the prince royal of the house of Burns, heir presumptive to the Pennsylvania Midland, and to all the other properties over which old Sylvester exercises sway. And so he hunted up Jim Spear immediately on his arrival, eh?"

Gardiner's voice sobered, and his glance grew speculative.

"H'm," he commented thoughtfully; "this Mollie Maguire theory of yours, Berschwind, may not be such a mare's nest, after all!"

CHAPTER X.

IN A BATTLE FOR LIFE.

IF Gardiner still entertained any doubts as to the validity of Berschwind's explanation of the dynamite outrage they must have been dissipated by the events of the next few days.

Unless Nature herself had turned his enemy, it would seem impossible to ascribe the series of misadventures which befell him to any other agency than that of a definite conspiracy.

Did he pass under a bank, or through a cut, some big stone would topple across his path without warning, or a seemingly solid mass of earth become dislodged and crash down toward him in an overwhelming avalanche.

Did he set foot upon a trestle, some part of it would unexpectedly give way. Three separate times incendiary fires had been discovered in the hotel where he lodged, and always in close proximity to his room.

The buggy which he sometimes used for his inspection trips twice had the nuts removed from its wheels, and once he had found its front axle sawed almost in twain. Finally, chancing one day to feed his dog upon some part of his dinner which he himself had providentially failed to touch, he was horrified shortly afterward to see the animal die of unmistakable arsenical poisoning.

By sheer good luck, or in some cases by lightning-like rapidity of movement, he had so far escaped death or injury in these various emergencies; but, as was only natural, they had begun to wear upon his nerves.

And even more harassing to him than

the constant sequence of malevolent attacks was his utter failure to place any responsibility for them. Search as he would, he could find no tangible proof as to the perpetrators.

Moreover, his enemies began to extend their spiteful operations to the line upon which he was employed.

Scarcely a morning passed that reports were not brought to him of some depredations committed during the night. Wires were cut, culverts undermined, switches turned, and rails pried loose.

He called upon the authorities for protection, and employed on behalf of the company three hundred guards to patrol the track night and day; but all his precautions proved absolutely futile. The guerrilla warfare continued uninterrupted.

At length word was brought to him one day that the massive and costly iron bridge in course of construction just beyond the limits of Berkely had been damaged by the inexplicable discharge of a quantity of powder. He hurried at once to the scene and made a most rigid investigation, but, as usual, found that no one was able to account either for the presence of the explosive or for the manner in which it had been set off.

There was plenty for him to do, however, in directing the repairs, and he remained upon the spot all day, overseeing the men and expediting their efforts.

When the six-o'clock whistle blew he was out upon the center span examining the riveting of some bolts which had just been put in. Becoming absorbed in his task, he did not realize for some moments that the others had all left.

Then recalling the frequent assaults made upon him, a little thrill of anxiety struck him for a moment, and he lost no time in getting back to the shore.

But with his feet once more upon firm ground he smiled at his fears, for there upon the rails stood a hand-car thoughtfully left for his convenience, and ahead of him lay a straight stretch of track, leading down to where the lights of Berkely shone through the dusk.

He mounted, accordingly, upon his clumsy vehicle, and seizing the bar, began

to pump up and down with a right good will, for the sooner he reached Berkely the sooner he would stretch his legs under a supper-table.

Now, when one is driving a hand-car with all one's strength one doesn't pay much heed to the scenery on either hand, so it is therefore not to be wondered at that Gardiner's first suspicion of anything being wrong came when he found himself jostling over some rough and uneven rails. Then in an instant it flashed over him what had happened.

"Some one has thrown the switch," was his swift conclusion, "and has shifted me on to the siding which leads down to old abandoned Mine No. 3."

At the same second, and almost involuntarily, he threw himself forward to trip the brake and stop the car.

That quick movement probably saved his life; for as he leaned over, a coupling-pin wielded with murderous force missed his skull by a hairbreadth, and escaping the hand which held it, crashed through the timbers at the front end of the car.

The assailant, who, all unknown to him, had leaped light as a cat upon his refuge, probably at the moment when it had turned into the siding, was overbalanced by the effort of striking, and lurched heavily against him.

Instantly Gardiner gripped the fellow, and the two went down in a heap on the floor of the car, but as they twisted and turned the other's face came into view, and Davis's heart leaped in exultation. For even in this half-light there was no doubting the identity of his would-be assassin.

It was Jim Spear, and Gardiner had his proof at last.

It is one thing, however, to hook an eel, and another to bring him to land, as the engineer speedily discovered. Rendered desperate by the knowledge that he had been recognized, Spear writhed and twisted in the other's grasp, and whenever he could get an arm free rained vicious blows upon his opponent.

It was rough-and-tumble fighting of the fiercest description. Not a word was spoken; both men reserved all their energy for action, and only their hoarse panting rose above the rattle of the wheels.

Now one, now the other, would be on top, as they strove for supremacy, but, locked in close embrace, each was at the same time striving to keep the other from flinging himself off to the ground.

The siding upon which Davis had unwittingly diverged was a steep incline, and once fairly upon it, the car, gathering impetus, increased its speed. Faster and faster spun the wheels, more rapidly rose and fell the unmanned handle-bar; but these two clinched in the grip of battle paid no heed.

All over the narrow space of floor they wrestled, their fingers clutching at each other's throats, ribs cracking under the pressure of twisting elbows, legs intertwined in strenuous struggle. At one moment, his body half off the car, Davis's feet would be bumping over the ties; the next, their positions would be reversed, and Spear's long limbs would be dragging to the rear like an unshipped rudder.

It had been Gardiner's idea that the combat must come to an abrupt end when they reached the entrance of the abandoned mine and crashed into the heavy timbers which boarded up its front, and hence he had been trying to hold himself to the back part of the car, but as he came on top for a moment and cast a glimpse ahead his bloodshot, straining eyes saw that such was not to be the climax.

The timbers had been removed, and unless the car were checked it must inevitably plunge down a sharp declivity within the mine, and then precipitate itself and its occupants into a pit one hundred and fifty feet deep, and nearly half full of water.

The full scope of the diabolical plot hatched against him was now disclosed to Davis. It had been Spear's manifest purpose either to kill or stun him by the blow from the coupling-pin and then send the car bearing his unconscious form down the siding and into the oblivion of the gloomy shaft. No escape would have been possible, no clue would have been left to his fate.

The planking would have been replaced before the mine's entrance, and he would simply have ranked as another of those mysterious disappearances which had so puzzled the coal-fields, and

which had no doubt been wrought by similar means.

The thrill of horror which shot through him at this realization, the further knowledge that the danger was still imminent, came near proving fatal to him, for inadvertently he released his hold upon his antagonist, and Spear, quick to profit by the respite, drove home a short-arm jolt squarely upon the point of the jaw.

Gardiner's head flew back with a crack, and for a moment his brain whirled dizzily. He felt himself letting go his grasp upon consciousness, drifting easily out upon a sea of serene indifference.

And then, whether it was because the blow delivered at such short range had lacked sufficient steam or that the very certainty of his doom roused him to resistance, his senses returned with a rush. The clasp which had momentarily loosened upon his opponent tightened once more in a grip of steel, and the contest was on again as savagely as ever.

But with this near-victory Spear had shot his bolt. He still fought on doggedly, unyieldingly; but the youth and clean living of the other man was bound to tell.

With a fierce elation surging up into his throat, Gardiner felt the muscles of his adversary weakening, his furious efforts growing more impotent.

He himself was well-nigh spent, his breath coming in labored gasps, the beat of his arteries pounding like trip-hammers at his ears; but he knew that he was now immeasurably the superior.

Steadily pressing his advantage, he pushed his opponent forward until the latter's head rested under the heavy handle-bar which had hitherto been impartially thwacking them both, and holding it there, he let the machine do the work which, despite his supremacy, would still have required more time than he had to spare.

His object was, of course, to beat Spear into submission, and then, notwithstanding the fearful momentum which the car had now attained, to fling himself and his conquered foe from the platform and let the abandoned contrivance go on to destruction.

But Spear still clung to him with a

desperate energy, still bit and struggled, while the flying car swayed and jolted over the rails. Both men were fully alive to the danger which menaced them; both knew that every passing second rendered escape more hazardous; and yet they grimly battled on, each seemingly determined not to give in.

Still fighting, they shot into the gloomy entrance of the mine, and whizzed along the steep grade leading downward to the shaft. Then, at last, each seemed to perceive at once the futility of further struggle. As though by mutual consent, they unclasped their straining embrace and rolled toward opposite sides of the car.

Gardiner raised himself on his hands and knees, so as to spring off the edge in such a way as to sustain the least injury, but ere he could make the attempt there was a sudden crash.

He felt himself hurled headlong through the air as from a catapult, the universe crumbled and went to pieces about him in a chaos of pyrotechnic tumult, and he knew no more!

CHAPTER XI.

DANGERS ON EVERY HAND.

WHEN Davis slowly returned to consciousness he was at a loss, for a moment, to comprehend where he could be.

A Cimmerian blackness encompassed him, and the dank, cold air was heavy on his lungs. The trickle of running water-sounded in his ears, and the rough, uneven earth upon which he lay was anything but a restful couch.

He started to raise his hand feebly toward his head, but as he did so felt a sharp twinge at the shoulder-joint, which served better than anything else to restore his scattered senses.

Memory came back in a rush, and he now realized that he was within the abandoned mine, probably flung to the side of the track by a lurch of the runaway car and knocked senseless by the shock of impact with the earth.

The throbbing of his shoulder and the uselessness of his right arm also told him that he had suffered a fracture or dislocation; but he paid little heed to that. A question of more serious moment was

whether he had received other injuries which might prevent his immediate departure.

To his relief, however, a very brief examination convinced him that his powers of locomotion were unimpaired. His body and limbs were bruised and sore, but there was plainly no damage that could not be remedied by a liberal application of arnica and a day or two in bed.

Therefore, he started to struggle to his feet, with the intention of making his way toward the outer air.

But all at once he recollected his companion.

What had become of Spear? Had he gone on with the car and been dashed into the gulf, or had he also fallen off and been stunned or disabled?

How long he himself had lain unconscious, Gardiner could not tell. It might have been a dozen hours, or no longer than half a minute; and since it was unlikely that the mountaineer had stayed on the car, the probabilities were that his experiences had not been dissimilar to Davis's own.

Indeed, if the period of the engineer's insensibility had been inappreciable, it might well be that the other, unhurt and in full possession of his faculties, was now groping about in the darkness to find his victim and complete the deadly job upon which he had started. And in such a case, how was a man with his right arm powerless to withstand an attack?

True, one would infer that under such circumstances Spear would have made a light to guide him in his search, or that some noise would indicate his movements; but on the one premise Davis reasoned that the fellow might be without matches, and on the other, that not knowing how thoroughly his adversary was *hors du combat*, he would proceed with the greatest caution, in order to gain the advantage of a surprise.

In fact, the more he thought about it the more certain became Gardiner that his assassin had already located him and was now creeping stealthily in his direction, perhaps even at that moment poisoning himself for the spring which should mark the reopening of the struggle.

Imagination tricked his vision until he

almost seemed to see the eyes of his foe glaring at him out of the darkness.

Noiselessly, and with infinite care, he rolled himself away from the spot where he lay, and edged inch by inch along the floor of the mine in an almost frenzied effort to escape.

And thus he came unexpectedly upon an obstruction. Before he knew it, he had set his hand full upon something soft and yielding, and had started back with a stifled exclamation of alarm. Then, a great sense of relief swelling up within his soul, he sprang to his feet and jerked out his match-box.

A moment, and the tiny flame glimmered out to show that he was not mistaken. It was Spear—Spear, supine and helpless in the shackles of insensibility!

Davis had luckily in his pocket a bit of candle which he had used in inspecting a piece of excavation the previous day, and when his match burned out he produced this, and after some delay, owing to the awkward necessity of using only his left hand, succeeded in igniting the wick.

His first impulse, of course, was to examine Spear and learn how seriously he was injured, but as the fuller illumination relieved the obscurity of the cavern he forgot this purpose in a thrill of consternation.

For the flickering light of the candle revealed that his way of egress from the mine had been cut off. Between him and the entrance rose a jumbled heap of earth and timbers, and at the foot lay the hand-car, turned over and half buried in the rubbish.

With this clue, it was not hard for Davis to reconstruct the sudden termination of their mad ride. The old rails of the siding, unable to stand the strain of such terrific speed, had spread, and the car leaving the track, had crashed into some of the timbers supporting the mine's roof.

These being worn and rotted, had given way before the onset, and in their fall had brought down a section of earth, completely blocking the tunnel. Spear and himself, thrown ahead by the force of the collision, had just escaped the avalanche.

Forgetting in the agitation of this discovery even the excruciating pain of his

wounded arm, Gardiner scrambled over the piles of rock and debris to make an examination of the barrier.

Not much of an inspection was required, though, to inform him that it was there to stay. A man far less skilled in engineering than he would have had small trouble in recognizing that only a steam-shovel could remove those ponderous tons of fallen earth.

Balked of outlet here, Davis lifted his candle high and turned an inquiring glance toward the other end of the tunnel. No use to calculate on that, however, for there, only a few feet away, yawned the open mouth of the pit, and behind it was the blank granite wall of the mountain. He was literally entombed alive.

Without a certain knowledge of his whereabouts, and on the bare chance that he might be within, was it likely that his friends would essay the enormous task of removing the accumulation of earth that shut him off?

Was it not more than probable, indeed, that the "Mollie Maguires," for their own safety, and oblivious of the fate of Spear, would board up the entrance again, so that no one should even suspect that dark tragedy which had taken place inside?

An uncontrollable groan burst from Gardiner's set lips as his mind pictured for him the agonies to come. Wounded and in fever, he would have to endure the slow tortures of starvation, and in the end perish here in the darkness like a rat in a trap.

And then he was recalled to a more present danger by a moan from his companion, a feeble tossing of the limbs in a manifestation of returning life. If Spear recovered consciousness, and was practically unhurt, his own shrift, unless he first in some way gained control of the situation, bade fair to be even shorter than he had bargained for.

Therefore, only waiting to fashion a rude sling out of the neck-handkerchief he wore and thus relieve the weight of his dangling right arm, he hurried down the slope and made a rapid but exhaustive search of the insensible man's person.

The result exceeded his fondest expectation, for at the first haul he brought to light a wicked-looking knife and a

fully loaded revolver. With these in his possession, he felt himself on more than even terms with his adversary, and he therefore proceeded more deliberately in his subsequent investigations.

Spear proved, however, to be a mine of richness at every point. In a hip-pocket, opposite the one that had contained the revolver, was a metal flask more than half full of whisky, while from his coat developed candles and a couple of thick sandwiches, which Davis, without the least compunction, immediately sequestered. There were also papers—incautious messages and letters from George Burns—which Gardiner recognized would be more than enough to prove the whole damnable conspiracy against him, if only he were ever granted the opportunity to get them before a court.

By this time, however, Spear was grunting and thrashing away at a great rate, and it was evident that only a few moments could elapse before he awoke to the situation; so, retreating to a safe distance, Davis fixed his candle against the wall and then, with cocked revolver in his left hand, seated himself upon a pile of earth to await developments.

Presently Spear opened his eyes, blinked dazedly, and sitting up, began to rub his head. A moment passed, another, and then he slowly turned his face, and with jaw suddenly dropping, took in the other's significant attitude.

"Well—what the blazes?" he ejaculated amazedly, and swiftly reached for his own gun; but finding it gone, elevated his hands above his head. "Don't shoot!" he cried. "I s'rrender! You kin march me right down to jail as peaceable as a lamb!"

Gardiner laughed grimly.

"I only wish it were possible to do so," he said. "You evidently haven't grasped the full meaning of our predicament as yet, Mr. Spear. The mountain has caved in on us, and our retreat is cut off by several thousand cubic feet of earth and stones."

The man raised up and glanced quickly back through the tunnel, as though to verify the assertion.

"Sho!" he exclaimed. "That's too bad. I guess that about ends any hope of our ever gettin' out of here, don't it?"

There was just the hint of a question in the last sentence, and as he spoke an uncontrollable gleam of insincerity flickered in the man's eye. Besides, he had taken the news of their desperate plight entirely too calmly.

A sudden, almost unbelievable, hope thrilled Gardiner, and he leaned quickly toward the other.

"Look here, Spear," he said sharply. "You know of another way out of this mine. Now, by every law of justice your life is forfeit to me, but I shall spare you on the one condition that you immediately impart to me your secret."

"Know another way out of the mine?" scoffed the outlaw. "You must be crazy. Don't you s'pose, if I was wise to such a play, I'd 'a' been proposin' it before now, 'stid of loafin' here? No, siree; I only wisht I did know of another way."

But his denial rang false to Davis's attentive ear, and the latter raised his gun with a gleam of inflexible purpose in his eye.

"Very well, then," he said sternly. "On your own head be your fate. I shall count three to give you time for consideration, and if at the end of the count you still refuse, shall shoot to kill. Will you tell? One!"

Spear's face set into lines of defiance, and he stared back unwinkingly at the muzzle leveled upon him.

"It is not only because of your obstinacy in this regard that I shall have to kill you," exhorted Davis, "but also for my own safety. I cannot remain continually on guard, nor can I do without sleep. Now, again, will you tell? Two!"

The mountaineer still attempted to preserve his stoic calm, but the unwavering aim of the pistol proved too much for him.

"Heaven knows I can't tell, Mr. Davis," he protested, weakening at last. "There ain't no such thing to tell."

He threw himself to the ground, and whimpering like a dog, tried to crawl toward Gardiner's feet.

"You wouldn't shoot an unarmed man, Mr. Davis?" he pleaded. "Oh, sure, you wouldn't murder me?"

"Halt!" the other's voice rang out warningly. "Not an inch nearer. And

stand up like a man, if you are determined to take your medicine. Now, for the last time, will you tell me what I am convinced you well know. Th——"

Davis's finger was already pressing the trigger, but before he could enunciate the fatal syllable the trembling wretch before him surrendered.

"Hold on!" he shrieked. "Hold on, Mr. Davis. I do know a way. The others'll sure kill me for showin' it to you; but it won't be no worse to git it from them than it would from you; so I gives in."

"All right," said Davis, lowering his weapon; "but mind you," admonished once more by a sly glint in Spear's eye, "at the least sign of treachery, I shall waste no time in preliminaries, but shall shoot first and explain afterward. Now, proceed with your directions, for I am personally free to admit," glancing about him, "that I see no more chance of getting out than if we were in a submarine boat sunk in a thousand fathoms of water."

"You have to go down in the pit and strike the first gallery," rather sullenly announced Spear.

"Down in the pit?" repeated Gardiner, with narrowing eyes. "How does one get down in the pit?"

"Why, you have to shin a rope sailor-fashion. The hoist is gone long ago, and that's the only way it can be made. Or, I say," suddenly comprehending the other's silence, "you're winged, ain't you? Well, then," with elaborate carelessness, "s'pose I'll have to lower you first and foller after."

"Oh, no, you won't," demurred Gardiner. "The rope might slip out of your hands too conveniently to suit my purpose."

"Then, I'll go first, and you can come along behind?"

"No, nor that, either. You might dash off into that gallery and forget to come back after me. We'll make the rope a little longer than necessary, and you shall descend on it first, hanging suspended below the mouth of the gallery until I have successfully reached that level. Then you can come up and join me."

Hazardous enough it was at that, with treachery lurking below and only

one arm to sustain him, while the sole light afforded was that from the twinkling candles fastened to their two hats. Indeed, whenever Gardiner Davis hears of nightmares he has but to recall the memory of those moments when he hung suspended over that inky void to realize that Poe and Dante were but mere tyros in describing actual horror.

Yet somehow he achieved the feat; and when he finally set off on his farther advance, with his unwilling guide three paces in advance of him, he found that the pass he had just traversed was by far the worst obstacle to be encountered.

There were other places requiring a wary head—slides to be scaled and gulfs and fissures to be crossed—but nothing that stayed them long, and as a whole the road ran in a reasonably straight line.

Spear explained that the "Mollies," having knowledge of two worked-out mines which ran at certain sections in close proximity to each other, and wishing to establish a safe retreat for themselves, with two exits in case of danger, had knocked out the intervening rock, thus constructing a continuous passage through which they might travel at will.

"They might have improved the job by putting in cement sidewalks and an electric elevator at one or two places I could mention," observed Gardiner feelingly; "still, I suppose one ought not to kick at the accommodations. Their thoughtful work has certainly stood me in good stead to-night."

Just how good stead, however, he was not to know until a little later; for Spear had not mentioned to him the name of the other mine besides No. 3 that the "Mollies" had used, and as he had to a certain extent lost his sense of direction during their wanderings, he was treated to a genuine surprise when he finally emerged into the open and recognized his surroundings.

The dawn was just breaking, but the light was clear enough for him to see that the hillside upon which he stood sloped gently down to a valley diversified with fertile farms and prosperous villages.

He rubbed his eyes, blinked incredulously, then gazed again. There could be no mistake about it. Like Moses

upon Nebo, there was spread out to his vision a glimpse of his promised land.

He had been led by Spear directly through the mountain, and yonder lay the objective point toward which all his engineering efforts had been directed—Melton and the spur of the South-eastern!

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER COVER.

ALTON STEARNS sat in his office, a careworn and troubled look upon his face. On the desk before him lay that morning's newspaper, containing a head-lined account of the mysterious disappearance of the young engineer, and beside it lay a telegram from President Judson giving fuller details of the affair; but in neither was to be found any reasonable solution of the mystery.

"It is inexplicable," muttered Stearns. "If there was a conspiracy on foot to get rid of Davis, as Judson intimates, his body would have been found, or else the men who set out to look for him that night would have discovered some traces of a struggle. Gardiner was not the kind of fellow to submit without a fight, no matter how much he might have been overmatched by the number of his assailants.

"Yet," perplexedly. "all that we can learn is that the man was left upon the bridge by the workmen and seen no more. For all evidence to the contrary, he might have been snatched up in a balloon and carried off by his enemies through the air."

Stearns, it will be seen, had not been informed that the hand-car left for Davis was also missing; and strangely enough none of the people on the ground had noted that salient fact, either. Yet, it was not so strange, after all, when one comes to know that the crew of that particular car were members of the "Mollies," and that it had been abandoned by them with the reasonable expectation that Davis would see fit to use it.

They had, of course, to report its loss, but all of them swore to the section-boss that they had duly returned upon it, and that it must have been stolen out of the tool-house at Berkely during the

night. Consequently, its disappearance was not connected in any way with the fate of Davis.

"Well," muttered the banker, at last, concluding his consideration of the matter with a sigh, "this practically settles the destiny of the Spring Creek company, at any rate. I did not know how much I had been banking on Gardiner's success until now that my hopes are all knocked in the head. I suppose there is nothing left for us to do——"

He was interrupted by the appearance of a messenger-boy, who produced a note from the recesses of his cap, and handing it over, stood waiting for the answer.

Stearns tore open the envelope and unfolded the sheet in perfunctory fashion; but with the first glance at the contents he gave a quick start of amazement and hurriedly reached into a pigeonhole of his desk for his secret code-book.

The note was written in cipher, and was in the handwriting of Gardiner Davis.

"No reply," Stearns curtly informed the boy when he had completed his translation.

Stuffing the note into his pocket, he grabbed up his hat and coat, and left the office at such speed that he was down the elevator before the more leisurely messenger had reached the corridor.

The note had merely requested Stearns to call as soon as convenient at a certain obscure hotel over near one of the West Side ferries, asking on his arrival for Gerald Dalton; but under the circumstances it was only natural that the banker should waste no time in responding to the summons.

When he finally entered the tawdry little room in the hotel, however, he found still other surprises in store for him. Not only was Davis there to greet him, but stretched out upon the bed lay a tall mountaineer, his head a mass of bandages, and his wrists securely locked in a pair of steel handcuffs.

Gardiner, also showing traces of a desperate struggle, pale and unshaven, arose and extended his left hand in welcome to the visitor.

"You are wondering at my choice of a roommate?" he smiled, following Stearns's curious glance toward the bed.

"Well, the truth is I have become so fond of him that I cannot bear him out of my sight. He and I have both got to remain out of the public eye for a few days, hence my choice of a lodging-place; but while we are together, for my own complete peace of mind I prefer to have him trussed up as you see. I don't really believe there is a spice of danger in him any more; still, it is always best to be on the safe side.

"And now," he questioned eagerly, "is there any explanation advanced for my departure from Berkely? I see that the papers are still at sea, but I thought you might possibly have some later information. Neither Spear nor I was recognized during our journey to New York, were we?"

"No; the affair still remains a profound mystery to every one. And tell me, Gardiner, how——"

"Not now," interrupted the other. "I will give you the whole story some time when we have nothing better to talk about; but at present more important matters are pressing. What would you say, Mr. Stearns," his eyes dancing with excitement, "if I should tell you that the way to hook up your road to the Southeastern has at last been found?"

"Say?" ejaculated Stearns, starting to his feet; "why, my boy, whenever you can give me that assurance you can have my check to your personal order for a round hundred thousand dollars. But you don't mean to tell——" incredulously.

"I mean to tell you," laughed Gardiner gleefully, "that I'll trouble you for that check just as soon as you can draw it up. The way has been found, and furthermore, the cost of the link will be no greater than so much straight construction upon level ground.

"But in order to reap the full advantage of my discovery," he added, and waxing more businesslike in tone, "it will be necessary to keep the whole thing a profound secret. I shall remain here in seclusion, but the rest of you will have to be up and doing."

"How can that be?" demanded Stearns. "Will you not have to go out to Berkely to conduct your surveys and superintend the work?"

"Oh, no," Davis assured him.

"Berschwind can attend to all that quite as well, whereas I will better subserve all our interests by staying under cover.

"The first thing we must do," he directed, plunging without further preface into the details of his scheme, "is to buy up Mine No. 3 of the Berkely Coal Company, and Mine No. 16 of Travis & Potter, over at Melton. Both of them are worked out, and can be purchased for little or nothing; but after we have acquired them we will give out that a new vein of coal has been discovered, and that we intend operating the properties. That will give us an excuse for laying tracks along the galleries, and for shoring up the walls and roof of the passages. There are already sidings to the entrances; from our line up to No. 3, and from the Southeastern up to No. 16."

"Ah!" exclaimed Stearns, comprehending at last, "then there is a continuous passage through the mountain by way of these mines?"

"Exactly," assented Gardiner. "Later on we will, of course, have to put in a regular tunnel construction throughout the opening, but at present heavy timbers will answer every requirement. All I want to do is to get a train of some kind over that link."

"Oh, I see your purpose now!" exclaimed Stearns, with enthusiasm. "You are right. You must remain 'mysteriously disappeared,' and all our operations must be handled on the dead quiet. Not an intimation must be breathed until the link is fully completed."

"And now," rising to his feet, "I must be off to start things going."

"Oh, by the way," called Gardiner after him as he laid his hand upon the door-knob, "what is the price quoted on Spring Creek stock now?"

"Opened at forty this morning. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I simply thought I would like to take a 'flier' on it. If you don't mind, you can take that one hundred thousand dollars you were speaking of and buy for me as long as it lasts."

Stearns turned with a twinkle in his eye.

"Better be careful," he admonished. "Some of the best-advised people say it isn't worth twenty-five."

"All the same," responded Gardiner cheerfully. "I believe I'll take the chance. Wouldn't you?"

"Yes," with the same significant smile. "On the whole, I believe I would."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE ENEMY LOOK IT.

SYLVESTER BURNS, weather-wise old mariner of the financial seas that he was, yet found himself sorely perplexed and at a loss over the unaccountable behavior of the ticker, that unfailing barometer of conditions down in Wall Street.

Assured by George that the "Mollie Maguires" had duly accomplished the project entrusted to them, and that the one man who had threatened to balk his plans was out of the way for good and all, he had entered seriously upon the purpose he had so long held in view, of gathering in the Spring Creek line at his own figure.

He had no doubt but that with their last prop gone the directors of the little road would be only too willing to let go their holdings, but when he came to make the attempt he found himself unexpectedly balked and obstructed.

Somebody else had been in the market before him, and with obstinate tenacity withheld the stock he desired to buy. All that he could get hold of was at a steadily advancing premium, which his purchases only tended to increase, and for all his efforts he was still several thousand shares short of control.

He adopted opposite tactics, and in an endeavor to depress the price sold "short"; but it did no good. All that he offered was immediately snapped up by the mysterious interest that was opposing him.

At the same time he was having serious trouble with his Pennsylvania Midland stock. For no accountable reason, large quantities of the usually sought-after securities of that road were being daily offered for sale, and old Burns had to dip heavily into his resources to support their price against the determined onslaught of the opposing clique.

For over a week the battle had raged now, and the old fellow had been drawn

in deeper than he liked to think; but he consoled himself with the assurance that he must come out on top in the end.

These antagonists of his must be insane, he declared to himself, to go after the Pennsylvania Midland. Why, it was as stable as the national government; nothing could permanently affect its value. Presently the tide would turn, and then he would exact a golden toll from the upstarts who had dared to pit themselves against him.

He rubbed his hands and chuckled to himself at the thought of how he would shear the innocents when the day of reckoning finally came.

At last he saw signs of the end of the conflict.

The market opened one morning with a lull, and shortly afterward Pennsylvania Midland advanced half a point, while Spring Creek fell off three-eighths. It was a tentative effort on the part of Burns's brokers to test the strength of their adversaries.

"Ah," commented Sylvester, "they've shot their bolt. The time has come to rush them to the ropes."

He caught up the telephone and issued sharp, imperative orders to his lieutenants. "We've got 'em on the run," he said gleefully. "Buy Pennsylvania Midland and sell Spring Creek till the cows come home. You can go as far as you like."

But the other crowd was apparently not quite licked yet. Under the tremendous orders hurled at the market by his direction, the prices of the two stocks respectively rose and fell, as was only natural.

Still the opposition rallied effectively, and the changes were not as pronounced as might have been expected.

By noon the variation on either stock had not exceeded five points, while Burns and his friends were involved to the extent of millions. And still the old man urged: "Unbelt for every cent we have. When the slump comes we will wipe them off the face of the earth."

It was at one o'clock that the ticker brought the first news of the astounding information that was to plunge the stock exchange into a maelstrom of excitement and sweep proud fortunes into a wreck of havoc and disaster.

Twenty words it was on the unwinding tape; but the sequel to it would be told to-morrow in columns of description and comment.

"Spring Creek Railway reported to have at last effected connection with the Southeastern, assuring it through traffic to the East!" spelled out the clicking wheel.

Old Burns reeled back from the machine, his face livid, his eyes glassy.

"It's a lie!" he cried. "The thing is impossible. Why, every big engineer in the country has reported against it!"

"Perhaps Gardiner Davis accomplished it before he disappeared?" suggested President Stonefield, who, equally nonplused and overcome, was standing at his side.

Burns stamped his foot.

"Nonsense," he declared. "Gardiner Davis is safely under the sod, and he left no plans. I am certain of that. No; it's a lie, I tell you. A weak lie on the part of these people to try to keep themselves afloat.

"Ah, but perhaps Davis is not dead," persisted Stonefield speculatively, still clinging to his idea. "Perhaps this disappearance of his has been merely a ruse to let him work out his schemes."

Burns whirled upon him in a fury of contempt.

"Be quiet, can't you, and let me think!" he blazed out. "Gardiner Davis is dead, and I know it!"

"How do I know it?" as Stonefield again started to interrupt. "Because I ordered the job done, and I have been assured that it was accomplished.

"You wouldn't have soiled your lily fingers with such work, would you?" scornfully. "No, the rest of you cowardly hounds have always left such measures to me; but I have never hesitated when I thought they were necessary, and I did not in this case."

"You are mad!" gasped Stonefield, backing away from the other with a look of frozen horror. "You don't know what you are saying! This trouble has unsettled your reason!"

"Not a bit of it," disclaimed Burns testily. "I simply wanted you to understand the lengths to which I will go to protect my interests. And I repeat it. I had Gardiner Davis put out of the

way. It can't be proved against me, and if you or anybody else were to charge me with it I should deny it; but it is true, just the same.

"What's the matter with you, man? You're not going squeamish over a little thing like that, are you?" for Stonefield had sunk into a chair and was covering his eyes with his hand.

Burns started to lay a hand upon his shoulder, but the other recoiled from his touch as from that of a venomous serpent.

"Sylvester Burns," he said thickly, as he struggled to his feet, "you and I have been friends and business associates for nearly forty years. I have done many things at your bidding of which I am heartily ashamed; but still I have stuck by you. What you have just told me, however, ends everything between us. I never want to see you or hear your voice again."

And with one final look of disgust and repulsion, he turned toward the door.

"What!" cried his evil genius, thunder-struck at such a show of independence. "you would desert me, Stonefield; and at such a time? Ah," with a malicious snarl. "I see what is the trouble. You think I am beaten, and, like the rat you are, you would leave a sinking ship. Well, I'm not beaten," banging down upon his desk with his big hairy fist. "These lies and rumors do not disturb me. By to-morrow I shall be greater and more powerful than I ever was.

"And I promise you now, Stonefield," with vicious rancor, "that you will be the first one I shall ruin and degrade. I shall pinch you between my finger and thumb like a weasel until you squeal for mercy!"

"I believe you," assented Stonefield sadly. "I believe, from what you tell me, that this report is merely a ruse to gain time; and that, as you say, you will be in a position to-morrow to crush me. But even with that certainty ahead of me I cannot consent to ally myself longer with a *murderer*!"

He took his departure, and left alone, old Burns paced furiously up and down the floor.

"The dog!" he hissed between his teeth. "It's because he believes his fool report that he is shaking me. The

fool! Me beaten?" He broke into a contemptuous laugh. "Why, I am right now winning the greatest victory of my life!"

But just then came pealing up from the street below the shrill voices of the newsboys: "Extraw! Extraw! Full confirmation of Spring Creek link story! Extraw!" and a messenger entered the office with a telegram.

Burns tore it open and gave one glance at the slip inside. It was the answer to a query he had despatched to the representative of the Pennsylvania Midland at Berkely.

"By Heaven!" he groaned, as he sank into a chair, "the report is true, and I am a ruined man!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A SIDE-TRACK TO SENTIMENT.

WHEN the stock exchange closed that afternoon one of the greatest coups in the history of Wall Street had been effected.

Out of the seething turmoil of the final hour it was difficult to gather any definite information, for so agitated had been the session that few houses could tell exactly where they stood. But enough was known to make certain that control of the Pennsylvania Midland had passed from the hands of Burns and his associates over to the party headed by Alton Stearns.

These men were the heroes of the moment. Never before, it was asserted, had a deal of such magnitude been put through so secretly nor so quickly, nor had there ever been one resulting in a more complete overthrow of the opposing clique.

"It was a Waterloo knocked off in jig time," was the way one epigrammatic broker put it. "To think that they cleaned up old Sylvester Burns in a short two weeks, fooling him all the time, and having him right where they wanted him when the trap was ready to be sprung! Why, it almost challenges belief!"

There was, as has been said, no possible doubt that Burns had lost his hold upon the Pennsylvania Midland, and therefore President Stonefield communi-

cated without delay to the new men in the saddle that he was ready to resign.

In reply, he received a message asking him to arrange for a conference with a representative from among them, and consented, although he asked, since he was badly shaken by the events of the day, that the meeting take place at his house.

Accordingly, by eight o'clock he was seated in his "den" ready to receive the emissary, and with his resignation ready in his pocket.

He had given orders that whoever might come should be admitted without delay, and therefore when the door opened he rose, expecting to confront Alton Stearns or some other of the men now known to have been concerned in the big enterprise.

But to his amazement the figure standing framed in the doorway was that of the man whom he had once insulted in that very room, and who Sylvester Burns had that day assured him had been foully done to death.

Almost believing the spectacle an apparition, Mr. Stonefield staggered back into his chair, his eyes like saucers, his mouth dropping open in astonishment.

But Gardiner quickly canceled any doubts as to his materiality by advancing into the room and seizing the other's hand in a cordial grip.

"You have asked for a conference, Mr. Stonefield," he said, "and our people have therefore sent me up as the one probably best qualified to discuss present conditions and future arrangements."

"But—but," stammered the elder man, still apparently unconvinced that his eyes were not deceiving him, "Burns told me that you were dead!"

"Well, I'm not," rejoined Gardiner; "although it is no thanks to him that I'm still alive. He tried hard enough to put me out of the way."

"Then he was not insane when he made that horrible assertion to-day?" burst out Stonefield, with a shudder. "He was a murderer at heart, even if he was not one in deed."

"He is one in every sense," returned Gardiner. "I have undeniable proofs in my possession of his guilty complicity in no less than twelve crimes of the sort, out in the coal country: and I have small

doubt that if the truth were known the number would be doubled. See; here is my evidence."

He drew a packet of papers from his pocket and handed them to the other.

Mr. Stonefield glanced through the letters and affidavits, and then laid them down with a groan.

"Yes, yes," he admitted, "these are incontrovertible. I had been hoping against hope that he might not have told the truth when he confessed to me to-day. I would have liked to go to him, to try to comfort him, if his hands were not stained with blood; but he has raised a bar between us which even friendship cannot cross.

"However," controlling his feelings with an effort, "this is not what you came to see me about, Mr. Davis. We are together to talk business, and in order to relieve you of any embarrassment I will tell you that I have my resignation already made out and ready to hand to you. I will——"

"But, bless your soul," interrupted Gardiner, "we don't want your resignation. Your administration has been most successful, and the new interests in charge will be only too well pleased to have you stay on."

The old man almost broke down under this generous offer, tendered by one whom he had so greatly wronged; but the flood-tide of his appreciative remarks was broken in upon by a sharp peal at the bell, and a moment later a servant announced: "Mr. Burns."

"Oh, I can't see him," quailed Stonefield. "Tell him that I am busily engaged."

But before the man could withdraw, old Sylvester's step was heard. It was evident that he did not intend to be denied.

Gardiner had just time to whip out of sight behind the portières before the old man entered.

"Ah, Stonefield," was his greeting, as he paused with unaccustomed hesitation at the threshold.

His face was gray and lined, his eyes haggard; but it was evident that he was trying to assume an air of urbanity.

"Ah, Stonefield," nervously clearing his throat and beginning again, "they did down us to-day, after all. It was

the old story of the pitcher which goes too often to the well. But," breaking off abruptly, "I didn't come around to hold any *post mortems* with you, or to mourn over what can't be helped, but to set you right on that fool joke I perpetrated down at the office. Thinking it over afterward, I got the idea into my head that you had half believed it."

"What fool joke?" demanded Stonefield.

"Why, that I had had any hand in the disappearance of Gardiner Davis. Of course, though, you didn't believe it?"

"Yes," replied Stonefield, "I did believe it, and I believe it still. In fact, I know it."

"But," protested the other, "Gardiner Davis has not disappeared. He was waylaid by some scoundrels out in the mountains; but he escaped, and is now in New York. The evening papers are full of it."

"Yes, and those scoundrels out in the mountains were acting under your orders, as they had done before. I have not only your confession for it, but here are the proofs, which Gardiner Davis himself gave me not fifteen minutes ago!"

"What?" The old man's face changed in a flash from the ingratiating expression he had worn to one of eager craving. "Those are his proofs?" pointing to the papers. "Then give them to me this instant! Give them to me, I say!"

He jerked a revolver from his pocket, and with a gleam of murder in his eye pointed it toward the other.

Gardiner sprang quickly from his place of concealment, his own weapon drawn; but before he could act the desperate man, seeing that the game was up, had turned his pistol on himself.

A single shot rang out, and the old financier dropped a huddled mass upon the carpet. By the time Gardiner and Stonefield had reached his side he was dead.

A Pennsylvania sheriff, who forced his way into the room almost immediately after the tragedy, drew Davis aside.

"He," with a nod of his head toward the recumbent figure on the carpet, "and his boy were the only ones that

got away. George is on the ocean, bound for Europe, but I'd 'a' got the old man sure if I'd only been ten minutes sooner—I was that close on his trail. The rest of the gang," he added, "are all in jail, including Spear, although he has agreed to turn State's evidence, and may get off with ten years."

* * * * *

Six months after the foregoing events Gardiner Davis took a journey down to Rossmore. His visit to the town was purely one of sentiment; but this was a sentimental journey. It was, in fact, his honeymoon.

And as they walked, one evening, through the familiar scenes of their childhood, Phœbe said to him—for of course his companion could have been no other than Phœbe:

"How gloriously have you succeeded,

Gardiner. I wonder if success would have come to you in the same measure if you had held to your original ambition and stuck to poetry?"

"Hardly," he laughed. "In fact, I have a shrewd suspicion that as a poet I should have been a failure.

"Still," he added, "these old scenes do bring back my youthful yearnings. I made a rime in my mind just now—the first one, I believe, since I was seventeen years old."

"And what was it?" she asked eagerly. "Repeat it to me."

"Well, then, close your eyes," he adjured her, "and stand perfectly still. Now, listen:

"The summit of my earthly bliss
Is kissing Phœbe, just like this!"

"And thereupon he suited the action to the word.

THE END.

THE BEAUTIFUL MADNESS.

BY GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD.

An evening that seemed like a dream, but which blossomed into a blissful reality.

IT was some few minutes past eight, and crowds of people were pouring into the theater. Cabs, hacks, and private carriages fell into line, disgorged their occupants, and drove away.

The street-cars were drawn up four or five at a time, blocking traffic. On the curb, many onlookers surveyed the hurrying throng—onlookers mostly of the cheaply smart youth, somewhat wonderfully attired, and smoking vigorously, that none might deny their manhood; men of the world of the shop-clerk class, who in ennuied, languid fashion pointed out and disclosed the identity of the various individuals descending from the equipages, regardless of the fact that they knew none of those of whom they spoke.

A broad-shouldered young man in an Inverness passed in.

"That's Eldridge Hunter," said one of the youths, cocking his bowler hat a little farther to the left side. "He's the fellow who was challenged to a duel by that French count, and——"

The broad-shouldered youth (whose name was not Eldridge Hunter) passed through the swinging doors into the foyer. Noting the long line stretching from the ticket-office, he sighed, and took up a position near a huge potted palm, surveying aimlessly the photographs and paintings of celebrated actors and queens of comic opera hanging on the walls.

The foyer was alive with color. People hurried, singly and in couples, through the narrow gateway leading to the auditorium. Most of them were just people, commonplace, every-day, healthy people; and very few of them were in evening dress. Occasionally a man passed muffled to the chin and with a silk tile or crush-hat, accompanied by a girl, bareheaded. There was a penetrating odor of perfume in the air, certain whiffs of which struck the broad-shouldered young man as being in bad taste.

There was a stir now and then when some better-known person passed, and

such a stir was more evident as a number of men in evening clothes entered and grouped themselves just beyond the broad-shouldered youth.

"Mrs. Hillen Stewart's box-party," some one said. "That's Curtis Lichen, and next him is Dick——"

The informant's voice was drowned by the chattering of new arrivals.

"Who's that fellow standing by himself? See, he's taking off his coat. Good-looking chap!"

"I dunno. I never shaved him. He's one of them society bugs, though. Yeh can see by lookin' at him. He's got the good looks, all right. 'Minds me of one of them magazine pictures——"

The barber and his friend were swept along toward the balcony entrance, and the young man with the broad shoulders smiled grimly, for he had heard what they said and knew himself to be the person meant.

Any one but himself would have pronounced the barber's eulogy as not wanting in truth. His head was almost classic in its outlines, a fact which the closely cut hair emphasized; the ears were small and set close to his head; his face was bronzed, lean, and thin-lipped, with a sharp, straight nose, well-defined eyebrows, and clear eyes; the forehead was high, and had he removed his hat one would have seen his tawny hair brushed back from it and lying smoothly flat on his head.

He was the sort of man who looks his best in evening clothes, and the ones he wore fitted his splendid form as only a good tailor's clothes can fit; but one surmised that this was the sort of man who would look well in any attire.

"Here comes the crowd," said the man who had been pointed out as Curtis Lichen.

There was a rustling of lace and silk as they came in, loosening their capes and showing bare throats pink and white; and as they swept past the broad-shouldered young man he sniffed hungrily at the subtle, delicate perfume of their sweet young persons, looked with longing upon their soft hair, their pretty clothes, and admired their attractive little mannerisms.

Nine girls followed one another, and there was much hand-shaking and dof-

ing of top-hats. At the end of the train came a middle-aged lady of smiling face and gray hair, flanked by a gentleman of her own age who limped slightly and carried a gold-headed cane.

Last of all, and whispering in the elderly man's ear, was a slim, frail girl of exquisite pallor, a face almost thin, so delicately molded was it, framed in blond hair that gave back golden rays in the electric light.

The broad-shouldered youth moved suddenly, and too late to repress an exclamation; the babble that had ensued between the men and girls drowned it, fortunately. The gentleman with the cane was producing tickets for four boxes, and the girl was speaking to a man she called Bobby.

She was not more than four inches from the broad-shouldered youth. He might have reached out his hand and touched her. His eyes were fastened on the back of her head, and the glow of her hair seemed to dazzle him.

"What—Tommy not here!" the old gentleman wheezed. "Can't come? Outrageous! Monstrous! He should have let Mrs. Stewart know before this."

He was led off, still grumbling. The girl followed with the rest.

As she turned, her eyes met those of the broad-shouldered youth, who, expecting this, had steeled himself to non-recognition.

For perhaps several seconds they looked at each other. The girl seemed a trifle puzzled. But no sign passed between them, and she went on inside.

As the party passed along down the aisle toward the boxes she pushed her way forward and caught the sleeve of a man who was chatting with a girl in pink and point lace. He made an excuse to his companion and dropped back.

"Douglas," she said, a trifle excitedly. "He's here, and I want you to do me a favor—a big favor—you will, I know, Douglas, won't you?"

The man pulled at his short-cropped mustache and smiled.

"Well, sis, I suppose I will. But who is *he* and what's the favor—eh?"

She dropped her voice to a whisper.

"Oh, you know—the man who showed me through the railroad shops—the mechanic I've spoken to you so much

about and you looked up and promised to help——”

“The young Greek god—Apollo Belvedere and all that—eh?”

He smiled again.

“Well, sis, that’s funny, but I forgot to tell you. I’ve found a place for your man. Sisson’s got an appointment as civil engineer in charge of building the new railways down in Brazil. He wants an assistant, one who is first of all the right kind of man—a decent sort, the kind who can associate with his wife (she’s going along with him). This assistant would have to be a practical man who knew the shop-work and was also a civil engineer——”

The girl clasped her hands.

“Douglas, you’re the best brother a girl ever had. It’s perfectly lovely of you—perfectly lovely! I’m sure Mr. Bond will be just the man. He studied civil engineering at night, and he knows all about the shops and——”

“But is he—first?” Her brother hesitated. “I’m not a snob, Beth, but Edith Sisson is going alone—and—well—you know, sis——”

The girl and the man moved to the door of the box they were to occupy; and she put a hand on her brother’s shoulder.

“He’s here to-night,” she went on. “And that’s the favor—Douglas, you know there’s a vacant place—Tommy Murray hasn’t come—and Mr. Bond is standing out in the foyer. I saw him there. Douglas, I want you to go out and make his acquaintance somehow and bring him in. But don’t let him know that I remember him. Hurry; maybe he’s got his seat and is coming in. Afterward he can join our supper crowd at Aunt Helen’s. Please, Douglas——”

Douglas Ridgely smiled in a puzzled way and then tried to scowl.

“But look here, sis,” he demurred, “the man mightn’t know—the little things—and——”

“Please go!” she urged. “He does; really, truly, I know he does.”

Ridgely heaved a sigh. His sister had an all-conquering way.

“What’s he look like?” he asked.

“You can’t miss him. He has a scar—a little scar on his left cheek—and he’s sunburnt and very good-looking—go, please go, Douglas.”

Her brother grinned patiently.

“All right, Beth,” he said and retraced his steps, obtained a return check and passed out into the foyer, which was emptying rapidly.

The line at the ticket-office had dwindled down to four people. But the broad-shouldered young man still stood near the potted palm and gazed vaguely at nothing in particular.

He could not have told any one just what his thoughts were, nor how long he had been standing there. He was startled out of his reflections by a tap on the shoulder, and turning, faced Douglas Ridgely, whose small, keen eyes had already noted the scar.

Ridgely was holding out a white-gloved hand.

“Hello, Sheridan—just the man I want.” Then, as they looked each into the eyes of the other, Beth’s brother added in tones of apparent disappointment: “Why, it’s not Sheridan. I beg your pardon.”

The broad-shouldered youth bowed gravely, and met Ridgely’s stare with composure.

“There’s something about the set of your ears makes me think of Sheridan,” added Ridgely, hesitating a trifle in his speech. “I’m sure I beg your pardon.”

“I’m sure it’s granted,” smiled the other. “Sorry I’m not the man you want.”

“Well”—Ridgely cleared his throat—“as a matter of fact, any friend would be just the man I want. Look here, I don’t know you, do I?”

“No. My name’s Bond—Richard Bond. I haven’t a card.”

“Well, mine’s Ridgely. See here——” He plunged into the thing abruptly. “My aunt’s giving a box-party—Mrs. Stewart——”

The youth took a step backward.

“You’re Douglas G. Ridgely, then?” he half gasped.

The other nodded. “Why?”

“I’ve heard of you,” said Bond, regaining his composure.

Heard of him, indeed! D. G. Ridgely, Chief of the Engineering Corps of the B. and Q. system and—what was far more—brother of *the* girl!

“We’re one man shy,” pursued Ridgely quickly. “Sounds unusual, but I’d

like to have you make up the party. I don't know you, but——" He surveyed Bond carefully. "I'm not taking many chances, I fancy."

Bond was visibly amazed. "I'm sure it's very kind of you——"

Evidently Ridgely chose to misinterpret.

"Glad to have you," he said, linking Bond's arm in his. "Come along." The strains of the opening chorus floated out into the foyer. "The curtain's up and the folks will wonder where I am——"

He said "Mrs. Stewart's party" to the doorman and they were inside, Bond too surprised to protest.

A ready attendant checked his coat and hat. Bond, all in a daze, was swept along into the box, and found himself being introduced to three men and two girls whom he hardly saw, and then:

"Beth, let me present Mr. Bond. My sister, Miss Ridgely, Bond. See you after the act," and Ridgely hurried away to one of the other boxes.

Dick Bond saw nothing clearly save a pink, shell-like ear, the curve of the slim white throat, the glorious hair. He dropped into the seat by her side, intoxicated, living a twentieth-century fairy tale.

Sometimes he had had visions that he might sit so near her; might breathe the perfume of her presence; but never had he believed in the actuality of the thing. For three months he had dreamed and reviled himself for so dreaming.

And after a while he had consoled himself and condoned his folly by remembering that even a firefly might worship a star.

And now, with the strains of merry music in his ears, the swish of the multi-colored stage dresses, the glitter of the lights, and the girl's near presence, he forgot what he was, and madness entered his veins.

He found himself laughing and making replies to the girl, replies light, merry, inconsequential. Between the acts he met other people, the sort he had never known before, and still the madness was upon him, and he found himself as careless of their presence as though he had known none other all his life.

But never did he remember what he

had said; words flowed to his lips without perceptible effort; and he was like a man drunk on new wine.

It was but dimly that he realized anything except that he was near the girl, and that the blood was coursing merrily through his veins. At the supper-table, later, he only knew that the background was such as befitted her.

And every one laughed and talked and was merry, and still the madness coursed in his veins, and he, too, was merry and ate and drank, and feasted his eyes upon the girl.

He became aware, a short time after they had risen from the table, that people were beginning to go; and that what he had to say he must say quickly and make his departure. He took the girl's hand and held it for a moment.

"I must—go," he said haltingly. "Everything has been glorious. But I must go—I sha'n't forget this evening—ever——"

They were standing apart from the others just inside the music-room.

"You must come and see me, Mr. Bond," said the girl. "You must come very soon. You will, won't you?"

He had a flash of what must be.

"No," he said. "Don't let's talk of that. The evening has been too splendid, too glorious. I can't come again—not soon. Some day, yes, but not soon——"

Two vivid spots of color were burning on her pale cheeks.

"But you must," she insisted. "You must come soon."

And the madness, the madness of the evening, spurred him on; and he knew it *was* madness all the while.

"I can't," he said. "And maybe you won't want me to after I tell you. For I've got to be honest; anyhow, honest with you. You don't realize—you don't realize at all. You think I am like any other of the men here to-night. But you see, I'm not. You're Miss Ridgely—and I'm—well, I'm a mechanic down in the Mount Clare shops—and——"

He caught his breath. The girl had clasped her hands over her bosom, and was breathing heavily.

"You see," he went on, "you don't even connect me with him—but there was a man who showed you through the

shops three months ago. But that was a man in overalls and I—well, I'm in these clothes now. It's the first time in my life I've ever worn them. I only got them this afternoon——”

Again he looked at her. Her lashes were shading her eyes.

“I didn't have the right to do it; but I've been thinking about you ever since that time. I was with you just one hour, but I lived a year in that hour—for everything was changed, don't you see? And I talked of you with my little sister, and we've been reading all the papers ever since to see what you were doing and where you were going and—everything. I tried to get a copy of your photograph from the photographer, but he wouldn't give it to me. I offered him a month's wages.”

He bent his head lower, as one might do in a vaulted cathedral when the incense burns.

“And it was you—you—you—all the time. And I had no right to think of you at all. For I've lived down in the slums all my life. This is the first time I've ever been in a decent house. My father—well, he—he wasn't born that kind of a man—but—he ended up by playing the piano in barrooms. He didn't care much for anything but whisky. I was twelve when he died and Millie eight—that's ten years ago—I was water-boy down at the Mount Clare shops *then*.

“But we scraped along somehow, and I went to night-school and read books and learned something. What I know of manners I learned by seeing things on the stage. We went to the theater and sat in the gallery—twice a week sometimes. And I got along at the shops and made better wages; and we took an old house down there. We studied—and I took up civil engineering and thought—maybe—but there wasn't any chance.

“I had Millie, you see, and Millie's lame—I couldn't have Millie work, and so I couldn't afford to be a rodman or something like that to begin my civil engineering and get practise. So I just settled down to be a good mechanic—and maybe get to be foreman some day. Then you came that time and——”

He noticed that she trembled slightly.

“Madness—yes, madness!—but—well

—I think I'm just a little mad to-night, but it's a very beautiful madness—and after I've said what I've got to say, well, it won't have been an insult because a man loved you. Because I'm a decent enough sort of a man that way—and I've never cared for a girl in my life—only you. And my love is no insult.

“Mad, yes, to suppose that you could care—mad enough—but just loving you has been a great deal for me. This is my one night of glory. It will be the only night I shall ever have, I suppose. Because with you not caring, I might as well be a good mechanic and—all that. And maybe I couldn't be anything else if I tried.

“I heard that you would be there to-night at the theater—the papers had something about your aunt's party last week—and I bought these clothes—had them made just for to-night. Why, I guess I'll never wear them again—but I'll always keep them—always have them and the memory—the memory of this mad masquerade of to-night—this beautiful mad masquerade——”

He choked and paused.

“And if you—would give me,” he added, “that rose in your hair. It is nothing to you—it would be everything to me—that and the memory——”

Silently she handed him the rose. Her eyelids trembled. As he put his hand forward, he felt something wet upon it. The girl raised her eyes, and something glistened in them.

“You are sorry for me,” he said gently. “Don't be sorry. It has been glorious—this night——”

“Maybe for me—too,” she whispered, her voice trembling. “Maybe it has been glorious for me too. You thought I did not know you. I sent my brother out to bring you in. I have spoken to him many times about you—I remembered, maybe—maybe as well as you remembered. I would have known your face in a thousand——”

He trembled and his hands shook.

“My brother has arranged—everything. You are to be General Sisson's assistant—are to go to Brazil with him and his wife. He is to build railways down there—and my brother recommended you. And I saw you out there in the lobby and wanted him to know

what you were—that you were worthy of all he had done—and all I had said you were—all——”

She, too, was trembling. The guests were in the hall, the men pulling on their coats, the women descending from above, where they had left their wraps. Their chatter came to the ears of the man like the droning of the waves on a sandy shore.

Lights seemed to circulate. queer little thrills ran up and down his spine.

“You——” He choked.

“I——” she said. “I have thought of you too. I remembered what you said about studying civil engineering. I knew from the way you talked that you were not meant to stay where you were—I knew from your looks that you were—what any one can see you are—and I——”

“You did all this for me——” he be-

gan. “How can I—begin to—thank—to——”

“Perhaps I was selfish, too. Perhaps—oh! maybe you don’t understand that——”

He staggered, and his fingers clutched at the air. Then he came out, master of himself.

“You love me—you love me?” he said, in a queer, half-dazed way.

For her eyes were downcast. She was silent. Regardless of who might see, he caught her into his arms.

“Tell me,” he demanded fiercely. “Will you go to Brazil? Will you go there with me?”

“I will go anywhere—with you,” she answered, and the sweetness of her presence filled all his senses.

He crushed her lips against his.

“It is a beautiful madness,” she sighed.

THEIR LAST HOPE.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "The Scarlet Scarab," "In the Lion's Mouth," "The Fugitive," etc.

A story of Egypt, in which Americans abroad find the Serpent of the Nile very much at home.

CHAPTER I.

BLUNDERING INTO A TRAP.

A WHITE, dusty ribbon of road, lined with huge shade-trees. At one end, blurred by dust, three towering conical shapes, at whose base crouched a stone image—half lion, half woman.

At the opposite end of the thoroughfare a stone bridge, beyond which a hundred domes and minarets gave back the blaze of the afternoon sun. On either side, a dreary expanse of yellow sand, punctuated by discouraged-looking fields and terminating in a wide sinuous strip of verdure whose windings marked the course of the tawny river.

The highway was choked with carriages, camels, equestrians, and plodding peasants. For the Gizeh Road, leading from Cairo to the Pyramids, is the fashionable promenade and drive of Egypt.

A group of men and women, riding with more or less awkwardness on little mouse-colored donkeys, joggled westward toward the city; now moving abreast, now stretching out in single file or by twos to permit some unusually large cortège to pass.

Any one who had traveled in Europe or in the East would at a glance have recognized the party as Cook tourists. There were a round dozen of them, and at their head rode a swart-faced man in panoply of blue and gold—Halil Sadik-Ali, their dragoman.

A girl dressed in a dust-shedding costume of brown holland rode near the van. She was not very tall, and her brown eyes roved hither and thither among the unaccustomed sights with all the frank wonder and delight of a child's.

Observing this, more than one gaze which had turned on the tourists with amusement paused to linger with gen-

vine pleasure on the trim brown-holland figure and joy-flushed face.

An elderly gentleman jogging beside the girl looked down at her with manifest approval.

"Miss Brant," said he half laughingly, wholly admiringly, "you're a model for us all. Here the rest of us are choking with dust and painfully conscious that we're making a show of ourselves on these wretched little donkeys, and yet *you* look as cool and as happy as a child on her first holiday."

"It is my first holiday," she answered gaily; "my very first in four years, and I'm enjoying every minute of it. I——"

"Your first holiday in four years? Then you've been to college, I suppose? But I——"

"No," replied the girl, "I've been teaching school. And in summer vacation I've been tutoring girls who were preparing for college."

"Teaching school? You're the last sort of girl I should take for a school-ma'am."

"Oh, I can be *very* severe, I assure you. My scholars all hold me in awe. At least, I always like to think so. But I supposed you knew. The party has been together so long that we all know one another's histories and tastes and characters and most becoming clothes and—— But I forgot! You only joined us at Port Said. So I suppose there are still a few incidents in our lives that you haven't learned."

"Yes, I took the Gibraltar-Tangier trip, you know. I hardly feel acquainted with my fellow voyagers. But your name is very familiar to me. Henry Brant, of Brant & Fitch, the brokerage house, you may have heard of. He was——"

"He was my father."

The gleam of fun had now quite died from Madge Brant's eyes, to be replaced by a momentary shade of sadness.

"Your father? Really. I——"

"You are surprised that his daughter should be a school-teacher? You know he failed; and soon after that he died. I was left alone, with my way to make, just as I was ready for college. I took up teaching, and I've been at it ever since."

"I am more glad than I can say to

meet my old friend's daughter. I'd no idea of it. Seeing you so much with Mrs. Chittenden, I fancied——"

"No, she is no relation of mine. She is a wealthy New York woman whose daughter I prepared for college. Mrs. Chittenden seemed to take a liking to me. She was coming abroad for a year, and was kind enough to ask me to come along as her companion."

"I wish you joy of the employment!" the man exclaimed, real pity in his dusty face. "I know her well by reputation. One of the richest women in New York—and one of the stingiest. It was a joke at my club that she had invited that cub nephew of hers, Barry Clive, to make a tour of the world with her, and that he was afraid of offending her by refusing; and then when he found she was economizing by making a Cook's tour of it he was furious. It——"

"Pardon me, Mr. Gault," intervened the girl, "but Mrs. Chittenden is my employer. If you don't object, sha'n't we talk of something else? I——"

She was interrupted. The little cavalcade had been brought to a stop to permit a troop of native cavalry to jingle past.

A fresh cloud of dust had been stirred up, and through it a man who had been riding at the rear urged his donkey at a canter, in order to be rid of the choking haze. He passed so close to Madge that the two donkeys collided, and the shock of the impact almost unseated the girl.

The youth, with no word of apology, nor so much as turning to see the result of his awkwardness, galloped on, the heels of his mount engulfing Madge and Gault in a second whirlwind of dust.

The elderly man coughed vehemently, his face purple with wrath. Digging his heels into his donkey's furry sides, he was about to speed after the youth, but a restraining voice checked him.

"Don't!" Madge begged. "He meant nothing by it. It's only his way."

"His way!" snorted the other, pulling back his donkey, nevertheless. "Well, it's a way I won't tolerate from any one, least of all from a whelp like Barry Clive! I'll make him come back and apologize to you!"

"Oh, I beg you won't!" cried Madge, in distress. "In the first place, he

wouldn't do it, and there would only be a scene. Besides, I wasn't hurt. It's all right."

"I've heard quite a bit about that young man," observed Mr. Gault, eyeing contemptuously the broad shoulders and slender waist of the impulsive youth, who was beginning to slacken speed now that he was free from the dust-cloud—"quite a bit. And none of it was in his favor. According to all reports, he's about the worst specimen of un-kicked puppy on record. They tell me he was a monument of selfishness and conceit at Harvard, and afterward at the law school; that he gave himself unbearable airs of superiority over the poorer men in his class, and that he's an all-around cad. And all just because he happens to have met no one with public spirit enough to give him a good thrashing and teach him he doesn't rule the whole universe."

"Oh, come!" laughed the girl. "It isn't quite as bad as all that. He's been spoiled and petted until he doesn't quite understand the rights of other people. That's all. He's——"

"He's been toadied to, just because he is his uncle's heir and because he has more money than is good for any boy," amended Mr. Gault—"just because he happens to be the nephew of the great Jonas Fitch. By the way, Jonas Fitch was your father's former partner, wasn't he? Of course he was! I remember, now, hearing rumors that——"

"That he ruined my father and profited by the crash in which the Brant fortunes were swept away? It is quite true. Though there is nothing to be gained by brooding over that now."

"And that young beast is giving himself airs on money that ought to be yours!"

"As I said," resumed the girl, "there is nothing to be gained by bringing all that up now. I——"

"Madge!" called a querulous voice from behind; "the hotel is only about three blocks away. Ride ahead and tell Selène to prepare my bath."

Gault turned with amazement to face the old lady who had given so peremptory an order to Miss Brant; then, with still more amazement, he noted that Madge, without a word, had whipped

up her donkey and ridden forward on her menial errand. As she passed Barry Clive the latter did not bow or in any way give sign of having recognized her.

"I don't know what salary that poor child receives," communed Mr. Gault within himself, "but whatever it is, she certainly earns it!"

* * * * *

To reach Shephard's Hotel (the Waldorf-Astoria of Cairo) from the Gizeh Road one follows a transverse street. At a point a block or two east of the hotel this street forks.

The left-hand road continues on past the hotel; the right, after divers curves and windings, carries the traveler into the slums, or lower native quarter, of the city. The average stranger in Cairo is prone to mistake the latter and wider highway for the hotel street.

This is precisely what Madge Brant did. Spurring on ahead of the cavalcade, her cheeks aflame at the humiliation of being publicly addressed as though she were a servant, she instinctively chose the wider road.

A passing string of camels had barred the way of the main party, causing a temporary halt and obstructing the view. Thus, Madge's blunder passed unseen.

Barry Clive alone, still riding in advance of the others, saw her pass him, and as she turned to the right he instinctively followed. His own knowledge of Cairo's topography was as limited as was Madge's, and seeing her go to the right, he supposed she was headed for the hotel. Thus they rode on, each thinking their fellow tourists were following at their heels.

Clive was in a thoroughly bad temper. From the very outset of the trip it had irked him to be associated with a mere Cook tour. It had seemed beneath him; he regarded his fellow travelers as hopelessly commonplace, and sternly repelled their friendly advances.

His aunt's parsimony was a daily trial to him; and but for fear of offending her, and of thereby marring his own financial prospects, he would long since have returned to America.

This afternoon the climax of annoyance had been reached when, in the passing throng on the Gizeh Road, he had

encountered the wondering amusement in the eyes of a passer-by whom he had recognized as a Harvard classmate of his own—an ultrafastidious member of the university's ultraexclusive set.

That this man should have seen him in the guise of a "tripper" was as vitriol to Barry Clive's vanity. He pictured to himself the unction with which the story would be repeated in Cambridge, and the malicious joy it would afford the coterie of snobs among whom Clive had ever shone as the brightest star.

So absorbed was Barry in these wrathful musings that it was with a start he at length realized that the street through which he was jogging in Madge's wake bore absolutely no likeness to that on which the hotel fronted.

This same knowledge dawned on Madge at almost the same moment.

She reined in her donkey and glanced about her in bewilderment. She was at the entrance of a long, crooked rectangle into which a number of filthy narrow alleys debouched.

The square was alive with activity, yet not one European face did she see. Natives everywhere; natives of both sexes; low-browed, evil of eye, and squalid of dress.

She had, although she did not realize it, penetrated to that vilest quarter of all Egypt, the Cairo "Fishmarket," an unspeakable section, wherein, even in this semi-enlightened age, no foreigner's life is safe, least of all if that foreigner be a woman, young, good to look upon, and defenseless.

CHAPTER II.

A SERVICE AND A REPULSE.

As Madge Brant glanced about her in perplexity she became aware that she had all at once become the cynosure of a thousand eyes. Comments of whose nature and phrasing she was luckily unaware were freely bandied back and forth among the frequenters of the square. A little knot of people, quickly increasing, began to gather about her donkey's head.

A native woman would have screamed; a European damsel would doubtless have

fainted. Madge, being an American girl, with the fearless eyes and fearless soul of her type, felt only astonishment at the attention she attracted, and intense interest in the variegated costumes and odd faces that met her gaze.

Tall black Nubians in white robes and stolid faces; sullen Druses in white turbans and blue-tattooed eyelids; fat Cairenes of the lower type; *fellaheen* in ragged sheepskins; Turkish soldiers fat and dirty in their ill-fitting uniforms; shopmen, idlers, criminals, with here and there a man whose wild eyes and strange garb proclaimed him a dervish—all these congregated about the surprised girl.

She cast a hasty backward glance to see if any of her friends had followed. Her eyes encountered only Barry Clive, who had ridden up to within a few yards of her, and who was looking past her in evident perturbation at the motley assemblage in the square.

"I'm afraid we've lost our way," she began, when a hand on her arm caused her to turn suddenly.

A large man, bloated and yellow-brown of face, and who, by his dress, seemed a personage of some importance, had laid an unwashed paw upon her sleeve and was addressing her in halting French.

"*Mademoiselle* has come to view the charms of the Fishmarket?" he asked, with an unpleasant laugh.

"I—we have lost our way," replied Madge coldly, in the same language, as she withdrew her arm. "Will you kindly direct us to Shephard's?"

Alone, the fellow's touch and words would have alarmed her. With a fellow countryman at her side—even so uncongenial a fellow countryman as Barry Clive—she felt no fear.

The man did not at once reply to her request. He said something in Arabic to the crowd, and a laugh arose—a laugh that was not reassuring. Nor were the distorted faces with their rows of grinning white teeth good to look upon.

The fat man, seeing evidently that the crowd expected something further from him by way of entertainment, again laid his hand on Madge's arm.

"Come!" he said persuasively; "*mademoiselle* must stop and have a glass of cognac as the Fishmarket's guest before she returns."

With a shudder, feeling as though some reptile had touched her, Madge attempted to withdraw her arm. But this time the grasp was not so easily shaken off.

An ugly look crept into the fat man's eyes as he tightened his grip and leered up into the face of the now thoroughly frightened girl. He opened his lips to speak, but a howl of pain cut short his words. Barry Clive had brought down his riding-stick smartly across the native's pudgy knuckles.

The fat man snatched away his hand and fell to nursing the bleeding fingers.

Before he or his fellows could recover from their astonishment Barry had caught the bridle of Madge's donkey, had swung the little quadruped about, and the two were galloping back up the alley by which they had arrived at the square. They had been only upon the threshold of the rectangle, and the crowd was wholly in front of them, so the maneuver was executed with comparative ease.

Had the hour been later a hundred running feet would swiftly have outstripped the tired little donkeys and haled the pair of insolent foreigners back. But the sun had scarcely set, and the police were still abroad.

There was also the danger of running into a party of British or Egyptian soldiery. So the denizens of the Fishmarket prudently desisted from pursuit.

After galloping along at top speed for several hundred yards, Clive glanced back over his shoulder and perceived that they were not followed. He slackened his pace and dropped Madge's bridle.

For a brief space the two rode on through the tortuous alley in silence. Then Madge won the battle she had been waging against a longing to cry, and began to recover her scattered self-control.

With restored tranquillity came an impulse of gratitude toward the man who had extricated her from so awkward a predicament.

Moreover, she was aware of certain twinges of conscience at having misjudged him. The aloofness he had consistently shown toward herself and her friends doubtless arose from extreme dif-

ference. Otherwise, how account for this recent act of chivalry?

"Mr. Clive," she began timidly, yet with earnest gratitude, "I hardly know how to thank you for what you have just done. I——"

"Don't try," he answered shortly, urging his donkey forward through the labyrinth of alleys.

She brought her own mount alongside, secretly admiring him for the apparent modesty that made him seek to avoid her thanks, but none the less resolved to ease her mind and her conscience.

"I won't try to thank you," she continued, smiling across into his stolid face, "but I shall never forget how brave and how ready you were. And," as he made as though he would interrupt her, "there's another thing I want to say: I've misjudged you—your manner and your behavior toward the rest of us. I see now I was wrong and I ask your pardon for thinking——"

"It's quite immaterial to me what you or any one else thinks," he broke in crossly. "Look here, Miss Brant, we may as well understand each other at once and for all. What I did to help you a few minutes ago was no more than I—or any white man—would have done for any washerwoman. As for my former behavior toward the others of the party my aunt forces me to travel with, that is no concern of yours. But concerning my manner to *you*, let me assure you I've never given you a further thought than I would have wasted on any other of Mrs. Chittenden's servants."

"Servants!"

She echoed the word almost inaudibly, the friendly smile dying on her child-like face as suddenly as if the man had struck her.

"Servants?" she repeated, not comprehending. "I—I don't understand."

"Then I must explain more clearly, and you'll excuse me if I speak with more plainness than perhaps you're used to. These people we travel with have made a pet of you, and have given you perhaps a rather magnified idea of your own importance. In other words, they've spoiled you. They have made you forget that you are a dependent of Mrs. Chittenden and have treated you as an

equal. If they choose to it is their own affair. But I have noticed several times lately that you seem inclined to address *me* as if we were on the same social plane, and——”

“Mr. Clive!” broke forth Madge, but he waved her to silence and resumed:

“Please do not interrupt. I am sorry to have to speak so frankly, but you force me to it. Let it be settled henceforth that I shall accord to you the civility I would show to any woman, black or white, but that I do not choose to associate more than is absolutely necessary with my aunt’s paid employee. The days of King Cophetua are past, and I——”

“You need not say anything further,” interrupted the girl, and now all the surprise and indignation had gone from her voice, leaving it cold, metallic, deadly calm. “You speak of coming to an understanding. That is impossible at present, for you understand neither yourself nor me. But perhaps I can make both clearer to you.”

She paused an instant, and he was about to speak, when she went on in the same cold, level tone:

“You look on me as a dependent of Mrs. Chittenden’s and, as such, your inferior. I—like yourself—*am* a dependent. But with this difference: *I* work honorably to earn my living. *You* do not work at all. I give full value for every penny I receive. You accept a living for which you give no return. Which of us is the inferior? No, please don’t interrupt. I heard you patiently. I ask the same courtesy at your hands—the ‘civility you would show any woman, black or white.’”

He winced, but listened in spite of himself.

“You look down on your fellow travelers and consider them beneath you. Yet they are kind-hearted, honest, and do what they can for one another’s comfort. Can you say as much for yourself? You take advantage of the accident of fortune to make me feel keenly my position as an employee. By your own statement none of the others have treated me other than as an equal.

“You further insult me by hinting that I am seeking to play the rôle of beggar maid to your King Cophetua.

Just to prove to you how mistaken you are, I wish to tell you that I hold of you the same opinion that any sane and self-respecting woman would hold toward a man who can speak to a woman as you have just spoken. It can be condensed into one word: Mr. Barry Clive, you are a cad!”

The young man’s bronzed face was purple. Thrice he opened his mouth to blurt out some angry torrent of retort, and thrice he checked himself. After waiting for an answer, she went on:

“I think that now we at last begin to understand each other. There are but two points more to clear up before we close this very unpleasant subject. First, I cannot, of course, continue in Mrs. Chittenden’s service after this, even if your Bayard-like chivalry prevented you from repeating our conversation to her. But I shall not on that account let you spoil my long-planned trip. I have a little money laid by, and I shall continue the journey at my own expense. In other words, the fact of my being your aunt’s ‘dependent’ need not force you to continue my acquaintance. So in future I beg that you will treat me as you treat the rest of us; in other words, ignore me. That is all, I think. We must be almost at the hotel; I won’t trouble you to escort me farther.”

Whipping up her weary donkey, she galloped on through the fast-gathering dusk. He made as if to follow, but his donkey stumbled on the slimy cobbles and fell to its knees.

By the time Clive had got the beast to its feet again Madge was out of sight around one of the sharp corners of the byway.

So engrossed had both been in their talk that they had failed to note the settling down of dark or the fact that the curving, tortuous course of their path proved it to be one of those innumerable alleys which in the “native district” of Cairo merge into and depart from the main streets at so obtuse an angle as to mislead even the oldest foreign habitués of the city.

As a matter of fact, Clive and Miss Brant had been traveling almost in a circle. The alley forked almost directly in front of the spot where Clive’s donkey stumbled. In doubt as to which road

the girl had taken, Barry turned to the left, and in due course found himself within fifty yards of the hotel.

Madge, on the contrary, hot tears of rage and mortification dimming her sight and dulling her faculties, had wheeled into the right-hand fork.

As she rode on she fought back the unwonted resentment that filled her heart.

"They sha'n't spoil my good time! They *sha'n't!*" she told herself defiantly. "I've worked hard for four years, and I won't let a cross old woman and a cub of a boy ruin my trip. I'll forget all about it and enjoy the rest of the tour just as much as I can. Thank goodness, all the others are nice to me! I'd be foolish to let myself worry over what Mr. Clive chooses to think about me."

Having at last talked herself into her normal sunny temper, she fell to wondering at the length of the route she had chosen. It was now quite dark, and despite her Yankee fearlessness she began to grow a little nervous as the narrow black alley stretched out before her.

It was not wholly pleasant to feel that she might have missed her way and been lost in the slums of one of the vilest cities on earth. She quickened her pace, glancing apprehensively at the occasional dark forms that slunk past her.

Luckily, the night was as much her friend as her menace, in that it rendered her practically invisible to such frequenters of the quarter as she chanced to meet.

At length, coming around a curve in the road, she saw ahead of her, not one hundred yards distant, a welcome glare of light, an open space where hurrying figures passed and repassed.

"The hotel square at last!" she thought gaily, as, dazzled by the light, she urged the donkey forward—into the very center of the Fishmarket.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN OF DESTINY.

MADGE BRANT, divining how fatally she had lost her way and to what a goal her last dash for refuge had led her, sat dazed, inert.

There, in the middle of that noisy, squalid square, she sat, a pathetic little

huddled figure with white face and wide, frightened eyes. About her swirled the eddy and backwater of all that is lowest in Cairo's mixed population.

The air was vibrant with the monotonous *thud—thud—thud* of native drums in the various cafés and concert halls; shrill yells, laughter and song; thick with smoke and rank perfumes. The filthy pavements were swarming with the scum of the Mediterranean.

And in the center of it all, perched on a solitary small gray donkey, sat the trembling American girl.

Before she could frame a plan for escape one or two idlers had spied her. Drawing about her in open-mouthed curiosity, their actions attracted others. In less than thirty seconds the girl found herself once more surrounded.

Then came a shout from in front. She was recognized as the *Sitt* (foreign lady) who had been in the Fishmarket less than an hour before. The shout brought men running from all directions. It was seen that her escort was no longer with her, and this emboldened the throng to press closer.

Awakening to a sense of her peril, Madge sought to wheel her donkey to one side and to force a way through to the friendlier shadows of the alleys. But the crowd was thick and the little beast exhausted. A loud laugh greeted the failure of her attempt.

"Five medjidie to the man who will conduct me to Shepheard's Hotel," she cried in French, in a voice she pluckily strove to steady.

But even as she spoke there was a stir and confusion in the press, as of some one striving to force a way through. Men fell back respectfully to either side, and through the lane thus formed waddled the fat man who had addressed her on her previous involuntary visit.

His right hand was bound up in a dirty cloth where Clive's riding-stick had struck. His expression had not been improved by the experience.

"Let me be *mademoiselle's* escort," he said; "I shall be honored to conduct her to Shepheard's."

Such of the crowd as understood French laughed aloud as he waddled forward and with an air of mock gallantry held out his uninjured hand.

"And I shall not demand the five med-jidie," he resumed, with a smirk, bringing his flabby face close to hers; "all the payment I shall ask is one little kiss—payable in advance, of course—"

She could feel his hot breath on her cheek. Tossing back her head just in time, she struck him full in the face with her little clenched fist.

He recoiled a step in amaze. Then, maddened by the amusement of his fellows more than by the sting of the blow, he sprang forward, gripping Madge by the shoulder.

"When payments are not made willingly," he snarled, with a sort of savage humor, "they must be collected by force!"

Regardless of her mad struggles, he once more bent his face toward her.

She cried out in horror, and—the fat man went spinning backward into the crowd like a tee-totum, caroming off from the impact with his comrades, and at last landing in a sitting posture on the dirt of the ground.

Almost before he fell he was up again, with an agility marvelous in one so obese. A curved knife was in his hand, and he was glaring about him like a wild beast.

In a small cleared space directly in front of Madge stood a man in black. Of no great height or bulk, and dressed in plain civilian garb, his presence yet seemed to dominate that whole noisy rabble. His back was to the light; and the fat man, judging the stranger, from his attitude, to be the assailant who had balked him of his dainty sport of torturing a defenseless girl, gripped the knife tighter and took a step forward.

"Abou Saoud!" said the newcomer.

He did not speak loudly, nor threateningly, as he thus pronounced the other's name; but the effect was electrical. The fat man stopped in his tracks.

By the torch-flare Madge could see the color ebb from his yellow-brown face, leaving it ashen. His very bulk seemed to collapse. The knife dropped from his nerveless fingers and tinkled dully on the ground.

"*Saadat-el-Basha!*" (Excellency!) he gasped.

At the words a murmur, as of a rising wind, swept the mob. Madge could hear whispers of amazement, of fear, on every

hand, mingled with cries of "*Effendi!*" "*Mamour!*" and "*Walee!*" (Lord! Master! Divine One!)

The crowd melted away as by magic, leaving in a moment none in the center of the erstwhile thronged square save the New York girl on her donkey, the stranger in black, and the trembling Abou Saoud.

And now the stranger was speaking again to the frightened native—speaking in deep-toned, guttural Arabic. Though Madge could not understand a syllable that was said, she noted the stinging effect of each stern word on the cringing Abou.

The fat man cowered wilting and crushed under the invective, attempting no reply, making no sign of remonstrance.

At length the stranger pointed to the knife on the ground, and then to the shadows beyond the radius of light. Like a whipped cur, Abou Saoud stooped, picked up the ugly weapon, and slunk away in silence.

As the darkness swallowed the departing native the stranger for the first time turned toward Madge Brant.

The torchlight fell full on his tanned face and slender, erect figure, the glare bringing out each detail of the high forehead, the stern yet kindly mouth half hidden by the crisp grizzled mustache, the level gray brows beneath which shone alert blue eyes of almost hypnotic keenness, yet in whose depths there lurked a profound gentleness mingled with a sort of fanaticism.

The whole face and bearing bespoke a strange blending of the warrior, the man of thought, and the mystic, while the key-note of the *ensemble* seemed an intense gentleness whose basis was granite strength.

At first glance, Madge leaped forward with an eager smile of welcome. Here was a friend, one whom she knew and loved. Then, on second thought, she blankly realized that she now looked on the man for the first time. Yet his face seemed as familiar to her as that of her own father.

Somewhere, she was sure, she had seen him; not once or twice, but often. For every line of the weather-stained handsome face was known to her.

"I—I know you," she faltered, lamely enough; "but who are you?"

Then, on the moment, recovering herself, she went on:

"Thank you a thousand times! If it had not been for you——"

She stopped with a little involuntary shudder at memory of the loathsome face that had been so close to her own. Then, again raising her eyes to the stranger's, she went on:

"I have met you somewhere—some time. Haven't I?"

"I think not," he replied, with a half-smile that began and ended in the depths of his strange blue eyes, "for I could hardly have failed to recall you."

There was a subtle compliment, an Old-World courtesy, in his tone that went to the girl's heart.

"Yet I knew your face the moment I saw you," she insisted. "Could I have met you in America or——?"

"No. I have never had the good fortune to visit your country, though some of the pleasantest people I have met are Americans. But," he added, his tone changing to one of concern, "did those brutes hurt you in any way? I am thankful I arrived when I did."

"No," she answered, the shock and horror of the past scene now returning with double vividness, "but I owe my safety to you. I shall never forget what you did for me."

In a few words she explained her presence in so untoward a place, noting, as she did so, that he had refrained from questioning her on the subject, although the sight of an American girl in the Cairo Fishmarket after nightfall must have seemed to him a hopeless puzzle.

He heard her through in silence; then, laying his hand on her donkey's bridle, he said:

"We are less than half a mile from Shepheard's, though the streets are unsafe by night for a woman—or for a man, for that matter. Come, if you are strong enough to ride so far, I will be your guide."

"You say these streets are unsafe by night," she commented, as they threaded their way through the network of ill-sinelling alleys, "yet you were here alone."

"No one in Egypt would molest me,"

he responded, a sort of fond pride in his voice. "These people are my friends—my children."

"But I've heard there is only one European whom these crafty, suspicious Egyptians really trust," pursued Madge, "and that is 'Chinese' Gordon, the——"

She checked herself with an exclamation of wondering delight. Now she recalled the reason of the stranger's familiar aspect; why she had entertained that haunting idea of having met and known him.

The features that she had looked on in the torch-flare of the Fishmarket were those of the man whose pictures just then adorned the shop-windows and illustrated-magazine pages of a thousand cities.

"Yes," he said amusedly, reading her unspoken thought, "I am Gordon."

* * * * *

Meantime, in the upper room of a *khan*, just off the Fishmarket, sat three men. One was Abou Saoud; the second, a brown-faced man in the gorgeous blue-and-gold dress of a dragoman; the third, a gigantic negro whose solitary garment was a soiled white burnoose, and whose hair was piled in mattress-like tufts high above his head.

Abou Saoud's face bespoke utter and cowardly despair. He was rocking his fat body to and fro, and moaning.

"Ruined!" he wailed. "The whole Heaven-sent plan wrecked! It is hopeless now; and so you may tell your master, oh, Farragh."

The black man grunted, eyeing his shrinking ally with contempt.

"The gray jackals of the hills must have eaten your heart in babyhood, Abou Saoud," sneered he, "and left the heart of one of their whelps in its place. What is this Gordon Pasha that his coming should swerve the Mohammed-blessed plans of my master? What is he that all you Egyptians cringe at his very name?"

"What is he?" squealed Abou, in contempt at such ignorance. "He is the man whose life is charmed, that he may not be slain; the fool to whom boundless wealth has a thousand times been offered, and who has refused it because, for—"

sooth, he deemed it against his honor to accept bribe or tribute! The saint who is poor because he gives his all to the poor! The wonder-man who, single-handed, wrenched the Sudan from its ancient masters and crushed our rich slave trade, and by his might swept the country clear of armies of fifty-fold his numbers. The one Feringhee whose word is as the word of Allah for truth, whose heart is a lion's and a dove's. He is the wizard who will again swoop down on the Sudan and scatter like chaff the hordes of your master, El Mahdi, and bring El Mahdi himself whining for mercy at his feet. Do I not know him of old? 'What is he,' do you ask?"

"Words!" grunted the Sudanese. "When this Gordon before conquered the Sudan his foes were mortal men. El Mahdi is the Son of Heaven, and his followers cannot be vanquished. So spake the Prophet to El Mahdi in a vision, and the promise has been proven true in twenty battles. You say this Gordon Pasha is a wizard—that he has learned of your plan in far-off Feringhston [England] and has flown hither on the lightning to thwart it? Bah! You call yourself one of the Faithful, and yet you place this wizardry above the power of the Prophet? Can he face the Chosen of Allah?"

Abou Saoud was visibly moved by this theological aspect of the case. A little color returned to his sallow face.

"Be it so!" he said at last. "Though my heart is turned to water at thought of Gordon Pasha. I deemed him ten thousand miles away!"

"One of the *cavasses* from the embassy tells me the pasha arrived but this afternoon and starts for Khartum on the second day," volunteered the dragoman, speaking for the first time.

"Then I must be gone before dawn," replied Farragh. "My mission here is accomplished. If you send us the tidings and give us the aid you have pledged, Abou Saoud, you shall be back at the rich slave trade within the year. And all Feringhi [foreigners] who pass beyond the First Cataract from now on shall be yours. For we rule, already, all the land beyond. Thus says our master, El Mahdi."

"Then, if Gordon Pasha goes directly

to Khartum," spoke up the dragoman, "you will reap your first harvest before long, oh, Abou. For some members of the Feringhi party I conduct start next week up the Nile. They plan to pass Assouan and go on to the Second Cataract. I will lead them into your net—if it be made worth my while."

"Of what condition are they?" carelessly asked Abou.

"Of rank, I should judge, and able to pay ransom. Among them are the *howadji*, Clive, who is known to be rich; and the aged woman, his aunt, who also is rich, though meager in giving. Also the little maid whom Gordon Pasha but now snatched from you, and——"

"It shall be made worth your while, oh, Halil!" interrupted Abou. "It shall be made worth your while!"

CHAPTER IV.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DARKNESS.

GREAT was the amazement and open the good-natured envy of the Cook party on the following day to learn that three of their number had actually been honored by invitations to the Khedive's levee at the palace that evening.

The levee was of a semi-informal nature, arranged on the spur of the moment (or as nearly so as anything in the lazy East may be said to deserve such a term), in honor of General Charles George Gordon's opportune arrival.

That beloved adopted son of the land was spending but two days in Cairo prior to his Sudan departure, and had expressed a wish to meet his former Egyptian comrades before leaving. Consequently, the levee was planned, "last-moment" invitations deluging the *élite* of all nationalities who dwelt in the Nile city.

Now, thus it was that three of these coveted invitations chanced to fall among the group of Americans at Shepheard's:

Mrs. Chittenden was the American consul-general's cousin. She had sent him her card on arriving at Cairo. Instead of calling—for he had vivid transatlantic memories of the old lady's crotchety ways—he salved his conscience by procuring for her and Clive two invitations to the forthcoming levee.

That the third invitation should be addressed to Miss Madge Brant was the true sensation of the whole affair, so far as the others of the party were concerned.

Madge had wisely refrained from mentioning to any one her adventure of the previous evening, understanding the difficulty of so doing without involving the fact and cause of her having broken away from Clive. Yet it was to that same adventure she owed her summons to the Khedive's levee.

On the homeward journey from the Fishmarket to Shephard's she and Gordon had fallen into pleasant talk. The general, noted always for his oft-expressed liking for Americans, was particularly charmed with this plucky American girl whom he had so opportunely rescued, and who to him seemed to combine the independence of a woman of the world with the unsophisticated freshness of a child.

Learning how short a time she had been in Egypt and how deeply interested she was in every phase of native life and customs, he had hit on the plan of giving her an insight into Cairene aristocracy such as she could not otherwise have gained. Hence the invitation.

"My dear Miss Brant," beamed old Mr. Gault across the table where the party were finishing their late breakfast in the great alcove dining-room of the hotel, "I shall begin to think you are a princess in disguise. How on earth do you happen to be going to the palace? I thought you said you were a stranger in Cairo?"

"I am," she laughed; "or was till last night."

"You haven't told us yet how you chanced to be invited," snapped Mrs. Chittenden, from farther down the table. "Of course you aren't going. You must realize there is a mistake somewhere, and——"

"There is," retorted Madge sweetly. "The mistake is in your thinking I'm not going. I *am*."

"Well," grumbled the old lady, "I suppose, if you insist, Barry and I *can* take you in our carriage. That is, if you will pay your share. But of course——"

"Oh, I shouldn't dream of troubling

you, dear Mrs. Chittenden. General Gordon has very thoughtfully promised that his aide, Colonel Stewart, will take me. The colonel is to call this afternoon with a note of introduction from General——"

The whole tableful had been regarding her with wide-open eyes and mouths since her very casual mention of Gordon's name, but before she had finished speaking their amazement had found vent in a storm of questions.

All of these Madge parried with ease, and in such way as to give no offense, while at the same time leaving her hearers no wiser than before.

Mrs. Chittenden and Barry Clive alone of all the party did not join in this chorus of query. The former was glaring in speechless incredulity at the girl, and finding it impossible to recognize in her the deferential, ever-obedient companion of the earlier part of the trip.

True, Madge was no longer in her service, having on the previous night (when Mrs. Chittenden had taken her to task for losing her way and reaching the hotel an hour late) resigned her position, and having gently refused, in the face of tears, threats, and recriminations, to reconsider that resignation. Yet Mrs. Chittenden could not thus soon adapt herself to the knowledge that she was no longer the absolute tyrant of her former employée. The idea came as a shock.

Clive, for far different reasons, held his peace. He had been doing a good deal of hard thinking during the past twelve hours, and Madge's recent arraignment of himself was the unwilling theme of his thoughts.

While he in no way agreed with nor admitted the truth of anything she had said to him on that belated ride, he involuntarily felt a new respect for her, somewhat as a snapping dog might feel for the man who has just kicked him.

Barry Clive, for the first time during their six weeks' acquaintance, found himself looking at her as if she were a human being and not merely a cog in his aunt's domestic machinery. To his surprise, he found that she was worth looking at—in fact, that she was decidedly pretty—and that everything about her, from the daintily aristocratic poise of her

little head to the intonations of her soft voice, spoke of birth and breeding.

He wondered, dully, that he had not noticed this before. And even as he wondered the memory of her searing opinion of himself returned with renewed vividness, making him turn his face away from her with a scowl.

The queries of the others were interrupted by the entrance of the party's dragoman.

"Well, Halil," queried Mr. Gault, "how about the *dahabiyeh*? [a sort of house-boat propelled by steam or sail]. Has one been chartered? And when are we to start up the Nile?"

"It has been chartered, *howadji*," replied the native, in moderately good English, "and we can start as soon as you desire to. You must forgive my delay. These foolish rumors of uprisings among the back-country tribes have made many of the boat-owners timid, and they would not rent out their *dahabiyehs*. The company's own boat, the only one now in commission, is too small to hold so many with comfort. So I have, on my own responsibility, hired another. If you will deign to inspect it, and if it meets the approval of all, we can provision and be ready to start within three days."

"You speak about uprisings among the tribes," quavered an angular spinster from Missouri, Miss Halpin by name. "Maybe we would be wiser to wait till we're sure everything is safe?"

"Pardon, *Sitt!* I spoke of 'foolish rumors of uprisings.' I have inquired closely. I have also consulted a very holy man—Farragh, a priest—who is but just returned from the upper Nile. All my investigations prove the country to be as safe as Chicago, the capital of America."

"In that case," dryly observed Mr. Gault, "I shall certainly carry two revolvers. Shall we go down and now take a look at this *dahabiyeh*?"

* * * * *

The vast, barn-like Presence Hall of the Khedival Palace was ablaze with lamps and full to suffocation with a throng that had gathered to bid farewell to Egypt's idol, "Chinese" Gordon, on the eve of his departure for the Sudan.

The only especial outward difference in appearance between this assemblage and any one of a hundred similar gatherings at any of the European capitals consisted in the fact that among the men present scarcely one in five was bareheaded, and an equally large percentage wore clothes so grotesquely ill-fitting as to cause an unaccustomed outsider like Madge Brant to stare in wonder.

In other words, four-fifths of the men present were Egyptian or Turkish officials, crowned with the never-absent fez or tarboosh, and dressed in a manner almost to justify the French diplomat's famous remark, "The Turk wears the cast-off clothes of Europe."

The remaining fifth of the male guests wore, for the most part, the uniforms of the various nations to whose diplomatic corps they belonged, while here and there the somber evening clothes of a civilian stood out like black smudges on the carnival of color.

The women—all of whom were European or American—were in ball costume. Not a native woman was visible, but an occasional flutter of drapery from behind a high screen in the gallery betokened the unseen presence of the Khedive's wives and their attendants.

In a niche at one side of the vast hall sat Madge Brant. The excitement had brought warm color to her cheeks and a light to her brown eyes. All evening a little group of attachés had been clustered about her.

Mrs. Chittenden had glared at the girl in malignant envy from her own isolated position near by, while Barry Clive, behind his aunt's chair, had gazed on her in growing amaze and admiration.

He could not realize that the jolly, obedient little girl in brown holland was one and the same with this radiant creature to whom half the young diplomats of Cairo were struggling to speak. Twenty-four hours earlier he had attempted to teach her her place. Tonight she had found a place of her own, wherein he had no part.

So he stood, looking on morosely at the swirl of gaiety and beauty whence he was ostracized. He recalled his views of his own importance, his ideas of Madge's insignificance, and wondered

how their respective positions had for the time become so completely reversed.

And as he wondered a sense of shame awoke within him at his own past behavior toward the girl.

Madge at last found herself momentarily alone with Colonel Stewart, a big, soldierly man of the dragoon type, who had stayed close by her side from the first.

"Tell me," she commanded, with pretty imperiousness, "who are some of these people? I mean the famous ones, you know. I've been so busy talking all evening I've had no time to look around. That stout old gentleman in the pirate make-up, over there, for instance. Is he——"

"Hush!" laughingly whispered Stewart; "he is a very important being, and his uniform is quite correct. Not in the least like a pirate's. That is Selamlik Pasha, the most powerful man in Egypt, next to the Khedive. See, he is speaking to His Highness the Khedive now. The heavily built fair man in the Guards' uniform, next to him, is Sir Herbert Stewart. And there, just beyond——"

"Oh, who is the giant over there?"

She was nodding toward a youngish man who strolled across their line of vision. He was in the dress uniform of a captain in the British Royal Engineers, and stood head and shoulders above most of the natives about him, being at least six feet four inches in his stockings.

He was lean, with the leanness of vast endurance; his harsh face was burned brick-red by many months of desert campaigning, and between the sweeping sandy mustache and the shaggy sandy brows eyes as cold and as stern as a hawk's blazed keenly forth on the world at large.

"That?" queried Stewart, following the direction of Madge's gaze. "Oh, that's Captain Horace Kitchener, one of her majesty's officers out here on special duty. Odd chap, is Kitchener. Ideal soldier, but more like a machine than a man. The sort of fellow who is likely to make his mark some day. But there, just behind him, is one of the 'lions' of the levee."

"That pompous-looking officer with the wooden features? The one who just

ignored the salute of those young subalterns? Who is he?"

"That is Sir Garnet Wolseley—or, rather, Viscount Wolseley, as he is now. You've heard of him, of course. He, like General Gordon, is merely making a flying visit to Cairo. He is the hero of Tel-el-Kebir, you know. There! those are all the real celebrities in sight just at this moment."

"Colonel Stewart," asked the girl suddenly, "did you ever hear of a man named Abou Saoud?"

The soldier's face darkened.

"Where did *you* ever hear of old Abou?" he inquired, surprised.

"I—I've heard the name, I think," evaded Madge. "Who or what is he?"

"He's a number of things. But they can all be summed up in the one word 'Blackguard.' He was one of the most notorious slave-traders in the old days in the Sudan. Then General Gordon stamped out the slave-trade there, and on Abou's solemn pledge of reform gave the man honorable employment on his staff. Soon he found Abou was betraying him, smuggling slaves through the lines, taking bribes, and extorting tribute in his employer's name, and even conspiring against the general's life. A less noble man would have had the cur shot. But Gordon Pasha contented himself with dismissing him on condition that he leave Egypt forever. Wherever he is now, he is doubtless hatching some new deviltry. Pardon me an instant. The general is signaling me."

As he moved away, and before any of a half-dozen waiting swains could take his place, Barry Clive strode across.

"Miss Brant," he said curtly, as the girl looked up in surprised displeasure, "I wish to ask your forgiveness for my rudeness of last night. I was a cad. I should like you to give me an opportunity to prove how sorry I am."

His tone was ungracious, and robbed his words of much of their contrition. Yet Madge could see that in a measure he was in earnest.

"Please say no more about it," she said quietly.

"I never apologized to any one before," he went on, with the same sulky expression of face and voice, "and I hoped you'd meet me half-way."

"You forget," she said, "King Co-phetua came *all* the way down from his throne, so the story goes, to meet the beggar maid."

"Oh, come!" he growled, "what's the use of rubbing it in? I said I was sorry, didn't I?"

"You said all that was necessary," she answered, "and so far as I am concerned the whole affair is forgotten. But may I offer you one little suggestion? If a thing is worth apologizing for, it is worth apologizing for gracefully. Not that it matters in this case, of course."

He was about to reply, but Colonel Stewart returned. With him was Gordon Pasha. Barry stood irresolute a moment, then backed away to give place to them.

He had sought in vain all evening for an introduction to the hero of the hour. And now Gordon had come of his own accord to seek out this girl whom Clive had looked on as a nonentity.

"Have you enjoyed it, Miss Brant?" asked Gordon, leaning against the open casement of the window and looking down at her.

"More than I can tell you," she answered eagerly. "It is all so new—so beautiful. A scene from fairy-land. I shall never forget it."

"Stewart tells me you are going up the Nile in a few days, as far as the Second Cataract. Why not come still farther south and bring your party to visit me at Khartum? Your will be made very welcome there, I can assure you."

He spoke in idle kindness. At a later, supreme, hour both were destined to recall his careless words as vividly as though they had been written in letters of blood.

Madge was about to make some light reply, when, with a faint whirring sound, some object, apparently hurled from the moonlit garden below, whizzed through the window, struck Gordon on the shoulder, and bounded off into the girl's lap.

Gordon did not move a muscle of face or body; but at Madge's involuntary exclamation Colonel Stewart sprang forward and snatched up the missile.

It was a small stone around which was wrapped a sheet of paper. And on the

crumpled page ran this sentence in Arabic:

TO HIS EXCELLENCY. GORDON PASHA (*on whom be peace!*)
Death waits for you in the south.

Stewart ran to the window. The garden beneath was empty.

CHAPTER V.

THE RETORT DISCOURTEOUS.

GORDON PASHA had begun his southward journey to Khartum, starting up the Nile toward Berber, whence he was to strike inland.

Cairo, recovering from the little ripple of excitement occasioned by the idolized pasha's sudden arrival and early departure, had settled back once more into its habitual plethoric calm—a calm that overlies more intrigue, crime, and evil than any mere outsider dreams of.

Such members of the Cook party as were to make the Nile trip to the Second Cataract were busy with preparations. To every rumor of discontent among the up-country tribes there came from all sides a dozen emphatic denials of the possibility of anything of the sort.

For it is hard for the Englishman in the Orient to credit the idea of his subdued vassals venturing to rise up against him. And this despite the red memory of such exceptions as the Sepoy Mutiny, the insurrection of Araby Bey, the Zulu and Boer wars, and the Mahdist rebellion.

Soon or late all these uprisings have been crushed and terribly avenged, but at the price of thousands of innocent lives.

At last all was ready for the Nile journey. The *dahabiyeh* was equipped from the tips of its lateen sails to the clumsy wooden hull.

Halil had engaged a particularly villainous-looking and incompetent crew, for the regular sailors attached to the Cook service were not permitted to make the journey. The tourists—a round dozen, all told—were assigned to their respective stuffy cabins opening out on the deck.

So it was that in the gray of the morn-

ing, when a malodorous and unwholesome mist hung low on the river, the order was given to get under way. At the last moment a rotund, puffing figure loomed up through the mist, making violent signals to those on board.

A man panting and perspiring ran up the gangplank and on to the deck. He was short, perilously fat, and of a sallow, pasty face, whose little round eyes had a furtive look.

He carried a big valise, and a negro *commissionaire* toiled up the plank behind him bearing a second.

Barry Clive hurried forward with both hands outstretched to welcome the newcomer and to relieve him of his luggage. Mrs. Chittenden, with a manner that dimly approached affability, bustled forward with equally ardent greeting.

"Why, Jonas!" she exclaimed. "When you didn't come last night we supposed you had changed your mind. We were going on without you. You wrote us to, you know, in case you didn't reach here by the twenty-first. You must have traveled all night."

"I did," answered the late arrival, his breath coming in great gulps as his laboring lungs sought to right themselves after their unwonted exertion. "Got here from Alexandria half an hour ago. Found you'd just left Shepheard's, and raced on after you. Where's that nigger of a dragoman? Here, you!" to the resplendent blue-and-gold Halil. "Take my things to my cabin."

Madge Brant and old Mr. Gault were standing by the rail about ten yards distant, whence they had been watching the gradual awakening of the river-front traffic.

As the newcomer bustled aboard Mr. Gault turned to the girl. She was pale, and her eyes shone.

"You recognized him?" queried he. "That's Jonas Fitch."

"I saw him," she replied, without emotion.

"When he didn't arrive by last night's train I hoped he had given up the trip," went on Mr. Gault. "I am very sorry, for your sake, that the man to whom you say your father owed his misfortunes should have come to break up the harmony of our party. But it needn't really matter, you know. He and Clive

and Mrs. Chittenden can herd by themselves. He will hardly have the effrontery, of course, to address you."

Jonas Fitch was rolling along the deck in the wake of Halil, Clive following attentively at his heels. He came face to face with Madge, blinked unbelievably, then held out a pudgy hand.

"Why, it's little Margery Brant!" he gurgled. "You've forgotten me, I see; but your father knew me——"

"My father," said Madge, in a low voice, looking him in the eyes and ignoring the fat hand, "knew you to his cost, Mr. Fitch. I do not purpose to know you at all. Please let that be very clearly understood from the start."

She turned away. As soon as Fitch could recover from the stupendous discovery that he had actually met some one who did not cringe before him and the wealth he commanded he took an involuntary step to bar her way. His yellow face was mottled with purple.

"D'ye know who you're speaking to?" he roared. "How dare you say——"

He got no further. Old Mr. Gault had stepped forward; but Barry Clive was before him.

The young man had heard the whole brief colloquy. With flushed face and eyes that could not meet Madge's, he laid a none too gentle hand on his uncle's shoulder, and wheeling that amazed personage to the right, propelled him toward his own cabin.

Jonas at first showed signs of balking, but the pressure on his plump shoulder was too strong.

"Here!" he squealed. "Don't you go hurrying me along like that, Barry! I've got something to say to this young person, and I mean to say it. I——"

"You've said quite enough," interrupted Clive, for the first time in his life venturing to cross his uncle's will. "Come to your cabin. You must be tired after your run."

Too aghast at this unwonted behavior on the part of his erstwhile dutiful nephew and heir, Fitch suffered himself to be assisted along without further comment.

As the uncle and nephew vanished around a corner Mr. Gault looked at Madge in genuine surprise.

"Well!" he ejaculated. "That

young Clive actually has a latent spark of manhood in him, after all. And you, of all people, Miss Brant, have brought it to light."

Then, perceiving that the girl was still agitated, the old fellow tactfully began pointing out various sights along the shore, avoiding looking at her or making any remark that required an answer.

The *dahabiyeh*, under power of her little auxiliary engine, was heaving clumsily up the river, the turgid yellow waters parting sluggishly before her blunt bow. The mists were rising. From riverside fields came the creak of water-wheels, revolved by sleek, slope-horned Cape buffalo.

In the blue mud of the river's edge gray crows with black wings walked daintily, looking for garbage and insects. Lean scavenger-dogs prowled along the bank. A string of mangy camels wound in and out among the scrubby trees.

Farther away, to the left, where river herbage gave way to encroaching sand, the three pyramids—the Great Pyramid of Cheops in the center—rose ghostlike out of the lifting mist-shrouds. And in the yellow sand at their base, the Eternal Enigma forever lurking in her blank stone eyes, crouched the Sphinx. Still more distant, mere blurs in the haze, showed the lesser pyramids of Memphis.

"It's the Nile! The Nile of Cleopatra—of Ptolemy—of Rameses!" the old gentleman rambled on, "and every throb of the engine takes us farther away from Civilization and the Nineteenth Century, and farther into the Past! If only——"

Barry Clive swung around the corner of the deck-house. His face was still flushed. He had the air of a man coming from an unpleasant interview and anticipating one no pleasanter.

"Miss Brant," he began abruptly, not perceiving Mr. Gault, who was hidden from view by a flap of the bulging awning—"Miss Brant, it seems to be my fate to apologize to you every time we meet. I know how you feel toward me and toward Mr. Fitch, but I beg that you will forgive and overlook his rudeness to you this morning. He was excited and overtired, and was scarcely himself. I sincerely hope you were not offended at his brusqueness. I'll do all in

my power to avert a recurrence of such a scene and to prevent your trip being spoiled in any way by him. Please believe that. Won't you?"

The abruptness had faded from his tone. It bore, moreover, no trace of its usual intolerant superiority.

Madge vaguely noted that his voice, thus stripped of its ordinary defects, was decidedly musical. Also that the look of honest concern in his eyes altered for the better their expression, and that of his entire face.

"It is all right," she answered, more gently than she was wont to speak to him, "and I thank you for the way you interfered in my behalf a few minutes ago. It was very——"

"It was fine of you, young man!" seconded Mr. Gault, quite ignorant of the fact that Clive had not seen he was present, "you really behaved most——"

Madge saw the old-time look of contempt rush back to Barry's face, and saw his eyes harden from their momentary gentleness.

"Mr. Gault," said he stiffly, "when I wish your opinion I will ask for it."

Turning on his heel, he retraced his way to Fitch's cabin, leaving the poor old gentleman staring blankly after him.

* * * * *

It was late the following evening. The sails had been run down, the engine stopped. The *dahabiyeh* lay moored to the bank. Above was a full moon.

The tourists, with the exception of Clive, Mrs. Chittenden, and Fitch, had been sitting on deck, beguiling the hours with banjo and song. They were a light-hearted group, and snatches of music and laughter were wafted to the stern, where Clive sat alone, smoking an unsolacing cigar.

His aunt and uncle had long since retired to their cabins. The merrymakers ignored him, having had unpleasant experiences in former kindly efforts to make him one of themselves.

Looking out on the vast solitude of the Egyptian night, the young man suddenly felt pitifully alone. The ideals, the patrician standards, he had set for himself somehow seemed less exalted out here in the wilderness than they had appeared at Cambridge or in New York.

He fell to wondering. The music, the laughter, the wholesome good-fellowship of these people whom he had despised as middle-class Philistines—might there not be something in all this that he, in his higher, more exclusive, notions, had somehow missed? With conjecture came discontent.

He was aroused by some one walking toward him. Madge Brant, seeing the solitary figure seated in the stern, had, like himself, been struck by the contrast between it and the jolly group forward. Moved by a half-comprehended impulse, she had moved astern to speak with him.

"You look lonely," she began, commonplace enough.

"I *am* lonely," he answered, rising; "deucedly lonely, and a bit blue, besides. Miss Brant," he continued, the odd query coming to his lips unbidden, "what is the matter with me?"

She looked at him in bewilderment.

"What is the matter with me?" he resumed. "I was always well satisfied with myself until lately. Yet since we've been in Egypt I've been ashamed of myself more than once. I never was before. I sit here to-night as lonely and shunned as if I were a pariah, and actually longing to join in the jollifications of that crowd up there that I wouldn't speak to at home. I'm as good as they. I used to think I was far better. Why am I ostracized?"

He had spoken incoherently, in puerile fashion, utterly unlike his ordinary self. Yet it never for the moment occurred to him that there was anything unnatural or unconventional in his appeal.

This childlike, big-eyed girl just now seemed different from all other people he had known. He could speak to her as he could not to others. He vaguely felt she would understand. And she did.

"You are not ostracized," she said, unconsciously speaking in the tone she might have employed toward one of her refractory but penitent pupils. "It is you who have ostracized *us*."

"I—I don't quite see——" he began, but she went on:

"You were brought up to believe yourself a man above the common herd. You took no pains to hide that belief from any of us. People don't like to be looked

down on and snubbed. They seldom give a stranger a second chance to do it. That is why no one risked another rebuff by courting your friendship."

"You said once that I was a cad. I was angry at the time. But—to-night—I've been wondering if I am. Do you really think so?"

"No," she replied reflectively, "I don't think I do. But, if you'll pardon my saying so, you will always be mistaken for one until you revise your mental list of the world's great men and give yourself a lower place in it. You speak of being lonely; of not being sure you were right in your treatment of me and my friends. Prove that we were wrong in our estimate of you."

"But how?"

"There are some of the singers still left up yonder. Come over and join us. Be one of us!"

Clive frowned; drew back; hesitated, and, by a mighty effort that none save Madge could have understood, obeyed. It was the hardest struggle he had ever undergone. But he won it.

Five minutes later, to every one's surprise—most of all, to his own—Barry Clive was on the deck-house, shamefacedly growling a horribly inharmonious bass to that classic ditty, "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean."

As the party broke up, an hour later, Clive and Madge walked down the deck together toward their respective cabins. At the gangway they met old Mr. Gault, who had been taking a solitary ramble along the bank.

Madge walked forward to the head of the gangplank to greet him. She was still several feet away, when, with a gesture incredibly rapid for so old a man, he leaned forward and, with all his strength, thrust her to one side.

The next second he had brought down his stout walking-stick with a resounding thwack on the boards of the gangway.

Something black and sinuous writhed and doubled over. Another blow laid it motionless. Mr. Gault's quick eye had descried in the moonlight one of the deadly water-asps so common to the Nile, which had wriggled up the gangplank from the bank on a tour of investigation, and had lain coiled directly in the girl's path.

A glance made the situation clear to Clive and Madge. The latter shuddered at the danger she had so narrowly avoided, and for the instant could not speak, but Clive, in open admiration of Mr. Gault's presence of mind, pressed forward.

"Splendidly done!" he cried. "You were——"

"Mr. Clive!" snapped the old gentleman, drawing himself up in ironic haughtiness, "when I wish your opinion I will ask for it!"

CHAPTER VI.

HEMMED IN.

ONE day passes much like another on a Nile *dahabiyeh*. From Cairo as far south as Assouan, at the First Cataract, the scenery of to-day is the scenery of yesterday and the scenery of to-morrow.

There are the same shelving or sloping banks; the same vistas of irregular yellow sand; the same oases with their feather-duster palms; the same mud villages; the gray crows, the gray donkeys, the yellow scavenger-dogs and mouse-colored, mangy camels; the same tawny, muddy water.

Incidentally there are the same long or short donkey-back journeys into the surrounding country at various points; to the age-hallowed ruins of Beni-Hassan, Abydos, Thebes, Karnak, etc., for a detailed and exhaustive description of each and all of which the reader is respectfully referred to any of a hundred weighty tomes of travel.

Despite the uneventfulness of the journey, Madge Brant saw nothing monotonous in the daily panorama. To her the gorgeous sunrises and sunsets, the ever-varying hues and forms of the desert, even the squalid villages and their bovine inhabitants, afforded, daily, new revelations.

Steeped in the magic of the mystic past, she saw everything through wide eyes of wonder.

Such of her fellow travelers as did not fully share her enthusiasm were at least the happier for it, and dutifully admired everything, as good personally conducted tourists should. They made the rounds of the tombs and other ruins on their

donkey-back excursions, loafed about the awninged deck, and devised new pastimes to while away the tedium of the slow river miles.

After that moonlit night when Madge had succeeded in drawing Clive into the pleasant circle of merrymakers, she saw comparatively little of the young man, for Jonas Fitch and Mrs. Chittenden, feeling the time hang more and more heavily on their hands, levied with daily increasing extortion on his every waking moment. Thus it was that though his demeanor toward the party at large had undergone a slight but quite visible change for the better, he had scant opportunity to avail himself of their society.

Jonas Fitch, profiting, perhaps, by Madge's own warning, and perhaps by his nephew's influence, had not intruded himself upon Miss Brant since that first morning. Mrs. Chittenden, too, who had never been able to forgive Madge for not begging to reenter her service, turned a glassy eye of disapproval on the girl.

So the two cliques remained aloof one from the other, to the probable profit of both.

The First Cataract was passed. At Assouan, Halil, the dragoman, had received stringent orders from the local authorities to venture no farther south.

By dint of a goodly bribe (in the land where money will achieve any object save loyalty) he had been permitted to pass on, but was warned that he did so at his own risk, as the upper country was now alive with marauding tribesmen and with bands of Egyptian outlaws.

Needless to say, the trusty dragoman neglected to communicate these tidings to his passengers. Nor had he remembered to mention to them, at starting, that he was no longer a Cook man, but had fitted out the present expedition at his own cost—and that of Abou Saoud.

So the thirteen Americans, all unaware of the fate planned for them, pushed on up the river, daily encroaching on what, back in Cairo, was already referred to as "the danger zone."

* * * * *

The *dahabiyeh* lay moored off the village of Amelook, on the Nile's west

bank. There had been no apparent reason for putting in at so unprepossessing a spot, and it was still early afternoon.

But Halil reported the engine in need of repairs, and had announced that the *dahabiyeh* would not go on until the following morning.

The tourists, for the most part, had gone ashore, and were wandering with frank curiosity about the little Nile-side town, paying the natives exorbitant prices for bogus antiquities and tawdry bits of Egyptian needlework.

Halil had been the first to land, and he had bent his steps directly to the plastered abode of the Sheik-el-beled (head man of the village).

"Well," he said impatiently, in response to that civic dignitary's salaams, "what orders from my lord, Abou Saoud? I thought to find him here. Is he not ready?"

"No, effendi," returned the head man, "he is not. He passed through here four days ago, and bade me tell you that there are still squadrons of *Gippies* [native colloquialism for Egyptian troops] returning through the country toward Assouan and he dare not yet make the capture, lest he fall in with some of these. Within a week, he says, the last of them will be gone and all will be safe. He bids you go on to the Great [Second] Cataract, and to stop here on the return. All will then be ready."

Halil, with a grunt of disappointment at the thought that he must be servile for another ten days or more to the Unbelievers he despised, eased his ruffled feelings by imparting a resounding kick upon the cringing head man, and then strode out into the blazing glare of the filthy little street.

But what he saw there changed his majestic walk into a run. Jonas Fitch, Mrs. Chittenden, and Barry Clive had gone ashore with the rest, but had strayed off by themselves to a quarter of the local bazaar. There a bit of exceptionally gaudy lace had awakened Mrs. Chittenden's admiration.

She had priced it, and had been horrified to hear the shopman appraise it, in broken French, at something approximating its real value. With every sense of bargaining at once on the alert, the old lady had striven to beat down the

price. Failing in reducing the figure fast enough to suit her, she had lost her temper.

Had she possessed enough knowledge of the East to walk quietly away, the shopman would doubtless have rushed after her and begged her to take the lace at her own price. Instead, she slammed down on his table a medjidie (about eighty-four cents), snatched up the lace, and started off with it.

This was a method of shopping hitherto unheard of in that land where every innovation is regarded in the light of a personal insult. The shopman, slipping the medjidie into the fold of his scarf, screamed aloud that he had been robbed by the Unbelievers.

In an instant the space in front of his booth was alive with screaming, gesticulating villagers.

Here again the party's ignorance of the East led them into an error.

They did not know that the unarmed Oriental is harmless as long as he screams and makes gestures. As it was, they judged him by Occidental mobs, and foresaw themselves torn to pieces. So they did the one foolish thing that was left to do—they tried to escape.

Barry, as a vanguard, sought to force a passage where the crowd was thinnest, and the scared Mr. Fitch attempted to guide Mrs. Chittenden through the opening thus formed. The crowd hooted with joy at this new afternoon recreation, and a lump of mud flew past Barry's ear, plastering itself mushily across Fitch's sallow face.

Jonas howled in an access of fright. Mrs. Chittenden promptly fainted. It was at this juncture that Halil Sadik Ali fell upon the natives with the flat of his drawn saber, scattering them to the four winds.

The rescued trio were escorted in safety to the *dahabiyeh*, whither the others had some time preceded them. The story of their adventure lost nothing in oft-repeated telling, the one important result of the recital being that each and every man of the party solemnly resolved never again to set foot ashore on Egyptian soil without carrying along at least one revolver.

Halil was profuse in apologies for the mishap, and on his venturing to present

Mrs. Chittenden with the luckless bit of lace (which he had picked up during the *mêlée*) he was graciously forgiven by Fitch and herself, but only on condition that he would start on at once, leaving that perilous village far behind before nightfall. This he readily assented to.

On the second morning, anchor was cast off Ibrim, on the border of the Bishareen Desert. Scattering groups of temples lie to the east, about two hours' journey by donkey-ride.

None of the party save Miss Halpin had ever heard of these ruins or cared particularly to visit them. But that sentimental spinster averred that a "gentleman friend" of hers had been at the Ibrim ruins three years before and had scratched his name with a penknife directly beneath the great bas-relief of the cat-god Bubastis, and when he heard that she was coming to Egypt had made her promise to visit the sacred spot and see if the name was still there.

"It'll be so like home to see it," she pleaded; "and besides, it'll be better fun than sitting on deck and watching the sand go past."

For this reason it is to be feared more than for the former, the party fell in with her wishes, and the expedition was arranged.

Mrs. Chittenden did not care to go; neither did Barry; but Mr. Fitch loudly declared that no American was going to see more of Egypt than he or get more value for his money. So, his reluctant satellites accompanied him.

Mounted on their decrepit little donkeys, and headed by Halil in his full panoply of purple and gold, the Americans set forth, two donkey-boys following with big hampers of lunch.

Over the desert they wound their dusty way, Madge Brant and old Mr. Gault in the van, close at Halil's heels.

"It's queer," said Madge, as she glanced about at the knolls, ridges, and gullies of rock and sand amid which they rode—"it's queer what false ideas one gets of the nature of a desert. At home I always fancied it a flat area of sand, but it is as rough as an Adirondack forest. I wonder if we will meet with any such adventures to-day as befell poor Mrs. Chittenden at Amelook?"

"I hardly think so," replied the old

gentleman. "There are too many of us. Besides, we men are all armed now. See?"

He pulled a neat little revolver from his hip-pocket.

"I never fired one of these things," he went on, "and I don't exactly understand their mechanism, but a friend gave it to me when I left home, and it really affords me quite a feeling of security."

They came at last to the temples—a rambling group, half buried in shifting sand, and stretching brokenly for nearly a mile in area. After a perfunctory examination of the first few the party gathered in the shade of a huge cornice for lunch.

The meal over, they wandered idly about among the ruins until the hour should arrive for the return ride. Madge and Mr. Gault, in the course of their ramblings, came out upon a long avenue lined with broken pillars, fallen capitals, and partly buried monoliths.

A hundred yards ahead, and moving in the same direction, they descried Barry Clive, walking between his aunt and uncle.

"Mr. Fitch is evidently still resolved to see his money's worth," laughed Mr. Gault. "See how he drags along those two perspiring, bored protégés of his! Money must be very precious to them both to make them put up with such a man."

He and Madge loitered along on the shady side of the prehistoric highway, now and then pausing to admire some half-effaced carving or to avoid stumbling over a fallen pillar.

"I, for one, am saturated with ruins," Mr. Gault was saying. "After you've seen the first few you've seen all. I shall not be sorry to start back next week to civilization, a decent bed, and a bathtub. I am getting too old for—Here comes Halil! He must be rounding up the party. Hello, Halil!" as the dragoman came alongside. "Time to return to the *dahabiyeh*, eh? I'd no idea Miss Brant and I had walked so far. Why, we must have come almost a mile since we left the others."

The dragoman had passed on and was hailing Clive and his two companions. The three, at sound of his voice, turned and retraced their steps.

"Let's walk ahead of them," suggested Mr. Gault. "You won't care to trudge a whole mile in Mr. Fitch's company. Shall we start on?"

The others were but a few yards behind them as they turned—turned to confront some fifteen mounted men who had, unheard, ranged themselves across the ancient highway, between the six wanderers and the road that led to the rest of their party.

The equestrians made no hostile sign. They simply sat their horses in stolid silence and gazed without expression on the five Americans and the dragoon. Wild-looking fellows they were, in their flaring red burnouses, sheepskin under-vests, and close turbans.

From the belt of each peeped knife and horse-pistol. Long flint-lock guns with queer curved and inlaid stocks rested across their saddle-bows. They rode hairy, lean ponies whose rough coats were strangers to the currycomb.

The travelers turned involuntarily to Halil for an explanation of this sudden advent. It was their wont to look to him in all cases where the Western mind

could not at once grasp some Eastern situation.

There was no fear in the Americans' gaze; only curiosity as to the nature of this picturesque cavalcade. But one glance at the dragoon's face set their nerves to thrilling with vague uneasiness.

Halil Sadik Ali was the picture of dumb horror. His brown face was ash-color. The whites of his rolling eyes shone yellow. He shook from head to foot as with an ague.

"Well?" asked Fitch, breaking the momentary silence. "You're a pretty picture, ain't you, you pusillanimous nigger! Can't you speak? What are these folks on horseback?"

Mr. Jonas Fitch's hardly acquired education had an unfortunate way of deserting him in moments of stress. But now even the fastidious Barry Clive did not notice his breaks in English.

For both Clive and Madge had seen, over the trembling dragoon's shoulder, a second line of dusky horsemen emerge into the farther end of the highway. The little party were completely hemmed in.

(To be continued.)

FLIMSY ISLAND.

BY GARRET SMITH.

A terrifying winter adventure with a rise in the thermometer as a starter.

"ONE trip too many on the rotten ice," said Gibson. "I'm afraid

He broke off with a sharp exclamation and again threw the ice-boat into the wind and slowed down on the ragged edge of a strip of water that seemed to burst in front of them out of the thick fog.

The heart of the younger of the two men stopped beating as the craft came about, the windward runner poising for an instant over the very edge of the fissure.

To keep moving meant sooner or later to plunge into open water. To stop meant to break through the inch-thick heaving ice. In either case was death.

The weather-beaten Gibson sat at the

tiller with the main-sheet bound about his right wrist, peering into the blank fog. A dozen times quick connection between the trained eyes and the steady hand at the helm had postponed the fatal plunge.

He had faced death in the Atlantic off the Freeport Light for twenty-five years. To toy once more with the scythe-bearer was a part of the day's work. To feel that this time the scythe would conquer was a mere detail.

It was Barrett's first year at the life-saving station. He had never met death face to face before. It unnerved him.

He sat clutching the edge of the cockpit, and stared ahead with straining eyes. At each dash toward open water he had difficulty in keeping himself from

jumping and taking his chances on the ice.

He remembered the fate of poor Johnson, who had been thrown from the ice-boat early that winter while coming from the mainland alone. They had found him next morning stretched on the ice, where he had tried to crawl ashore, frozen to death. That thought kept Barrett clinging to the cockpit.

They were skating at the thin edge of eternity on the narrow bay that separated Freepoint Light, on its barren strip of sand, from the mainland. The five miles between the village of Freepoint and the station had made a pleasant sail that morning.

Sheltered from the ocean-swells and fed with fresh water by the Freepoint River, the bay had been frozen over just enough in cold weather to bear the weight of a swiftly moving ice-boat. The recent warm spell had weakened the ice and it had begun to break up.

The day had been clear, with a light sea breeze, when Gibson and Barrett left the station for the weekly trip to the village for provisions. A strip without a fissure connected the bar with the shore, heaving slightly with the swells from the mouth of the bay, but apparently safe for another day. The allurements of gossip at the village store and a comfortable dinner at the hotel kept them from noticing the weather till the middle of the afternoon.

When they loaded the ice-boat for the return trip they found a storm brewing. The sluggish wind had veered, and was blowing directly out to sea. Heavy fog-banks hung all about the horizon.

The men made a hasty start, hoping to reach the light before the fog shut down.

Half a mile from the shore the destruction of the ice became apparent. The open water at the mouth of the bay lay a few hundred yards to starboard. From it extended wide fissures.

The unbroken strip of the morning still seemed connected, but it had narrowed greatly, and was beginning to break out in open spots.

Gibson luffed the ice-boat and considered the situation for a moment. The retarded motion was heralded at once by ominous cracks under the runners.

"Better turn back while we have the chance," muttered the helmsman.

Barrett, through chattering teeth, agreed.

The rapid drop in temperature was already benumbing them.

Gibson brought the boat around, and had just hauled it into the wind, when to seaward there broke on their ears a low, muffled roar. Instantly it increased to a sound like thunder and ended in a sharp cannon-report. The ice had split not three yards in front of them.

Gibson's first impulse was to jump the boat over the crack. As he crowded the craft into the wind the ice-field swung free and they were separated from the mainland by several feet of black water.

They came about with a jolt that nearly threw them over. There was a bare inch to spare between them and the water. Again they glided over the treacherous, heaving bridge toward the light.

"It's make the light now or go through," said Gibson grimly.

To go through left not one chance of escape in ten thousand.

If they were lucky enough not to be driven under the ice, their life-preservers would keep them afloat. But even if their plight were seen from the shore, they would freeze to death before any boat could break its way to them through that long stretch of ice.

As this thought flashed through their minds the fog closed down, as if in mockery of their one chance of escape. The wall of mist surrounded them in a blank circle scarce two rods in diameter.

There was no opportunity to discuss possibilities or plan a course of action. In time of danger on land one can sometimes pause for a moment and decide what is the best move. Even on the sea, in an ordinary boat, the sailor can lie to in a storm and trust to his anchor.

To Gibson and Barrett, the one imperative thing was to keep moving. Where, must be a matter of instantaneous inspiration. One of Langley's aeroplanes could be in no more desperate plight a thousand feet above the earth.

"It's dead ahead and trust to luck," said Gibson.

Between numbing cold and terror, Barrett was too paralyzed to reply.

Forward they shot in silence broken only by the ring of their runners and the booming of splitting ice. Again and again Gibson brought them up short and dodged an open stretch of water.

They had tacked till they had entirely lost the direction of the light. They could not tell whether they were on the main strip of ice or off on one of its branches which could only lead them to the open sea.

The fog-horn at the light had gone wrong the night before, and the men had been mending it that day. It was still silent.

Again came that ominous booming from the open. This time it was to leeward, and would cut them off from the light, if, indeed, that had not already happened.

"We must jump that," Gibson groaned, heading straight before the wind.

The boat fairly flew.

Then came the final report, and the ice opened right under their bowsprit.

The forward runner jumped clear, and so did the aft starboard runner, but with a crash that brought them up short the port runner rammed under the edge of the ice.

Barrett shut his eyes, expecting to feel the water close over him the next instant.

Then he realized that they were again moving. The boat had swung around parallel to the fissure and was sailing across the wind, dragging one runner over the edge in the water. That could last only for an instant.

Gibson, in desperation, drew the sail tight aft and threw his weight far out over the ice. This move, with the force of the wind, keeled the boat so far over that only a swift leap by Gibson in the opposite direction prevented a capsize. When they righted again, almost by a miracle all runners were on the ice, and they were skimming along at a safe distance from the fissure.

Once more they turned and sailed before the wind.

Scarcely another dozen rods brought them again to a breach, so wide that they could hardly see the opposite ice in the fog.

"Shut off!" gasped Barrett.

Gibson was silent.

Again he had brought the boat around in the nick of time and was skirting the chasm in the vain hope of finding a bridge. A little distance brought them to a cross-split. Once more they turned and worked back, only to find a far edge broken by choppy waves that betokened the open sea.

They were marooned on an ice-floe, dashing wildly around the outer edge of a flimsy island that with every heave of the waves was growing smaller and might at any moment break into a thousand pieces.

"Could we swim it?" asked Barrett, in despair.

Gibson's only reply was a look of pitying scorn.

It would have been a feat in clear water of such a temperature even if the swimmer could have seen where he was going.

The fog lifted a little, but the wind was increasing to a gale, making it constantly more difficult to handle the ice-boat. The air was at least ten degrees colder than when they started.

To add to their confusion, the darkness of an early winter evening was now closing over them.

They might be a short distance from the light and safety, or they might be far out to sea.

Then for the first time it occurred to them to shout for help. Again and again they hallooed together and listened for an answering shout, but in vain.

Suddenly, with an increased volume of wind, the fog lifted for a moment.

Should he live to tell the story, never to his dying day could Barrett forget the feeling of despair the sight gave him.

They were racing straight to sea on their ice-island, now scarcely an acre in extent. The mainland was almost lost on the horizon, and the light was sending its intermittent flashes to them, nearly five miles away.

Every moment the racing tide was bearing them farther from land. There was not a sail in sight.

It was probable that the very tide that was carrying them away had so far preserved them, for as they dashed along the edge of the floe they saw that the broken ice had jammed under the main

strip, reenforcing it, and thus retarding to some extent its disintegration.

Around and around they raced. Gibson had managed, at the risk of disaster, to reef the sail down and retard in a measure the mad speed of the boat. Probably never before or since has there been such dexterous handling of one of these frail crafts. It was the dexterity of despair.

The clearing of the fog was only for a moment. Then it shut down again, denser than ever in the gathering gloom of night. The fog-horn at the light was now working again. Gibson and Barrett cursed its mocking moan under their breath. Many a sailor had gone to his death within the sound of that most mournful of all sea-dirges.

The two men were now almost completely benumbed with the cold. Barrett was beginning to feel a dreamy indifference creep over him. Gibson, by the strenuousness of his efforts had fought off the chill in his blood to some extent, but he, too, realized that his nerve was going, and that narrower and narrower were becoming the escapes of the flying ice-craft at the verge of the circular barrier between them and death.

Now the boat was doing little more than whirl about in its tracks, a feat Gibson in calmer moments would not have deemed possible. The end seemed only a matter of seconds.

Around and around dashed the mad craft, now and again so close to the edge that on the windward side the whitecaps raced on to them and the salt spray froze over their faces.

"Better keep your blood going, old man," cried Gibson, catching sight of the stupor in Barrett's eyes. "You'll need it all when we strike the water. Never say die till you have to, boy. They may have a boat out for us now."

Five, ten, fifteen minutes, a half-hour passed. Still the race with death continued.

Half a dozen times Gibson tried to rouse Barrett, but the boy sat in a semi-stupor and refused to stir.

Meanwhile, the flimsy island had grown steadily smaller. Darkness had closed in at last.

Finally Gibson reached out the hand

to which the rope was bound and touched Barrett's shoulder. The latter scarcely noticed him.

"We've got to quit, old man," said Gibson.

There was a note of tender pity in the rough old fellow's voice.

Then he threw the boat directly into the wind and cut the sheet, lowered the sail, and came to a stop almost in the middle of the floe. Another big piece of ice, almost one-quarter the size of the whole, broke off as they halted, and their support rocked so violently that the boat threatened to slide off into the water before it could break through.

Gibson steadied it with his pike-pole.

For a moment they poised there. The expected break did not come. The drift-ice was concentrated in several layers under them.

Two minutes passed; then three and four. They seemed like hours. Still they swayed up and down in the stinging gale.

Barrett looked on as one in a dream. "She's holding!" cried Gibson, still a little doubtfully.

He shook Barrett's shoulder.

The latter roused up a trifle under blows from Gibson's fists, and began to shake off his torpor.

The ice was holding, but that meant only a slight prolonging of the freezing process, unless a vessel sighted them soon. Much chance of that in the blackness and fog. One might pass unseen within a few yards.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, old——"

Gibson's voice was drowned by a crash.

Then a plunge and darkness.

* * * * *

Could it be possible? Barrett was waking up to the sensation of being dry and warm.

"I guess you're all right now, me boy," said a rough voice, and opening his eyes, Barrett saw a man in a sailor's pea-jacket bending over him.

"Where am I?" asked the bewildered youth. "Where's Gibson? How did I get here?"

"Your pard's coming around all right," answered the sailor. "We ran

into your blooming little ice-island, out there, and smashed it up, and then trotted over you and your blasted sled-boat. Lucky we did, too, I guess. You'd be there yet if we hadn't. Not a

nice place for a sleigh-ride. Now have another swig of this and rest a while. You're aboard the fishing-boat Thomas Nelson. We'll land you in port in about an hour."

THE EAGLE OF EMPIRE.*

BY F. K. SCRIBNER,

Author of "The Ravens of the Rhine," "The Eleventh Rider," "The Secret of Frontellac," etc.

A story of Napoleon during the one hundred days between Elba and St. Helena.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

NORMAN INWOOD, while traveling through France on horseback, has the misfortune to lose his mount by a fall into a ravine. The accident happens close by the shore of the Mediterranean, and near a tower, where Inwood finds preparations to set off a flare, as a signal to some one at sea. He also finds under the parapet of the tower the body of a dead man, and later the horse belonging to him, which he has no scruples in appropriating. But he has not gone far on his resumed journey when he is halted by a body of riders, among them no less a personage than Napoleon, just returned secretly from Elba. Inwood is detained on suspicion and made to accompany the horsemen to a house where they halt for the night. Not liking the dirt floor in the outbuilding where he has been bidden to sleep, he gropes about until he finds a ladder, which he ascends, and is set upon by some one in the darkness. He defends himself, and hears a body crash to the floor of the loft. Presently a voice comes from below, and a man calls up to explain that he is the cuirassier who rode on his left, and that as his (the Frenchman's) father has served with Rochambeau in America, the son has come to bring the American some supper. Before he goes down to take the food a hand touches him on the arm and a woman's voice bids him to not tell that she is there.

When he returns he has borrowed a lantern from the giant cuirassier, and by its light discovers the woman bending over a man, the one who must have attacked him when he first appeared in the loft. He is badly hurt, and while the two are looking at him Colonel Ettore, of Napoleon's party, comes upon them. He and Inwood fight there in the loft; Ettore trips, and his knife enters the breast of the unconscious man on the floor. Inwood binds the French colonel and escapes with the unknown woman on two horses they find. They are pursued, swim a river, and just as Inwood reaches the opposite bank a bullet buries itself in the brain of the animal he is riding and he is hurled through space.

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERIOUS AWAKENING.

WHEN Inwood regained consciousness he awoke as one out of a dreamless sleep. For some moments he lay still, his mind groping vaguely in shadow.

His first physical sensation was of a strange lightness in his head; he seemed to be falling: a dizzy descent which sent a sickening thrill through his body.

He opened his eyes slowly and stretched out one hand; it felt numb and inert. By a powerful effort of the will he half raised himself and looked

about him, and what he saw filled him with astonishment.

He remembered vaguely having been dripping wet, and his limbs chilled by the cold March wind which swept across the surface of the river. Now a languid warmth filled his veins.

He remembered also, though as if in a dream, the sensation of pitching forward from the saddle. By every rule of cause and effect he should have been lying on the ground at the edge of the black water, on the farther side of which were those who had pursued him so relentlessly.

But as he stretched out his hand,

*This story began in the February issue of THE ARGOSY, which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents.

thinking to feel the damp, sodden earth, his fingers touched the soft covering of a bed. Instead of the weird moonlight and the leaden sky, heavy with drifting clouds, he found himself gazing at the paneled walls of a large room.

For a moment he thought he was dreaming and closed his eyes—when a light step at his side brought him back to reality again.

"Ah, *monsieur*," said a quiet voice, "you have regained consciousness and, as we hoped, the brain is uninjured."

Inwood stared into the face of the speaker, a little man clad entirely in black, who held in his hand a wine-glass filled with a colorless liquid.

Inwood opened his lips to speak, but his tongue refused to perform its office. He could only stare, amazed beyond comprehension.

His strange companion made a little gesture.

"Gently, *monsieur*; would you throw yourself again into the fever by undue exertion? In a few hours it will be otherwise—when you have taken this," said he softly.

He held the glass to Inwood's lips, and when the American had drained its contents, set the crystal upon a table by the bedside.

Whatever manner of liquor the glass had contained it must have been powerful, for after a feeble attempt to sit upright, Inwood felt his eyelids closing, a sense of languor overcame him, and he sank back upon the pillow.

It might have been hours, or even days, for he had lost all reckoning of time, when he awoke. His limbs still felt heavy and inert, but much of the lightness in his head was gone, and it required less effort to raise himself higher on the pillow.

In the strange silence which filled the room he gazed helplessly about him, at a loss to comprehend how so mysterious a change had been wrought in his position.

But gradually his mind became clearer, as if the mists which enshrouded it were drifting slowly away. He drew himself into a sitting posture, and though weak and dizzy, threw back the coverings. The movement was followed by a second, in another part of the room.

The sudden parting of a heavy curtain brought a flood of bright sunlight across the center of the apartment. Then, as the draperies fell into place, the golden streak disappeared and through the semi-gloom Inwood saw the figure of a man advancing toward the bed.

An indistinct recollection came to him of the little personage in black who, upon his first awakening, had held a glass to his lips; a remembrance so dim that he fancied it the phantasm of a feverish dream.

But the man who now advanced and looked critically down upon him bore no resemblance to the indistinct figure of the other. Inwood saw a tall form surmounted by a grave, haughty face, out of which a pair of half-veiled steel-gray eyes looked coldly.

For a moment these two, the American perplexed and mystified, groping as it were in darkness, his companion austere and apparently indifferent, examined each other in silence. Then the latter, with an almost imperceptible gesture, spoke.

"So it seems that *monsieur* has quite recovered his faculties, as we were forewarned; but to rise easily, *monsieur* will find to be quite another matter."

As he concluded he leaned forward and replaced the bed-clothes which Inwood had thrown aside.

For a moment the American remained silent, collecting his wandering faculties. The shadow of a smile—a smile without mirth—crossed the Frenchman's lips.

"*Monsieur* is amazed; is it not so?"

"Where am I?" demanded Inwood weakly. "I remember only——"

"It is not always wise to remember too much," was the enigmatical reply. "Nor is the time fitting for *monsieur* to indulge too freely in conversation."

Inwood passed his hand across his brow.

"*Monsieur*," said he, with increasing strength of voice, "I have but asked you where I am. That I was thrown from my horse I remember. To whom, then, am I indebted that I find myself in a bed, when but an hour since I was in the saddle?"

His companion shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not the surgeon, *monsieur*, else you would learn nothing to-day. It is sufficient answer for the present to say that you are in Paris!"

A look of incredulity crossed Inwood's face. Irritation and a feeling of resentment born of the unusual weakness against which he was struggling seized him.

Why should this cold-eyed stranger see fit to mock at him?

"*Monsieur*," said he impatiently, "I ask you again, where am I?"

"And I have answered. In Paris, *monsieur*," replied the other coldly.

"When an hour ago I was but a few miles from Cannes? It is impossible."

"It is the day of impossibilities. Calm yourself, *monsieur*, or I shall be accused of throwing you into another fever. You have been in Paris for the matter of some sixty days."

Inwood had once more started to throw back the bed-clothes, but his hand fell inertly to his side. *For sixty days!* and it seemed but as many minutes since he had struggled up the bank toward *mademoiselle*.

Surely he was the victim of a feverish hallucination, from which he must recover presently.

The stern lines on the face of his companion relaxed a little.

"*Monsieur*," said he gravely, "under some circumstances it might be unwise to prolong a conversation with one who has but awakened from so profound a stupor, but that you have awakened—in your natural senses—is sufficient proof that the danger is past. The injury to the brain received by being thrown from your horse rendered you unconscious for many days. It was, perhaps, fortunate that one of the most skilled surgeons in France has interested himself in your behalf. To him and to *Mademoiselle de Freron* you owe your recovery."

It was gradually dawning upon Inwood that the man was telling the truth, and that he had been seriously injured when hurled from the saddle upon the rocky shore of the river. But that he had lain in a death-like stupor for nine weeks, in some manner had been conveyed across France and was at that moment lying in a house in Paris, seemed beyond belief.

Then remembrance of *mademoiselle*, whom he had left awaiting him upon the bank of the river, forced a question to his lips.

"And *mademoiselle*—she escaped?"

"Else you had not been in Paris to-day. You are in the *Hôtel Prix*, where she ordered you to be brought, *monsieur*," replied the other.

The *Hôtel Prix*! the house of the slain count, who had died with the knife-blade of Colonel Etori in his heart. Again his mind went back to that fateful night, then:

"And *mademoiselle*—she is here?"

"She is here, *monsieur*." The Frenchman's voice was measured and cold.

"And you, *monsieur*? Surely I am also indebted to you——"

"I have told you it is through *mademoiselle*. What I may have done was at her desire."

There was no tone of friendliness in the man's voice.

Inwood was rapidly collecting his faculties, for, confronted with so difficult a problem, he summoned all his strength to solve the perplexity.

For several minutes he remained silent, arranging in his mind the incidents which had crowded upon him since he had set foot in France.

From the hour when, issuing from the cold water of the river, he had waved his hand to *mademoiselle* to the moment at which the little man in black had put the glass to his lips—all this period was a blank which had robbed him of sixty days of volition. Would he learn what had happened during those lost days?

And *mademoiselle*? How had she escaped, and by what means had she succeeded in removing him to Paris? Why had the pursuers not crossed the river, having followed them so far?

It was plain *mademoiselle* had not deserted him, yet to remain at his side and to have escaped being made a prisoner must have meant that the hostile horsemen had given up the chase when victory was within their grasp. And why had they abandoned the pursuit so suddenly? Surely not because a narrow river separated them from their prey.

There were many questions he would have asked, but his companion turned abruptly from the bedside.

"Already you have talked too much, nor will I answer you further," said he coldly.

"And *mademoiselle*? If she is indeed here, surely I may see her?" Inwood persisted.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"That lies with *mademoiselle*; she will be informed of your request," he answered.

Inwood watched him as he crossed the room and parted the curtains which concealed the door. He would have arisen, though conscious of his unusual weakness, but to get up must be to dress, and he saw nothing with which to accomplish such a task.

He lay back upon the pillows, gazing up at the paneled ceiling and listening for the footsteps which would announce the coming of the one person who in all France he most desired to see.

After a time he fell into a troubled doze, and when, scarcely conscious that he had slept, he opened his eyes suddenly, it was the little man in black who stood by the bedside.

"Ah, *monsieur*," said he softly, "it is the magnificent physique to which we owe everything; yet from the first I did not despair, and it was that I told *mademoiselle*."

"And *mademoiselle*? She is not here," demanded Inwood impatiently.

The surgeon made a little gesture signifying much or nothing.

"To-morrow; we must not move too fast. *Mon Dieu!* Must everything in France gallop like a race-horse?"

"But you will tell me——"

"Nothing to-day. To-morrow you may be satisfied. Patience, *monsieur*; a day longer will amount to nothing."

For a brief moment he laid cool fingers upon the American's pulse, nodded with satisfaction, and motioned toward the little stand at the head of the bed.

"If *monsieur* desires anything, he has but to ring and some one will present himself," said he briefly.

"But I desire to get up; you can realize, *monsieur*, that I am tired of lying——"

"Perhaps to-morrow. *Nom du diable!* It is the same with every one—from the emperor in the Tuileries to the gam-

ins in the Quartier Latin—impatience, galloping, pushing, ever pushing. But you, *monsieur*, must needs curb your restlessness until to-morrow."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROLL OF THE DRUM.

BUT it was not the next day, nor the next, that, restless as a caged beast, Inwood saw or heard anything of *mademoiselle*. On the third day something happened, but it was not the coming of the French girl he had last seen looking down at him from the back of her horse upon the bank of the river near the inn beyond Cannes.

It had been forced upon him that he was virtually a prisoner, for, having made an examination of the room, he discovered the door was always fastened except when it opened to admit the solemn servant who attended to his wants.

From the windows, high up, he could look down upon a broad avenue through which vehicles, pedestrians, and soldiers were constantly passing. To summon strangers to him or to break down the door would have been possible, but he saw no pressing reason for such drastic action.

He had been told that he might expect *mademoiselle*, and, although he was puzzled at her non-appearance and chafed under the enforced confinement and idleness, he felt in honor bound to await her coming.

That Napoleon had reached Paris, and regained his own, he understood; the little surgeon had spoken of the emperor at the Tuileries. But whether he had won out by battle and bloodshed or peaceably Inwood had not learned, yet he remembered what the giant chasseur had said: that beneath the tunic of every soldier in France was hidden the tricolor.

So for two long days he curbed his impatience, resolved as each hour ended to wait no longer, but each time holding back, thinking the next might bring *mademoiselle*. And on the third day, when patience ceased to be a virtue and the resolve to leave the house dominated all other feeling, his imprisonment was interrupted.

As he stood idly at one of the windows which overlooked the avenue there came to his ears the crash of a drum.

The martial sound was not new, for Paris was filled with marching soldiers; but hitherto their lines had passed up or down the avenue, the roll of the drums growing louder as they approached the house, then fainter and less distinct as the troops passed on and were lost in the stretch of thoroughfare.

But the drum-beat on the afternoon of that third day differed from what constant repetition had rendered familiar. There was at first the long rolling crash, then an instant's pause, a dozen regular taps—and silence.

For a time he could see nothing unusual, the view up and down the avenue being limited. But after each interval of silence the drum crashed out again; the long, steady roll, the echoing taps, the ensuing silence. And after each interval the noise seemed louder.

Curious to learn what this oft-repeated performance might mean, he opened the window wider and leaned across the sill. In the street, thirty feet below, pedestrians were hurrying in one direction; that from which came the beat of the drum.

Presently Inwood became aware that certain ones were looking up at the houses; staring at him and at the closed windows on either side. He essayed to lean out farther and was half stretched across the sill when a slight noise behind caused him to turn suddenly.

At his elbow stood the solemn-faced Frenchman who had been his only visitor during the two preceding days.

As always, the immobile face of the man told him nothing, but something in the eyes drew Inwood's attention. Behind the mask which covered the servant's countenance seemed to lurk a suppressed excitement; an emotion revealed only in the expression with which he regarded the open window and the hurrying pedestrians below.

Inwood had questioned the fellow on several occasions, but the man had answered briefly or not at all. Now, for the first time, he opened his lips and spoke of his own volition.

"*Monsieur* will pardon, but *monsieur* has doubtless observed that the hour is

arrived to leave the Faubourg St. Germain."

The American looked at the speaker in mild surprise. An inmate of the house in the Faubourg St. Germain for two months or more; since regaining consciousness virtually a prisoner—the door of whose room was always fastened on the outside—and the fellow spoke of departure as though it was, and had always been, a matter of his (*Inwood's*) own convenience.

He was upon the point of mentioning this fact pointedly when some inner feeling restrained him. A grim smile touched the corners of his mouth.

"And so it is indeed time that I go; well, perhaps you are right, my friend," he replied dryly.

The man made a little gesture.

"It, of course, lies with *monsieur*; but *monsieur* has heard—and seen."

He motioned toward the crowded boulevard below.

"Oh, the drums!" answered *Inwood* calmly. "Yes, I have heard, often, my friend; only they have changed their tune to-day."

The emotion behind the impassive mask flashed out more plainly.

"It is because *monsieur* is new to Paris, because he has been ill, that he does not appear to comprehend perfectly. Perhaps *monsieur* will pardon me if I venture to explain."

"Why is it time I left the Faubourg St. Germain?"

"And what else, *monsieur*? It has been expected that some such thing would come."

The crash of the approaching drum drowned his voice. The long, dull roll, the sharp series of little taps, the ensuing silence, save for the murmur of voices in the street.

"Well?" said *Inwood* sharply. "You were saying that——"

"It has come, as was to be expected. Already the others have gone: the last, *M. le Duc de Veris*, not an hour ago."

"And why," asked *Inwood* calmly, "have I been permitted to remain when the house has emptied itself? Why am I here when all the others are departed?"

He spoke at random, following the man's words as a cue; he did not propose to exhibit ignorance before this sour-

faced serving fellow, but he was puzzled at what he heard.

"It was *mademoiselle's* wish that *monsieur* be permitted to remain until the last moment, because of the recent illness, and M. le Surgeon so advised," replied the other.

"Ah!" said Inwood dryly, "and so it was that: because it was thought the fever had weakened me. *Mademoiselle* and the little surgeon feared I might grow faint by the way. See if it would be so."

He reached forward and picked up a heavy chair; then, before the wondering eyes of the mute Frenchman, he tore the wood apart and dropped the pieces upon the floor.

Why he did this he would not have been able to explain, but a mood of recklessness was upon him. *Mademoiselle*, the others who had occupied the house were gone, leaving a servant to bring him word that he, too, might depart. And they had believed, or pretended to believe, that he was little better than an invalid.

"And *mademoiselle* wished me to remain until the last moment; well, has that moment come?" he said sharply.

"*Vraiment!* *Mademoiselle* was most particular on that point. But now *monsieur* has heard for himself. It will be a quarter of an hour, perhaps longer, for there are still ten houses between them and us. You will understand I have waited till the last moment—the very last—because there is the passage leading behind the garden into the alley. *Monsieur* can go that way quickly—and unobserved by any one in the Faubourg St. Germain."

"And why——" began Inwood; then stopped.

He felt uncertain of his position, and the man's words puzzled him, but he judged it better not to appear too curious. Then suddenly something of what was meant dawned upon him.

He remembered who had been *mademoiselle's* associates. And he remembered also who was master in Paris at that moment.

"They are visiting the houses in the Faubourg St. Germain, I understand," he finished coolly.

He remembered having heard that the

great majority of houses in that thoroughfare were the residences of Royalists. That under the empire the broad street had assumed the aspect of a place deserted; because those who dwelt thereon had closed their shutters and crossed the border, out of France.

The Frenchman at his side made a quick gesture of assent.

"It is as *monsieur* has observed. It has happened before—before the—emperor went to Elba. The minister of police used to search the houses frequently. I have seen some terrible things, *monsieur.*"

"And since the return from Elba? During the last sixty days, while I lay here unconscious?" Inwood asked.

"This is the first time, which is perhaps fortunate. But now they are searching the house again, *monsieur.*"

It was easy now to read the meaning of the long roll of the drum, the taps and silence. The soldiers appointed by the emperor's minister of police to search through the old nests of the Royalists were moving from house to house; beating up the possible inmates as hunters, keen on the scent, beat up the underbrush.

What surprised Inwood was that the thing should be done so openly; that opportunity was given to the victims to escape.

Later, he learned that it was the policy of the emperor to scatter his enemies, not to arrest by wholesale the Royalists of Paris. Perhaps Napoleon felt the threatening shadow which hung over his newly regained throne; it was at least his idea, for the moment, not to drive any sect of Frenchmen to desperation. To clear the Faubourg St. Germain, not to permit the old birds, the hatchers of treason against his power, to sit too securely upon their nests—this answered the purpose while he was amassing a new army. Later, when he had worsted the allies gathering beyond the frontier, it might be another matter. Once again all-powerful against external enemies he could crush beyond resurrection the adherents of the Bourbons who remained within reach of his arm.

The crash of the drum rang out again: this time a little nearer. Inwood glanced down into the street.

"But why go by a secret alley, my friend? The way into the Faubourg St. Germain is still clear. And, after all, perhaps it might be just as wise to remain quietly here," he said calmly.

The muscles about the Frenchman's mouth worked violently, and he threw out his hand in a rapid protest.

"*Bon Dieu!* *Monsieur*, it is not to be thought of; it is the sickness which has hidden the necessity from your mind. It is possible that the search may lack thoroughness in some of the houses, but *here!* Surely, you must understand, *monsieur*, and—that you are not a citizen of France."

"The more reason why I need not flee so recklessly. Not being a Frenchman, it is more than possible——"

The other's agitation broke all bounds.

"*Mon Dieu!* and it was *mademoiselle* who warned me that there might arise some stubbornness. It is because you are not a Frenchman, *monsieur*; it is just that. Who has not heard how the emperor has used forbearance in dealing with his own countrymen; such as do not agree with him. But with others—and the English in particular—who come to Paris and join with his enemies, it will be the Conciergerie, if nothing worse. Cannot *monsieur* see?"

Inwood did perfectly; so fully that the thought of running away, as though he was really guilty of plotting against Napoleon, troubled him no more.

To be found in the house known by the authorities to be the harboring-place of a desperate gang of conspirators against the empire, and to be not a born adherent to the Bourbon cause, would scarcely work to his advantage.

While the emperor might pardon something in a Frenchman, he would find no mercy for an alien, and one who had already fallen under suspicion at the very moment when Napoleon's fate hung in the balance.

In the face of his companion's plain words Inwood's pride vanished. Better to avoid trouble while there was yet time than to trust to explanations after the net had fallen over his head.

And he thought of something else also; the man whom he had throttled in the barn might arise to confront him in the presence of the emperor.

He turned from the window.

"It is as you say," said he; "the time is arrived when it is the part of wisdom to vacate the Faubourg St. Germain. But—how am I to know to what place you will lead me? Paris is filled with the spies of the emperor; how can I be sure that you are not one of them? Surely, surely *Mademoiselle de Freron* has left some message—a word which will explain something."

The Frenchman half opened his lips, then closed them sharply and drew a folded paper from an inner pocket.

"*Monsieur* takes me for a spy? But then, as *monsieur* says, Paris is filled with spies and it is best to be careful. It was indeed *mademoiselle* who gave me what I hold, but it was not to be delivered until *monsieur* had left the house in safety. Yet, that *monsieur* may not doubt me too strongly, I will disobey *mademoiselle's* last instruction."

The man spoke dispassionately.

Without reply Inwood snatched the paper.

"*Monsieur!*" cried the other, "it is but necessary to note it is *mademoiselle's* handwriting. Now time is precious, and to delay is to put one's head in danger. Later there will be ample opportunity to——"

But Inwood was rapidly reading the message which his companion of that wild ride had written perhaps that very morning, perhaps days before, while he lay unconscious, and she, perchance, had found it necessary to leave him among strangers in the house in the Faubourg St. Germain.

The note began abruptly, without prelude or introduction, and filled the sheet of paper from top to bottom.

MONSIEUR:

It was a mistake—that night when you rode with me from the barn near Cannes. It was a mistake to strike down an officer wearing the livery of Napoleon, for in so doing you have made powerful enemies. And it was a mistake that we should fly from those we heard in the forest—not the Corsican soldiers, but those to whom I have united myself. It was they who followed us across the river and they who, at my request, brought you to Paris and to this house.

But the mistake did not end there.

my friend; it is a mistake to carry upon one's person that which one has taken from a murdered man. Perhaps you do not quite understand, and why I should explain I do not know, only because you saved me from violence in the barn, and we women of France do not forget easily.

Your danger has been great, *monsieur*, even greater than you dreamed, while you slept so long. They know who killed poor M. Andrea while he waited to fire the beacon at the summit of the tower. It was that which saved Napoleon that night near Cannes, and to you the Corsican owes the throne he has regained.

Why you did not give me up that night I cannot tell. Perhaps it was because Etori angered you beyond measure and, being yourself in the service of Napoleon, you struck down another who wore his uniform. It is evident that the man is very close to his master—traitor and vampire that he is—for you fled, having made him your mortal enemy. Of that I know little, only that your horse threw you afterward and your head was injured terribly.

Of course, they searched your clothes and came upon the pistol—the one with the silver mountings, which bore M. Andrea's name, and which they knew he carried when he mounted to the summit of the watch-tower. When it was discovered that he had been murdered their rage was terrible, both because M. Andrea was most trustworthy and the plans which had been so carefully laid went for nothing.

We knew that Napoleon had many followers, what his sudden appearance might mean to France; had he been taken that night, before any had seen his face, Louis would still be king in Paris. And when they found M. Andrea's pistol on you they would have killed you, even as you lay unconscious—killed you as they would a rat, *monsieur*, for the pistol told them it was you who found M. Andrea in the tower and murdered him.

But I remembered then what you had done for *me*, and because they did not dare make me their enemy they spared you—until a later day, when you should have departed from the house to which I had them take you. What may follow I cannot say, but, having repaid the debt I owed, our paths will cross no more.

The oath they made to me—not to harm you while you remained beneath this roof—they will not break, but

afterward—you can read your own danger, *monsieur*. There are those in Paris who will show no mercy.

Of one other thing I would warn you, a second danger, which you will doubtless realize. Etori serves Napoleon as second minister of police. Next to his master and Fouché he is all-powerful. If you know the man as I know him you will understand.

C. DE F.

The letter ended as abruptly as it began. Inwood folded it carefully and placed it in an inner pocket.

"It would seem," said he grimly, "that I am in the position of the man who stood between the devil and the deep sea. To remain is to meet this precious assistant to Fouché; to depart is to risk a dagger thrust in the back."

"*Monsieur* was pleased to say?" ventured his companion hurriedly.

"That we will leave at once; the drums are drawing nearer," replied the American calmly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE.

THE alley to which the Frenchman had referred was a narrow street opening into one of the wider boulevards beyond. Some five hundred yards in length, and flanked on either side by the walls of adjacent houses, it was used, in common with other alleys in the district, as a passageway for tradesmen in the daytime, prowlers by night, and frequently as a means of escape in troublous times.

It was upon the latter errand that Inwood, accompanied by the French serving-man, entered the narrow way even as those who beat upon the drums neared the house in the Faubourg St. Germain. Looking ahead, he saw that the road before him ran straight for perhaps a hundred yards, then turned abruptly so he could not see the farther end nor the wider street beyond.

The sober-faced Frenchman was close at his elbow.

"But a few moments and *monsieur* will enter the more crowded thoroughfare; it is then that only moderate caution will be necessary," said he respectfully.

Inwood did not reply and, after a moment, the man continued:

"*Monsieur* will pardon, but for many days *monsieur* has lain on a bed of sickness; during that time many things in Paris have changed; it may be just possible that *monsieur* may desire something—a word—for, *monsieur*, being a stranger——"

He hesitated, and Inwood, who had been thinking of that very thing, seized the opportunity.

"Yes," said he shortly, "doubtless *mademoiselle* has spoken in your hearing something of the matter. I must confess to you, my friend, that I am walking as one blindfolded; and you know Paris thoroughly?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Who better, *monsieur*?" he answered. "And"—lowering his voice—"there are, as *monsieur* knows, other houses besides those in the Faubourg St. Germain. Doubtless in one of these, to which I can lead you, *monsieur* will find some one of those who were forced to leave so suddenly."

What Inwood might have replied, how he refused the fellow's offer to take him into the midst of those who had sworn to kill him, was prevented by their suddenly turning the sharp angle of the alley.

Many yards ahead lay the opening into the broader thoroughfare; Inwood could see the trees, the moving vehicles, the figures of pedestrians. But between them and him he saw something else: something which checked the answer upon his tongue. The gigantic figure of a man, standing motionless—and the figure was clad in the uniform of a grenadier of the empire.

He stopped suddenly—so abruptly that his companion bumped against him. It flashed upon him that this man had been stationed in the alley for the express purpose of preventing his escape from the house he had just left.

For the first time since setting his foot upon French soil he experienced a thrill of genuine alarm. To face danger, even death, was an old story, and he shrank from neither; but to be taken prisoner in the street, dragged before biased judges, confronted by the sneering Etori, and probably shot down like a

stray dog, was a thing not pleasant to contemplate.

He half turned, for the soldier had not yet seen him. It was in his mind to retrace his steps quickly and trust to good fortune to escape those who might search the house. Then he noticed something which in the first moment had escaped him.

Save for the short sword hanging from the grenadier's belt, the fellow seemed to be unarmed. A foot soldier placed on guard usually carried a musket; besides, he would not be smoking, and the grenadier was puffing vigorously on a short-stemmed pipe.

The old dardevil confidence flashed up; for the fraction of a second only Inwood hesitated, then walked deliberately toward the boulevard.

At the sound of approaching footsteps the grenadier turned and glanced carelessly along the alley. He was not thirty yards away, and Inwood could see his face plainly.

The recognition came suddenly, when it was too late to stop or turn back. The man before him was the giant follower of Napoleon, the same who had given him the lantern in the stable near Cannes. Then he had worn the uniform of a cuirassier; now he had on the turned-back coat and broad straps of a grenadier of the guard.

Inwood was a brave man, but his heart began to beat so rapidly that he fancied it could be heard by the silent servant at his elbow. Of all men to meet at such a time—the one who, next to Etori, he would most desire to avoid.

He clenched his hands almost unconsciously, instinctively waiting for the shock.

The soldier took the pipe from his mouth and blew a cloud of smoke directly in front of him. His gaze rested on the American's face, shifted to that of the Frenchman, then returned to its first objective point.

The hand not holding the pipe moved upward—toward the hilt of the short, broad-bladed sword. Slowly, slowly, until Inwood could have shouted to the other to draw the weapon and make of him a prisoner. The moments seemed hours, the hours eternity.

The hand was opposite the cross-

guard, an inch higher, and the hairy fingers would clasp the shining hilt. Then the grenadier made a quick movement, the hand rose rapidly and the fingers were buried in the tawny bristling mustache.

It was the natural movement of one who is puzzled at something, who has forgotten and is trying to remember.

Unconsciously Inwood emulated the other's example; then he remembered.

In the stable that night his face had been clean shaven. Weeks upon a bed of sickness had altered his appearance. A thick, untrimmed beard covered his cheeks and chin. The soldier was trying to place him.

Another moment and the danger would have passed, when the American made a fatal blunder. It was natural, for the grenadier stood directly in the path and small courtesies come easily.

"*Bon jour, monsieur,*" said Inwood carelessly, and would have passed on.

Suddenly the other's fingers dropped from his mustache and he took a half step forward.

"*Mort du diable!* It is the American," said he.

Then, before Inwood could form the words to reply:

"Had you killed him that night, *Peste!* had you but killed him!"

This greeting was so unexpected that for a moment Inwood was dumb with surprise. The soldier could mean but one person when he cried gruffly: "Had you but killed him!" And that person was Napoleon's officer, Colonel Ettori.

Scarcely able to comprehend his meaning—why, being discovered in Paris by one who knew what had occurred in the stable loft, the grenadier did not make of him a prisoner—he answered:

"You were saying, *monsieur*; it was concerning a certain incident——"

"*Dame!* and of what else, *mon ami*? I repeat: had you but killed him I would thank you forever. Then, what has happened would not have happened."

Inwood glanced at the servant of Mademoiselle de Freron. The man's face expressed no interest in what was occurring, but it was plain he was listening.

The grenadier had knocked the ashes from his pipe and returned it to his pocket.

"I can see plainly that *monsieur* is surprised. *Sacré!* for these two months I have been surprised that it is permitted me to walk the streets of Paris. But you see, the emperor does not wholly forget those who have served him faithfully. Had it not been for that——"

He made a gesture signifying many things.

Inwood glanced for a second time at his companion of the house in the Faubourg St. Germain. The man took the hint quickly.

"*Monsieur* has but to walk to the end of the alley and he will find me waiting," he remarked dispassionately, and moved off in the direction of the boulevard.

"My friend," said Inwood, looking the soldier full in the face, "it so happened that you once befriended me. You know what happened afterward, that night, and you ask me why I did not kill your colonel. Surely it would seem that something has occurred which will be interesting hearing."

He spoke with easy assurance, for it was plain that the soldier had no intention of calling him to account for what had occurred in the stable. Why he did not hold him to be an enemy to Napoleon—one who had nearly strangled to death the emperor's officer—was a riddle beyond his guessing. Yet he was fast reaching the point where he was surprised at nothing.

The grenadier shrugged his broad shoulders.

"*Nom de diable!*" cried he, "and do you call *him* my colonel, *monsieur*? Who and what he may be I know not, but my colonel, never. Had he been with the emperor before, even for a little while, things would not be as they happened. To slander an old soldier of the empire: to fill the emperor's ears with lies. I, and many another, *monsieur*, believe he was nothing more than a miserable *mouchard*, such a one as avoids bullets carefully, so carefully that he never gets in range of one, but works always, always in the dark, where none may see him. Where was he before we went to Elba? I have seen all those whom the emperor trusted and who led the eagles into battle, but until that night at Cannes that one I had never seen. My colonel, indeed!"

The bushy mustaches bristled aggressively, his face was turned a dull red, and his eyes winked rapidly.

"It would seem, my friend," said Inwood quietly, "that the man has injured you. Was it that night, near Cannes?"

"And when else?" growled the soldier. "I entered the stable with a lantern. I left, locking the door behind me; Jean Pichard, who stood outside can bear witness to that. It was early in the morning; the emperor had awakened and we were preparing to go forward. Then what happened? They opened the stable door to permit you better freedom. On the straw they found a dead man and in a corner, trussed like a fowl for the fire, the other. Of course there was an outcry, and that *mouchard* rushed into the emperor's presence. What was said I know not, only a little later it was the emperor himself who summoned me.

"Sergeant Victor Rhoul," said he coldly, "it is one question only I would put to you: Did you enter the stable where the American was confined last night?"

"I did not lie to him—why should I? He looked at me for an instant; and he can look at a man, *monsieur*."

"Your sword, sir," said he coldly. "Then, your chevrons."

"I obeyed as one in a stupor. When I had ripped off the chevrons he looked at me sternly."

"I never forget, Victor Rhoul," said he half sadly, "and it is because of Rivoli, Arcole, Marengo and Austerlitz, where you were called to my attention, that I go no further. It was in my mind a moment ago that you be placed with your back against yonder wall, but I do not forget what you have been. It is enough that a soldier of France be stripped of his uniform. You wear that of my cuirassiers, but you are no longer of the army of the empire."

"It was the command that I strip the uniform from my back; that it should follow the chevrons and my sword. I felt hot and cold all at once. It was he, the Little Corporal, who spoke thus to one of the oldest of his soldiers."

"Sire!" cried I, and I had never trembled so in battle: "some one has lied to you."

"He answered me sternly. 'I have spoken; the information is authentic. Go, or I may forget that you once wore my uniform with honor.'

"It is a terrible thing, *monsieur*, to hear the emperor utter such words. It was that *mouchard* who filled his head with evil thoughts against me, because I had visited the stable. I remembered that he must have seen me as I departed. It is to him I owe all that, *monsieur*."

"But you still wear the uniform of a grenadier," suggested Inwood.

Victor Rhoul again shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you, *monsieur*, having worn one for fifteen years?"

"Then the emperor has again received you among his followers?"

"*Dame*, no! but it pleases me to follow old habits. I am too old a bird to change plumage so easily."

"Then you are not a grenadier—not a soldier of the empire?"

Rhoul struck his hand violently against his thigh.

"*Sacré bleu!* you see it is this way. I have a cousin who was wounded over there in Russia. He was a famous fellow, this grenadier; it was nothing for him to twist between his two hands an iron horseshoe. But being shot through the leg by a splinter of cannon ball, his fighting days are over. To him I related what I have told you. He swore roundly, for his wound has not interfered with that."

"Take, *mon garçon*, what is now of no use to me," said he. "Paris is filled with old comrades and none will be the wiser unless it chances you come face to face with the emperor himself." I followed his suggestion, and lo, I am a grenadier."

"And now you have no occupation?" asked Inwood.

"Except to walk the streets; at night I return to my cousin's house."

"He lives then in Paris?"

"Where else but in the Rue des Chan-teurs; very quietly with a half-grown daughter. And, *monsieur?*"

For a moment Inwood hesitated. Yet it seemed as though the hand of Providence was in it. Cast adrift in the streets of Paris, with powerful enemies surrounding him and unfamiliar with the

city, there suddenly loomed up a haven of refuge.

"My friend," said he, "a strange thing has cast me into Paris; even at this moment I may be pursued by enemies. Thinking me a spy in the service of the emperor, certain of the Bourbons would give something to thrust a knife in my back. And—and you know of this Ettori, the man who lied about you to the Little Corporal?"

"Surely; he has found his occupation—where there is no danger from bullets." The grenadier's smile was not pleasant to see.

"If he is your enemy he is the more mine," continued Inwood. "You can guess what would happen should he meet me in Paris."

"*Tiens!* I can well guess. It is *monsieur's* purpose to leave the city?"

"Not yet, my friend, being here. But it is necessary to find a lodging."

"*Monsieur* was just now accompanied by another."

"A servant in the house where I was staying. Now if it should happen that your cousin would receive a boarder it might be even possible I could pay well."

The old soldier hesitated, then, looking the American full in the face:

"And why does *monsieur* desire to remain in Paris?"

Inwood knew that much depended upon the answer, and was prepared.

"That I may watch Colonel Ettori, with whom I have a score to settle," said he.

"And *monsieur* is not against the Little Corporal?"

"No, it is in my mind to do him a service; it has reached my ears that this Ettori wishes the emperor no good, that there are certain Royalists who could tell you something concerning him."

He was lying boldly, though he half suspected he had hit upon the truth. Yet, by such a story he judged correctly that he would gain Victor Rhoul as an ally.

A grim smile crossed the soldier's lips.

"If it is for that *monsieur* remains in Paris it is sufficient. We will go to my cousin's; the matter can be easily arranged. And perhaps later *monsieur* will tell me of what happened in the stable."

"If you so desire," Inwood answered. "It is to the Rue des Chanteurs you will take me?"

"Number seven; my cousin occupies the second floor. Let us go, *monsieur*."

Thanking his good fortune that the first part of his difficulties had been solved so easily and unexpectedly, Inwood accompanied the soldier through the remainder of the alley to the boulevard. His late companion had disappeared; perhaps into a wine shop, perhaps because he had grown tired of waiting. The way seemed clear to reach his new lodging place in the Rue des Chanteurs.

The boulevard was filled with vehicles and pedestrians. The ex-chasseur and the American pushed their way forward. More than one person turned to look back at them, for they made a striking pair.

Victor Rhoul towered above his companion, but otherwise they were strikingly similar in figure. The breadth of shoulder, powerful limbs and easy carriage lent to each distinction.

For several blocks they continued each intent upon his own thoughts.

Then it became necessary to cross the wide boulevard in order to reach the streets which would bring them to the Rue des Chanteurs. The press of vehicles, moving in either direction, rendered caution necessary.

A quarter way across the street the American and his companion became hemmed in as by two rivers rolling past before and behind; they stood still, as it were, upon an island surrounded by turning wheels, surging horses and swearing drivers.

Suddenly Inwood felt a crushing grip upon his arm; it was the ex-soldier of the emperor, who was attracting his attention.

"Look, *monsieur*," said he sharply, "in front and a little to the right."

Inwood turned his eyes in the direction indicated.

Not twenty feet away a head was thrust through the open window of a carriage. The eyes of its owner were fixed upon the American and the giant grenadier.

Inwood felt a cold thrill dart down his spine. The pale, swarthy skin, the

sneering lips, the jaws, blue with the dark beard underneath, the tricky eyes, which gazed straight into his own—these belonged to the man whom he knew to be his sworn enemy. The man he had strangled in the stable loft near Cannes.

A gleam of fierce triumph crossed Colonel Ettori's sinister face. By a quick motion he opened the door of the carriage. In another moment he would order the arrest of one or both of the men upon the little island.

A gruff voice sounded in Inwood's ear.

"Take care, *monsieur*; afterward number seven, where I will await you."

Careless of the moving vehicles and grinding wheels all about, the American plunged into the surging mass before him.

He heard Ettori's sharp exclamation, then, mindful only of escape, seized the first refuge which offered itself.

Right in front of him a carriage, forced almost to a standstill by the press before, blocked the way. Almost without thinking Inwood caught the handle of the door, pulled it open, and sprang into the vehicle, slamming the door behind him. And at that moment the coachman whipped up his horses.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN IN THE CARRIAGE.

THE carriage contained one occupant. Fortunately he was seated in the farther side, else Inwood, in his mad plunge, must have tripped over the extended legs and dashed through the opposite door.

He heard one startled exclamation, a quick movement on the seat, and looking up, faced the muzzle of a pistol.

But it was not that which brought a gasp to his lips; nor the fear of receiving in the head a ball from the threatening weapon. It was the sight of the face behind the pistol; the face and the world-famous uniform.

The occupant of the carriage was the Emperor Napoleon.

The American had not recovered from his surprise when a stern voice sounded in his ear.

"*Monsieur* is plainly a bungler; he should at least have had a weapon ready, or is it thought that I travel unarmed?"

It was well known that Napoleon feared assassination; more than one attempt had been made upon his life. The sudden bursting of a stranger into his carriage augured to him but one thing: either a crazy man or a fanatical Royalist.

Inwood's mind was wont to work rapidly and this time the habit stood him in good stead. To hesitate, to exhibit fear might have worked to his undoing. He looked the emperor full in the face.

"Your majesty may understand the better why I have no weapon in my hand when I assure your majesty that I am wholly unarmed," said he quietly.

A fleeting expression of surprise crossed Napoleon's pale face. He lowered his pistol, but kept it ready for instant use if necessary.

"Might I then inquire, *monsieur*, to what I owe the honor of this sudden entrance?" he demanded coldly.

"I became confused, your majesty, and being pressed on every side by horses and vehicles it occurred to me on the spur of the moment that the surest means of safety lay in making use of the first carriage to hand. If for a moment I had dreamed——"

The emperor broke in upon him. It is probable that he did not take the proffered excuse without a grain of salt, but his manner showed no skepticism.

In the first moment of the unexpected interruption a natural alarm had manifested itself. Now he became once more the soldier and emperor.

"*Monsieur* is not a Frenchman," he said sharply.

"Your majesty is correct; I am an American," replied Inwood.

He saw that the emperor did not recognize him, nor was it to be wondered at. On that night, near Cannes, Napoleon had only a fleeting glance at his face; in the light of broad day, and covered by a two-months' beard, this face must appear vastly different.

"Ah!" remarked the emperor quietly, "I thought that possibly you were an Englishman; and"—he smiled grimly—"just now we are not the best of friends, these Englishmen and I."

Then, with a quick return to sternness: "But *monsieur* has not explained his presence in Paris; and your name."

To give the true answer to either question would probably be fatal, so Inwood said?

"It was the spirit of adventure, your majesty. A desire to see and study new countries, France most of all, which has brought me to Europe and into Paris. My name is Green, Nathan Green, and——"

He hesitated; the emperor made a little gesture.

"Proceed," said he sharply.

"Having obtruded upon your majesty's privacy I will trouble your majesty no further."

"Ah!" cried Napoleon, "doubtless you desire to seek adventure elsewhere. But I admire your boldness; there are not many in Paris, nor in Europe, who would have carried off the situation so cleverly. Have you realized what would happen did I stop the carriage and speak a word to the first person in earshot?"

"I should be made a prisoner, for unwittingly I have transgressed upon——"

"But I shall not stop the carriage," broke in the emperor, who seemed to be in an excellent humor. "It pleases me that you shall remain seated; have you not earned that right?"

"It is your majesty's good will," replied Inwood quickly.

The old recklessness and boldness in the face of danger had gained the ascendancy. Once in the game Inwood would play it to the limit.

"And you desire my good will, Monsieur Green?"

"Doubtly, your majesty; having transgressed, and who is not fortunate to possess the good will of the master of Europe."

A shadow for an instant hovered over the emperor's face.

"Yesterday, yes—perhaps to-morrow; but I am master in Paris to-day, *mon-sieur*," he answered.

Then, after a moment's silence.

"You please me, Monsieur Green. Doubtless you have seen service. You have the bearing of a soldier."

"On the Canadian frontier, your majesty."

"Ah! in your little war, when you fought the English. Yet even at such times one is able to learn something; a wise man always learns something,

wherever he may be. Have you not found it so, *monsieur*?"

"Many times, your majesty; and, after all, war is war."

Napoleon shrugged his shoulders. Then, significantly:

"It is always wise to be frank; to me it is much to find one who speaks from the heart. History is making itself to-day; when the book is finished those who read will find that those who best retain my friendship were those who did not try to deceive me. And—there are many in France who would do so."

Inwood glanced quickly at the face beside him. Was the emperor speaking generalities or did a definite meaning lie behind the words? For the moment he was almost upon the point of making a clean breast of everything; Napoleon had surely invited the confidence by his words.

Then he caught himself in time. He remembered the fate of Victor Rhoul, and the position to which Colonel Etori had been elevated. Of what weight would his word be against that of the man who would seize the first opportunity to crush him.

The emperor appeared to be in wondrous humor; what it portended the American could not fathom. Was he being played with, as a cat plays with a mouse before it strikes?

That he had escaped Etori he well believed, for the carriage had gone some distance since he entered it and the sub-minister of police had not appeared. To say that he felt uneasiness, despite his assurance, was but plain truth; at any moment the emperor's humor might change. To leave the carriage in safety was Inwood's greatest desire.

Napoleon was gazing for the moment out of the window. They were approaching a bridge which spanned the Seine; to what it led Inwood did not know, for he was as yet unfamiliar with Paris.

Suddenly the emperor turned; by a gesture he indicated a gray stone building which stood close to the river's bank.

"It is the misfortune of a monarch to make use of such a pile; a duty which is both necessary and disagreeable, *monsieur*. Do you know what it is?"

"I am unfamiliar with the buildings of Paris, your majesty, but it is my purpose to see everything," Inwood answered.

"Ah, Monsieur Green, it is sometimes better, and wiser, not to become too familiar with everything. Do you desire to know what manner of building *that* may be?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"It is the Conciergerie," replied Napoleon briefly.

For a moment there was silence in the carriage. The feeling of uneasiness took firmer possession of the American.

He remembered for what purpose the Conciergerie was employed. Had the cat grown tired of his play?

Napoleon broke the silence abruptly.

"Is it in your mind to serve me, *monsieur*?"

Inwood had not expected such a question and it took him by surprise.

"To serve your majesty? It is an honor——"

"Many have so considered it. You have seen service—in America."

"As I have already informed your majesty."

"I can offer you a broader field—the whole of Europe, *monsieur*."

His dark eyes were fixed upon the American's face; Inwood met the gaze without flinching.

"I had not thought of that; as I have told your majesty——"

"You are seeking the new and the adventurous; well, it is what I offer you. I am in need of brave men, and, as I have intimated, *monsieur*, I have taken a fancy to you."

The magnetism of the man was wonderful; Inwood began to understand why he had regained his throne; how, landing at Cannes with only a handful of followers, he had pushed on to Paris unmolested. He comprehended why it was that while wearing the white cockade

of the Bourbons the old soldiers of France had carried beneath their tunic the tricolor.

Without considering what it might portend, or where it might lead him, he gave his answer. The greatest soldier Europe had ever known had asked of him service.

Inwood remembered suddenly what he had learned while in the stable loft and later in the house in the Faubourg St. Germain. The life of the man at his side—the man who might have crushed him but had received him in friendliness,—was daily sought by a band of skulking assassins—the rats creeping through the darkness to bite the lion before whose roar they fled panic-stricken.

And he might be able thus to subvert those who were watching to kill him also. How better than by serving under the Eagle of Empire?

"It is an honor, an honor which I shall strive to deserve, your majesty," he said.

Napoleon nodded.

"I am seldom mistaken; I shall find work for you. To-night at the Tuileries, at ten, *monsieur*. You will remember."

The carriage had reached the end of the bridge; Napoleon reached forward and rapped upon the window. The carriage stopped.

"I have your majesty's permission to withdraw?" Inwood asked.

"Until ten to-night, *monsieur*," replied the emperor.

Inwood opened the door, alighted, and saluting Napoleon, closed it softly. The carriage rolled from the bridge, the horses moving faster as they proceeded.

Looking after it, Inwood suddenly remembered. He had promised to present himself at the Tuileries before the emperor and those who might be with him, at ten o'clock that night. What if Colonel Ettoir should be there?

(To be continued.)

THE MIND.

WERE I so tall to reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean with my span,
I must be measured by my soul:
The mind's the standard of the man.

Watts.

THAT TYPEWRITER GIRL.

BY CHARLES B. FREMONT.

Concerning a romance that had its ups and downs in the elevator-shaft of a sky-scraper.

JERRY, the elevator man in the Brixton Building, is a very taciturn fellow.

You can ride in his car a hundred times a day and the chances are that he will not open his mouth except to inquire "What floor, please?" or to announce that he is "Going up" or "Going down," as the case may be.

Even when a pretty typewriter girl enters his car and smilingly greets him, Jerry only responds with a curt nod.

There are many strikingly pretty girls employed in the various offices of the Brixton Building, and most of them have a smile for Jerry, for although he is on the shady side of forty, he is rather good-looking and appears quite military in his blue uniform.

Jerry, however, seems to be blind to all these friendly advances. Indeed, it is when women passengers are on his car that he is most taciturn.

Once I ventured to rally him upon this fact, telling him that I greatly envied him his opportunity of daily observing so much feminine pulchritude. Whereupon he suddenly waxed loquacious and made me the following explanation:

"There was a time when I used to be a very talkative man," he said. "I had a pleasant word to exchange with every person who stepped aboard my car. I was very fond, too, of having my little joke with the girls.

"But now I attend strictly to business and haven't a word for anybody, except in the line of duty.

"I've discovered that the best thing for an elevator operator to do is to mind his own business. Running an elevator in an office-building is pretty prosaic work; but it has its romantic side, too, and that's just where the danger lies.

"I'll wager there isn't an elevator man who sooner or later doesn't fall a victim to the wiles of some pink-and-white typewriter girl who travels on his car.

"You see, most of the girls have a pleasant word and a smile for the elevator man, and that's enough to set the heart of many a presumptuous young fellow beating a little quicker.

"He doesn't guess that she regards him as merely part of the machinery and that as soon as she steps off his car she forgets all about him. Instead, he begins to flatter himself that he's made a hit with her.

"He sees her every day, and she's always got that smile on tap, and pretty soon he begins to lose his head, and before he knows it he's so mushy with the love idea that he's liable to forget to reverse the lever when his car reaches the top of the shaft.

"That's why elevator accidents occur in office-buildings. The only way to prevent them, in my opinion, is for the Legislature to pass a law forbidding pretty young women to ride on elevators. Then there'd be some chance for a fellow to keep his wits about him.

"No; it wasn't an accident that brought me to my senses—or, at least, not that kind of an accident.

"Yes, I'll admit that it was a woman. There's generally a woman at the bottom of a man's troubles. A woman is a good deal like an elevator. She can lift a man up and she can bring a man down as quick as lightning. She's subject to fits and starts, and she keeps a fellow up in the air most of the time.

"The particular woman that I have in mind was the prettiest girl I have ever seen in all my life. And, in addition to being beautiful, she was so pure and innocent looking that I trembled to think of her being exposed to all the dangers that are supposed to beset the path of the typewriter girl.

"She stepped into my car one morning and asked me, in a voice that sounded like sweet music, if I would be kind enough to tell her what floor Mr. Dewar's office was on.

"'Seventh floor, miss,' I says, making an inward inventory of her many charms. She was one of the pink-and-white sort, and she had blue eyes as big as saucers.

"Mr. Paul Dewar was a lawyer, and I thought at first that she must be one of his clients; but she told me in a confiding sort of way that she was his new stenographer and that she was to start in at work that morning.

"She asked me nervously what sort of employer Mr. Dewar was and whether he was a hard man to get along with; and I, taking pity on her, hastened to assure her that Mr. Dewar was a model gentleman and a very pleasant boss.

"She thanked me sweetly when my car reached the seventh floor. It was not so much her words as the look she gave me out of her big blue eyes that set my blood a tingling.

"I says to myself right then. 'Jerry, this pretty, innocent, helpless young thing is up against the wiles and snares of the business world for the first time in her life, and it's up to you to keep a paternal eye on her as much as possible to see that she doesn't come to grief.'

"Well, after she'd rode up and down in my car for a few days and we'd got on quite a friendly footing, I began to drop the paternal part of the idea.

"After all, I wasn't old enough to be her father. I wasn't yet forty years of age. I was good-looking in a way and well preserved, I flattered myself, and although an elevator man's wages ain't very big, I'd managed to accumulate a bank-account of a few hundred dollars.

"I began to dream pleasant dreams. I grew quite mushy. Why, I even wrote a letter to a woman named Letty, who runs a column in an evening newspaper entitled 'Letty's Advice to Lovers.'

"I stated my case to Letty in black and white and asked her if in her opinion there was any hope. And Letty printed my letter in her column with an answer underneath saying that she was sure the young lady returned my love and that if I was wise I would go in and win.

"I made up my mind to follow Letty's advice. I've learned since that Letty's column is run by a red-haired young man who smokes a pipe and gets drunk

three days out of every week; but I didn't know that then.

"I proceeded to pay unmistakable attention to this pretty typewriter girl. When she stepped into my car at nine o'clock every morning on her way to Mr. Dewar's office I presented her with bunches of violets and sometimes with boxes of candies.

"And she accepted these gifts with a sweet graciousness that made my heart beat high with hope.

"One evening I even plucked up enough courage to ask her if she would like to accompany me to the theater.

"She refused the invitation; but she did it so nicely, telling me in a confused sort of way that her mother didn't allow her to go out of nights, that I wasn't one bit offended or discouraged.

"I went on dreaming and hoping, until my mind was in such a state that I really wasn't fit to run an elevator, and it's a miracle that some of the passengers didn't lose their lives.

"Now, Mr. Dewar had a young clerk by the name of Simmons. He was a long, lanky, monkey-faced dude who parted his hair in the middle.

"One day, at lunch-time, the typewriter girl and this dude entered my elevator together. I scented trouble right away. I knew instinctively that they were going to lunch, and the thought maddened me.

"After that they went to lunch in each other's company every day, and I became so desperate that it's a wonder I didn't pitch that fellow Simmons down the elevator-shaft.

"This was bad enough; but when, each evening, Simmons and my typewriter girl boarded my car together, I became downright desperate.

"I guessed that the monkey-faced dude was seeing her home, and I thirsted for his blood.

"To add to my despair, the girl began to treat me quite coldly. When I gave her violets she no longer wore them, and she accepted them in such a way that I was given plainly to understand that my attentions were no longer welcome.

"And every lunch-time and every evening, when she and that fellow Simmons descended in my car, they would laugh

and talk together in such an intimate way that I gritted my teeth with rage.

"I believe I should have done something serious to that chap if he hadn't dropped suddenly out of the scene altogether.

"After that she entered my elevator all alone again; and her manner once more grew very friendly toward me. I was again filled with hope, and this hope grew when one evening I ventured to ask her in a casual sort of way what had become of Simmons and she answered indifferently, 'Oh, Mr. Dewar fired him. I'm glad of it, too. He was a very tiresome young man.'

"I noticed with a thrill of joy that she no longer refused to wear my violets. She thanked me for them as sweetly as before. I was so glad that I even found room in my heart to pity that poor young ass of a Simmons.

"My joy was short-lived, however. Our former pleasant relations had been renewed about a week and I was seriously thinking of summoning all my courage and proposing matrimony, when I experienced another shock.

"She began to go to lunch with her boss, Dewar, and they left the office in each other's company every evening.

"Once more her manner toward me changed and she grew very cold and distant. The limit was reached when she told me one morning, gently, but firmly, when I offered her a bunch of violets, that she was very sorry, but she could not accept them, as her mother did not wish her to receive presents from strangers.

"Then my heart was indeed filled with despair. I asked myself bitterly what chance did I stand against that rich young lawyer. I began to have an inkling then as to just why Dewar had fired the unfortunate Simmons.

"Apparently the lawyer intended this pink-and-white girl for himself; he was not going to see her carried off by a seven-dollar-a-week law clerk, or by an elevator man either.

"One afternoon, the lawyer and the typewriter girl returned from lunch, and as they stepped into my car Dewar says out loud, 'How would you like to go to the theater to-night, Gertrude? I've got seats for the Casino, and after the

show we will go to Rector's and get something to eat.'

"And she answered him, all beaming with smiles:

" 'That would be delightful, Paul.'

"I bit my lip in rage and despair. When I had asked her to go with me to the theater she had told me that her mother wouldn't let her, and yet here she was eagerly accepting this lawyer's invitation.

"And he had called her 'Gertrude' and she had called him 'Paul' right before me. It was maddening. I was so upset that I lost control of the lever and the car shot up like lightning and struck the roof of the shaft with a crash.

"It was a wonder that the whole three of us weren't killed. Luckily I managed to summon enough presence of mind to reverse the lever and bring the car down again.

" 'How confoundedly careless of you, Jerry,' says Dewar to me. 'You might have killed us.'

"If he had only known how little I would have cared if I had killed *him*, he would have avoided my car thereafter.

"All that afternoon I felt pretty gloomy, I can tell you. I thirsted for a chance to cut out that lawyer.

"And later in the day a chance came in the form of a messenger-boy.

"The messenger-boy boarded my car and said that he wanted to go to Mr. Dewar's office on the seventh floor.

" 'What for?' I asked suspiciously.

" 'Don't know,' said the boy. 'He's just called for a messenger. I'm going up to see what he wants.'

"A few minutes later the boy came down again, and he had an unfolded telegram in his hand.

"Something prompted me to ask the boy to let me see the message.

"The boy handed it to me, and I was astonished to read:

" 'Mrs. Paul Dewar, Mount Vernon, New York. Don't wait dinner for me. Cannot be home until late to-night. Detained down-town by important business engagement. PAUL.'

" 'Ha!' I exclaimed. 'And so the wretch has got a wife in Mount Vernon, and yet he has the nerve to pay attention to my girl. I'll wager that pretty

innocent young thing doesn't dream the deceitful scoundrel is married. When she finds that she's been to the theater and to supper with a married man she'll be broken-hearted.'

"My first thought was to send an anonymous telegram to the wife in Mount Vernon telling her that if she paid a visit to the Casino that night she would learn the exact nature of the important engagement which detained her unfaithful husband down-town.

"That would have been a fine way of getting square; but on second thoughts I decided not to do it. I knew that women, being unreasonable creatures, always blamed the woman in the case rather than the man, and I had an idea that if the angry wife did show up at the Casino that night her first act would be to scratch out the eyes of that innocent girl.

"Of course, I told myself, the poor girl was not to blame. She didn't dream that her employer was married—otherwise she never would have called him by his first name or allowed him to call her 'Gertrude.'

"I made up my mind that I would wait until the next day and then break the news to the poor thing.

"Probably she would faint in my car, but at all events she would be nice to me again and would not have anything to do with her wretch of an employer.

"In her disappointment and humiliation she would probably be glad to listen to a proposal of marriage from me.

"Everything would be lovely once more. What a lucky thing it was that I had seen that telegram!

"I was in such good spirits again that when at six o'clock the bell rang on the seventh floor and I went up and brought down the lawyer and the girl I scarcely cared at all, even though I knew that they were going to the theater.

"Let them go to the theater and to supper afterward,' I thought. 'Let her enjoy herself to-night. To-morrow he shall be exposed and she'll find out her mistake.'

"And the next morning at nine o'clock, when she comes down to work and steps into my car, I says to her:

"Did you enjoy the show last night?"

"She colored furiously at the question and her big blue eyes stared at the floor of the car; but she replied:

"Yes, thank you, Jerry. I had a fine time.'

"Then I said to her very sternly:

"Would you have had as good a time if you had known that you were in the company of a married man?"

"At this she turned very pale and gasped: 'What do you mean, Jerry? Mr. Dewar isn't married.'

"Oh, isn't he?' says I triumphantly. 'That's all you know about it. He probably has fooled you into thinking that he is a single man; but I happen to know that he has a wife and five children living in Mount Vernon.'

"Of course the five children was guess-work on my part, but I thought I'd put them in so as to make the effect stronger.

"And it worked. She uttered a little scream and clutched the side of the car for support.

"Are you sure?' she gasped.

"Positive,' said I; and I stopped the car between two floors, so that we could have our little talk without interruption.

"Of course,' I said, 'I don't for a minute think that you knew your employer was a gay deceiver, but now that you do know it, what are you going to do?'

"Do?' says she indignantly. 'I'm going to leave his employ at once. I wouldn't think of staying in the office of such a wretch. Why, he actually had the audacity to propose marriage to me last night, and I accepted him. Oh, dear—oh, dear! mother will be so shocked when she hears of this. Thank you so much for telling me, Jerry. Take me up to the seventh floor at once, please. I'll write him a note telling him that I have discovered his deceitfulness.'

"She came down again soon afterward, looking so sorrowful that my heart ached for her.

"I've done it,' she said, with a sigh. 'I've written him a note telling him that I know all. I am very grateful to you, Jerry, for having given me this warning.'

"Not at all,' I replied. 'It was my duty. By the way, miss, I've had something on my mind for some time I'd like to tell you about. I've got a few dollars saved up, an my job here is steady.

I ain't no spring chicken, I know, but I'm regular in my habits and a home-loving sort of man. If you feel as if you'd like to be Mrs. Jerry——'

"But she shook her head sadly and raised her hand for me to stop. 'Please don't say anything like that, Jerry,' she said, with tears in her big blue eyes. 'I really couldn't listen to it just now—I really couldn't. Perhaps later you and I will meet again, and then it may be different. Rest assured that I shall never forget you.'

"And that was the best I could get out of her. As the car reached the ground floor she shook hands with me and again thanked me. Then she was gone.

"About an hour later in comes the lawyer fellow and steps into my elevator.

"'Good morning, Jerry,' he says breezily. 'Did Miss Wright get down yet?'

"'Yes,' I answered spitefully. 'She's been and she's gone.'

"'Gone?' says he, much surprised. 'Gone where, Jerry?'

"'I don't know where she's gone,' says I. 'But she's gone for good. She ain't never coming back.'

"'Why, what's the matter?' says he, turning very white. 'What's the trouble, Jerry?'

"'The trouble is that she's found out the truth. She knows all about your wife in Mount Vernon,' I answered spitefully.

"'My wife?' says he, pretending to be surprised. 'I haven't any wife. What are you talking about?'

"'Oh, yes, you have,' I answered, looking him straight in the eye. 'It's no use denying it to me. Didn't I see that telegram you sent her yesterday afternoon saying you wouldn't be home until late, as you were detained down-town on important business? "Important business!" Ha! ha!' and I laughed scornfully.

"'Don't be a fool,' he cried angrily. 'That telegram wasn't to my wife. It was to my mother. I live with my mother. I'm not married. Who's been telling Miss Wright such an idiotic story?'

"It was my turn to be surprised.

"'So that telegram was to your mother, eh, sir?' I stammered. 'I thought it was your wife. The name was the same, you see. I'm very sorry, sir. I told her that you were a married man, and she said she wouldn't stay in your employ a minute longer.'

"'You fool!' he cried angrily. 'You interfering fool! Just see what you've done! Miss Wright and I were going to be married. She accepted me after the theater last night. Now, goodness knows where she's gone. Didn't she leave any word for me?'

"'Yes,' I answered. 'She went up to your office and wrote a note to you. It's waiting up there now.'

"He didn't wait for any more, but ordered me to rush up to the seventh floor as fast as my car could go. He dashed down the corridor and into his office like a madman.

"Five minutes later, when my car reached his floor again, I saw him standing at the gate of the elevator-shaft tearing his hair out by the roots.

"'Quick!' he cried: 'Take me down as quickly as you can. I must go to the police at once.'

"'What's the matter?' I asked in alarm. 'Has she gone to commit suicide? What did the note say, sir?'

"'Suicide?' he cried. 'Not she. I've been stung. Here! You can read her note for yourself, if you want,' and he handed me a sheet of paper on which was written:

MY DEAR PAUL:

It was very wrong of you not to have told me about that wife and the five kids up in Mount Vernon.

When you proposed marriage to me last night I believed that you were sincere. How you must have been laughing up your sleeve at me!

Well, perhaps you will not laugh quite so heartily when you learn that the poor innocent young thing you sought to deceive happens to enjoy the reputation of being the cleverest woman thief in the United States. If you do not believe this, take a look at your office safe. I think one glance will be sufficient to convince you.

Good-by, dear Paul. I hope that you will forgive me for having deceived you, as I freely forgive you for having deceived me.

"There was fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds in that safe—the property of a client,' howled the lawyer, 'and she's stolen every one of 'em.'

"Did she burst the safe open?' I asked in amazement.

"No, she didn't have to,' he replied bitterly. 'That young fool of a Simmons must have given her the combination, for she's opened the safe in the regular way and calmly helped herself to the diamonds. By Jove! to think that such a charming, innocent-appearing

creature could be so slick a thief! I never would have thought it! I'll go to the police at once. She must be caught.'

"But as far as I know she hasn't been caught to this day. And she's never come back to accept my proposal of marriage either," added Jerry, with a sigh. "But she taught me one good lesson, and that is to attend strictly to the business of running this car and not get familiar with my passengers, no matter how pretty and friendly disposed they may be."

In the Mouth of the Gift-Horse.*

BY CASPER CARSON,

Author of "On the Spur of the Moment" and "Playing Against the Colors."

The startling train of consequences that arose from the undesired loan of a musical instrument most people would give their boots to possess.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

IN the early morning round-up at the Maiden Lane jewelry establishment of Hermann Brothers, a diamond necklace, valued at thirty-five thousand dollars, fails to tally in the count of articles on hand. It has not been sold, and the manager, Joseph Knipes, is missing. Charles Hermann telephones Mrs. Knipes, and learns from her that her husband was last heard from while calling on Mr. Ezra Green at the Waldree Hotel, in Forty-Fourth Street. Hermann at once calls up Green at the Waldree and, instead of Ezra, gets his son Ted on the wire—a Smart Aleck of a young man with a penchant for amateur detective work. Ted hears enough to know that a valuable necklace is missing, and when he finds that two of his friends in the Waldree, Dave Martin and Hal Francis, have been presented with a piano-player by Bobby Hume, a brother of Mrs. Knipes, he proceeds to build a strong case against that lady. It seems that Hume said they might have the instrument for a few days or some weeks, he could not tell yet, but Mr. Green happens to know that the thing had been offered to several other people by Mrs. Knipes before her brother undertook to get rid of it for her.

Now, Dave Martin is in love with Ellen Knipes, and quarrels with his roommate, Hal Francis, when the latter suggests that, in order to keep their skirts clear of any possible mix-up, they ought to send back the piano-player at once. They draw lots to see who shall leave the apartment; the die falls on Francis, who gets out the same evening. The next day, after Ted Green informs Dave that Detective McNamara is coming at two o'clock to find out if the diamonds are concealed in the piano-player, Dave resolves to run no chances of having Ellen suffer the possible consequences of her father's disgrace. He takes the instrument apart, finds no diamonds, only a bit of twisted paper with some writing on it, and then, while the piano-player is all dismembered, is called to the 'phone by Mrs. Knipes, who asks him if he will not be good enough to return the piano-player at once, as she wishes to use it for a luncheon-party she is giving that day.

CHAPTER VI.

PREDICAMENT UPON PREDICAMENT.

DAVE MARTIN was known among his fellows as a chap who rose splendidly to an emergency. His thinking apparatus never seemed to work more

clearly than when under the spur of necessity.

But here was an exigency which taxed even his inventive powers and paralyzed his ingenuity.

It was idle to think of delaying for the expedient he had been about to adopt

*This story began in the February issue of THE ARGOSY, which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents.

for the benefit of Ted and McNamara (getting a mechanic to put the machine together), for Mrs. Knipes had explained in no uncertain fashion that she wanted her property without delay.

Nor could he tell her that the thing was all in pieces, since what possible excuse could he offer for his apparent vandalism? He must say something, though. She was waiting at the other end of the wire for his answer.

As he stood there tongue-tied, vainly searching his brain for some plausible fiction which might serve to turn her purpose, a sudden suggestion shot like a ray of light into his cranium.

It was a desperate hazard—a cutting of the Gordian knot, as it were, instead of trying to untie it—for should Mrs. Knipes fail to acquiesce, it left him with no other recourse than to “fess up.”

Still, there was a chance of success, and Dave determined to take it.

“Why—er—Mrs. Knipes,” he stammered, “the fact is—or, rather, I should say—well, to tell the truth,” finally taking the plunge, “I don’t wonder that you want the player back. Even in the short time I have had it I have fallen so in love with the instrument that I hate to let it go. So I am going to summon up my courage and ask you as a great favor if you won’t allow me to keep it. You may wonder, I know, why I don’t get a new machine; but somehow I feel as though no other could take this one’s place. I will pay full price for it,” eagerly, “and promise to treat it kindly—or,” stopping with a jerk as he realized that he was running off the track, “rather, I should say, hold it as one of my chiefest possessions, and never forget your kindness in the matter.”

“What?” cried Mrs. Knipes. “Sell my cherished piano-player?” Dave’s heart sank to his boots at her tone. “Why, Mr. Martin, I am afraid that would be simply——”

She broke off suddenly, and Dave indistinctly heard Ellen’s sweet voice calling “Mother!” Then all sound was shut off, and he realized that a hand must have been laid over the mouthpiece at the other end of the wire.

He waited for a resumption of the conversation, and for the refusal of his plea which he felt sure would be forthcoming.

He tried to frame up an explanation for the liberties he had taken with the piano-player. But it is the unexpected which always happens, and when the lady’s voice again sounded in his ears he noted with surprise that it was at a much less uncompromising pitch.

“I hardly know what to say, Mr. Martin,” debated Mrs. Knipes. “I have never considered selling the machine before”—she hesitated a trifle—“yet circumstances may so shape themselves that I shall be glad to sell it, and I certainly should never get a better opportunity.

“On the whole,” she went on, and Dave’s knees nearly gave way under him in his relief, “I guess I will let you have it. But,” she insisted, “I could never think of accepting the price of a new machine, as you so generously offer. Mine is in first-class condition, of course”—Dave cast a deprecating glance at the ruin over in the corner—“still, at the best it is second-hand, and you must not think of paying more than it is worth.”

He was so afraid she might reconsider that he did not stop to argue the point, so a bargain was speedily patched up whereby he acquired all right and title to the instrument for forty dollars.

Then with an almost hysterical expression of thanks he hastily rang off and turned to the contemplation of his next move in the game; for it was getting well along toward twelve o’clock, and he still had Ted and the detective to reckon with.

The only place in town he could think of where he might be likely to find a workman capable of handling the job was at the salesrooms of the company manufacturing this make of piano-player, and that, as he discovered, was in the lower part of the city.

Nor would he trust to the telephone for communication with them, with the specious promise sure to be returned that a man would be sent up at once and the appearance of the said man upon the scene possibly by the day after to-morrow. In his present predicament, Dave could afford no chance of a slip-up, and he therefore determined to visit the place in person, accompany his mechanic back, and keep him under constant surveillance until the work was completed.

Consequently, although he had good luck with the Subway and managed to catch an express almost as soon as he entered the station, some fifteen or twenty minutes necessarily elapsed before he reached the establishment for which he was bound.

"Furnish you a mechanic who can put together, inside of a couple of hours, a machine totally taken apart?" answered the courteous salesman. "Why, yes; certainly we can. When did you want him to come?"

"Now! At once!" exclaimed Dave. "If you'll trot him out I'll take him right along with me, so that there need not be the slightest delay."

The man smiled at his impatience.

"But I am afraid that would be impossible," he explained. "All our force is out at present. The soonest we could promise you would be to-morrow morning."

"But I tell you this is an imperative case," protested Dave. "I am willing to pay almost any price for a competent man, provided I can have him at once."

The other was sympathetic, but he still had to shake his head.

"No," he affirmed, "I am sorry, but it is out of the question."

"Then tell me some other place where I can get hold of a workman," urgently. "You of course do not understand; but to me it is almost a matter of life and death that this player of mine should be repaired before two o'clock!"

"Oh, but that is simply out of all reason, you know," demurred the salesman with definite conclusion. "Our own mechanics, who are specialists at the work, would be hard pressed to do such a job as you describe in that time. An outside man, such as you might pick up, never."

It was true. With a crash all Dave's hopes came tumbling to the ground. There was no way in which he could avert discovery at the hands of Ted and McNamara.

CHAPTER VII.

A DREADFUL ANNOUNCEMENT.

It was the salesman who rescued Dave from despair with a suggestion so simple that Dave could not understand why

he had failed to hit upon such a solution himself.

"Unless there is some especial reason for having your own particular machine at the entertainment," he counseled, evidently under the impression that the instrument was desired for use at some kind of a social gathering, "why do you not take one of these which we have here in stock?"

"That would seem to me a far more satisfactory way of overcoming the difficulty, and, although giving you an entirely new piano-player, would really cost you very little more than the repairs you contemplated, since if your machine is complete, as you say, we would be glad to make you a very considerable allowance on it in effecting the deal."

Dave took a moment for rapid thought. Mr. Green had of course recognized the instrument at sight, but it was very unlikely that Ted, who rarely went to the Knipeses, or McNamara, who had never been there, would be apt to spot a substitution.

At any rate, it was a risk well worth taking.

"Have you a player slightly shop-worn, or looking as if it had been used to some extent?" he inquired anxiously, and to his delight the salesman was able to show him the very thing he wanted.

In construction, finish, signs of wear—even down to the scuffed places on the carpeted pedals—it was as near a "ringer" for Mrs. Knipes's as could well be imagined.

Without the exchange of half a dozen words he produced his pocketbook and paid for the thing on the spot.

"And you don't care to trade your old machine for a part of the purchase price?" inquired the clerk, tentatively fingering the bills passed over to him.

"Well, I haven't decided on that yet. I'll think it over, and let you know to-morrow. The main point with me just now is to get this new one up to my diggings before two o'clock. Do you think it can be done?"

"Oh, yes," confidently. "We have an automobile truck, you know, and it will take no time at all to whirl the instrument up there, especially as I shall give orders to have it shipped at once. You may go on about your business, sir,

and rest easy in the assurance that the player will be there in ample time."

"Not me," rejoined Dave with forceful emphasis. "That chap you are talking about, who is to go unconcernedly about his business and let you run this little show, is another fellow. As for your Uncle Dudley, he sticks right by this purchase he has made until he sees it loaded on the truck, and then he sticks by the truck until it is backed up before the door of the Waldree and its burden is safely deposited in his rooms, right side up with care."

"You are taking no chances, eh?" with an appreciative grin.

"You bet I'm not," rejoined Dave; and the men coming up at that moment to remove his new acquisition, he showed himself as good as his word by following them out to the waiting truck, and then mounting the vehicle himself when its load was safely stowed aboard.

"Well," commented the salesman, gazing after him as he rolled away, "there goes a henpecked husband. His wife has insisted on having the piano-player in shape for some kind of a shindig she is giving this afternoon, and he is so afraid of her that he has blown himself for the price of a new instrument, and in addition is sacrificing half a day's time in order to make certain that it will be delivered before the hour."

Which all goes to show how erroneous one's judgments may be when based upon circumstantial evidence, even of the plainest and most apparently irrefutable character.

Meanwhile, Dave, indifferent to what the salesman might be thinking of him, was proceeding anxiously up-town, on pins and needles every foot of the way, lest some new *contretemps* might arise to delay him at the last moment, and balk him of the victory which now seemed so well within his grasp.

But no untoward incident intervened. The Waldree was reached and the piano-player conveyed to his rooms and unboxed without exciting any undue amount of notice.

When the thing was in position before his piano and the men had departed it still lacked fifteen minutes to the time Dave had set for the visitation of the detectives.

There was still much to be done, however, for the dismembered constituents of the old machine had to be put safely out of sight before their arrival.

"Where shall I stow this junk so as to escape the sharp eyes of Ted Green?" ruminated Dave, casting his glance about the apartment. "That infernal prying proclivity of his will lead him to smell it out if I put it in any ordinary place."

His wandering gaze fastened upon the bed as he spoke, and a happy thought struck him. He could hide every particle of the débris safely between the sheets, and not even the inquiring mind of Ted Green would ever think of looking in such a place as that for incriminating evidence, no matter how much his suspicions might be aroused.

No sooner decided than done. He had kept the chambermaid out of his room that morning in order that he might pursue his investigation of the piano-player undisturbed, and consequently his bed was not yet made up; but that did not disturb him a little bit.

He had resided for a time when small with a maiden aunt who held a theory that boys, as well as girls, should be educated in housewifely accomplishments, and under her tutelage he had learned to make a bed as well as any woman in the land.

He deftly spread out the under sheet now, and laid the wires and rods over it, reserving the bulkier pieces to be covered by the pillows. When the job was completed no one would ever have dreamed but that the chambermaid had looked after it in the regular exercise of her duties, or that there was anything there which did not properly and justly belong in its make-up.

This final coverlet had just been smoothed down, and the last pat given to the pillow, when a knock sounded at the door, and Dave, with a comprehensive glance around to assure himself that all was in readiness, hastened to admit his visitors.

They had brought an expert mechanic along in order to facilitate their work, and under his hands the piano-player was deftly and rapidly taken apart and put together again without the disclosure of any secreted diamonds, to the disappointment of Ted and his companion.

Nor did either of the searchers suspect for an instant the nature of the subterfuge which had been practised upon them. They accepted the piano-player as Mrs. Knipes's without question, and, although considerably crestfallen over the collapse of their theories, showed by their manner toward Dave that they had not the slightest doubt of his good faith in the premises.

Indeed, he had almost the grace to be ashamed of the trick he had played them, when at their departure they became profuse in their apologies for the trouble they had caused him.

"And, oh, by the way," cried Ted, halting at the door, "I forgot to tell you before, but dad left word just before he took the train this morning that he had decided a piano-player would be the nicest wedding-present he could give those friends of his up in the country, and that he wished you would get him one as near like Mrs. Knipes's as possible. He said he would have urged you to try and buy hers in if it were not for the suspicion attached to it.

"You might make a try for it now, though," Ted added with a somewhat rueful glance back at the instrument which had so cruelly punctured his swelling reputation as a sleuth. "McNamara and I will both guarantee that it has a clean bill of health."

The suggestion gave Dave a sudden diabolical inspiration. Mr. Green, with his fatuous belief in his son's powers of discernment, had been in a way responsible for all the worries and annoyances of that day. Well, here was a chance to pay him back and to teach him a lesson he would not soon forget.

Acting upon the impulse, Dave picked up his hat and followed the others out toward the elevator, intent upon a visit to the telegraph office.

In the corridor he encountered the chambermaid for that floor.

"Yes, Molly, you can go right in now," he told her in answer to her question, "although," he added with a quiet smile, "I doubt if you'll find very much to do in there to-day."

Then he went on light-heartedly to despatch his message.

At the telegraph office he spoiled quite a number of blanks before he seemed able

to express what he had in mind; but finally he drafted out the following and handed it in for transmission:

MR. EZRA GREEN,
RIVERHEAD, MASS.

Can secure for forty dollars Knipes piano-player duly inspected and pronounced free from extraneous articles. Shall I close bargain, and ship machine as it stands?
DAVID MARTIN.

And in the course of time, an acquiescent reply having come to hand, Mr. Martin withdrew his collection of "junk" from its temporary storage-place under his bedclothes, and having dumped it higgledy-piggledy into a large box, nailed down the cover and turned his "old man of the sea" over to the tender mercies of the express company.

"Ah," questioned Ted Green with his usual curiosity, happening to stroll up as the bulky outfit was being loaded on to the wagon, "what is that?"

"The piano-player your father commissioned me to get for him," vouchsafed Dave shortly.

It was more prudent, as he knew, to give Ted an answer than to start him off on his deductions.

"Well," in surprise, "you didn't lose much time over it, did you?"

"No," laughed Dave; "but then all I had to do was a little talking over the telephone. I took your advice, you see, and bought the machine from Mrs. Knipes. Consequently, all the trouble required was to put it in a box and send for the wagon."

He thought little of this conversation at the time, but later he had occasion to recall it and regret that he had been so frank.

At the present moment, however, he naturally considered that all his troubles were over; and consequently, in the exuberance of his spirits he felt a friendly spirit toward even Ted Green—so friendly a spirit, indeed, that suspecting the other might be a little dashed by his fiasco of the afternoon, he invited him out to dinner.

"But where's Hal?" interposed Ted in astonishment, knowing that it was the invariable custom of the chums to dine together. "Isn't he coming along with us?"

Dave colored up confusedly. He had no desire to let the falling out become a matter of gossip about the Waldree, especially now that the only cause of difference between them having been removed he thought it more than likely that Hal would be willing to return.

"Hal? Oh, he's gone away for a day or two," he therefore responded evasively.

"Gene away? Where? I saw him only last evening, and had quite a talk with him; it's funny he didn't say anything about it to me."

"Then you certainly ought not to ask me to tell you," adjured Dave severely; "since if he had wanted you to know he would undoubtedly have told you himself."

And glad to have got out of the hole so easily, he waxed more than amiable as he turned the subject of conversation into other channels.

After dinner, having shaken off the further companionship of young Green, he betook himself to the apartment of Mrs. Knipes, in order to pay that lady the forty dollars due her as the purchase-price of her piano-player; but that this was not the chief business of his call was evident from the increased animation of his manner the moment—the mistress of the house having been called out of the room—he and Ellen were left alone together.

And if he had acted the part of a tardy wooer before, he certainly made full amends by the ardor he displayed upon the present occasion.

As Ellen laughingly described it to him afterward, it seemed to her as though he must be under the stimulus of some particularly potent kind of nerve-tonic, so marked was the difference between his new manner and that which had previously characterized him when in her company.

He very speedily learned that the story of her engagement to Fred Hermann was a fabrication out of whole cloth—another of Ted Green's brilliant imaginings, in fact—and having satisfied himself upon this point, he proceeded to plead his cause with so much fervor and passion that almost before she knew it the girl was swept off her feet and up into his arms.

Not that she objected at all, for, as

she shyly confessed to him some moments later, with her head blissfully reposing upon his shoulder, he could have had her long before if he had only had the courage to try his luck.

Mrs. Knipes coming back, and having been told the wonderful news, accorded them her blessing.

"Why, this getting engaged is the easiest thing on earth, once a man makes up his mind to it," reflected the happy fiancé, on his way homeward. "What a fool, what an arrant fool, I was not to take the plunge six months ago!"

"And now," he continued more soberly, "that I am practically one of the family, I must get this diamond business straightened out. Of course, Mr. Knipes is no more guilty than I am; but the fact must be made so plain that no one can dispute it. We must find the robber and show conclusively just how the crime was committed."

Having reached the Waldree and feeling himself inclined for bed by the natural reaction from the excitement of his strenuous day, he turned toward the desk in order to get his key.

But as he crossed the floor a keen-eyed, smooth-shaven man who had been lounging to one side stepped quickly forward and intercepted him.

"Mr. David Martin?" questioned the stranger, letting his hand fall lightly, as if by accident upon Dave's shoulder.

"That is my name," drawing back a little; "but" scanning the other's countenance with a perplexed frown, "I confess you have the advantage of me. I do not remember ever having met you before."

"There is nothing particularly strange in that."

The merest shadow of a grim smile flickered for a moment in the corners of the man's mouth. With his free hand he threw back the lapel of his coat and displayed the badge of a detective-sergeant.

"I am Price, of the Central Office, Mr. Martin, and I am very sorry to tell you"—his grasp shut down now viselike upon Dave's shoulder—"that I have a warrant for your arrest."

"A warrant for my arrest!" gasped the young man. "Some new complication about those infernal diamonds?"

"Diamonds?" repeated Detective Price. "I don't know anything about any diamonds. What we want you for is murder!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"TAKE HIM TO HIS CELL."

FOR a space the universe seemed to Dave to reel upon its foundations and all the air to be filled with a chaos of shooting stars.

He closed his eyes dizzily and clutched at the railing of the desk in front of him for support.

Then it occurred to him that he must be asleep, and this a hideous nightmare; so he opened his eyes again to dispel the illusion.

But his staring vision failed to meet the shadowy outlines of his familiar bedroom faintly lighted from the reflection of the street-lamps outside. He was still standing in the broad illumination of the office, and beside him, with the detaining hand upon his shoulder, was this policeman who showed himself all too plainly to be a creature of flesh and blood.

"Murder!" repeated Dave, his pale lips scarcely able to speak the word above a whisper; then, as the first effect of the shock began to wear off and reason to reassert itself: "Oh, but, sergeant," he added, "there must be some horrible mistake about this."

"No mistake, I guess," responded the detective indifferently. "You're David Martin all right, ain't you? A real-estate broker with apartments here at the Waldree?"

"Well, then, whom air I accused of murdering?" demanded Dave desperately, seeing that it was no case of mistaken identity.

The man gave a perfunctory glance at his papers, although it was evident from the readiness of his reply that it was unnecessary for him to refresh his recollection.

"Harold Francis," he announced glibly. "Electrical engineer, aged twenty-seven. Said to have been a cotenant in your apartment."

Dave shrank back, appalled and incredulous, before the unexpectedness of the answer. Indeed, his natural alarm and disquietude at his own predicament

was for the moment swallowed up in the grief and horror which overcame him at such news concerning his friend.

"Hal dead?" he questioned shudderingly. "Hal murdered? Oh, it cannot, cannot be true!"

The detective glanced at him with cynical contempt.

"Don't you think you're playing it just a mite too strong?" he remarked. "I've been admiring your abilities as an actor up to this, and half believing your bluff was on the square; but that last settles me. 'Hal dead,' indeed. How could you help knowing it, when every paper in town has been bristling with the news for the last three hours?"

Dave did recall now that his ears had been assailed with shouts of "Wuxtray!" all the way home, and that leather-lunged "newsies" had poked their wares at him with some sort of polyglot jargon ending in the word "murder"; but, lost in his dreams of love, he had paid small heed to these interruptions, and so had remained ignorant of what practically all the rest of the town was discussing with bated breath.

This was a matter that he could not very well explain to Detective Price, however, so he made no attempt to regain the position he had forfeited in that gentleman's good opinion, but turned, instead, to a consideration of his own plight.

"How am I supposed to have murdered Francis?" he queried. "Let me have the details, please, upon which this egregious charge is based?"

But the detective, having been disappointed in his first estimate, was now disposed to show his prisoner very little consideration.

"The place to find out all those things," he observed gruffly, "is over at the station-house; and as you've been due there for some little time back, if you don't mind I guess we'd better be moving along."

Over at the station Dave did finally glean some information concerning the evidence upon which he had been taken into custody, and to his intense disgust he learned that his present trouble was also largely due to his ubiquitous friend—Ted Green.

The latter, it seems, had been somewhat piqued by Dave's refusal to gratify

his curiosity as to Hal's whereabouts, and had set himself to find out upon his own hook what had become of the missing elum.

By making a few inquiries about the hotel he learned that Francis's trunk had been sent out late the night before; but, strangely enough, the young man had not been seen himself to leave the Waldree, nor, as was disclosed by use of the telephone, had he appeared at the other hostelry to which his luggage had been directed.

In the course of his investigation, moreover, Ted discovered that the sounds of a vigorous quarrel had been heard by a number of people issuing from the apartment occupied by Francis and Martin; and it also was brought to his ears that Molly, the chambermaid, had commented rather wonderingly upon the fact that Dave had made his own bed that day.

"Faith," she had said to some of the other maids, "an' that was not th' only strange thing about it, aither. Shure, whin I touched it in passin' I felt something hard an' stiff down undher th' covers, an' I was jist about to slip me hand in an' see what it was whin Mither Martin come back an' tould me to stand away from there. Th' bed was made up, he says, an' there was no use of any furdher foolin' wid it."

Well, of course, that settled matters with Ted, and he waxed so vehement and persuasive in his representations to the hotel management that he finally got them up in the air also, and induced them to allow a search of Dave's apartment to be made during the latter's absence.

And then the first thing which caught the eye of the investigating party when the door was swung open furnished full confirmation to all of young Green's suspicions; for there, exactly as it had been left by himself and McNamara when they took their departure that afternoon, stood the piano-player which Dave himself had declared he had shipped off to Riverhead, Massachusetts.

"If the piano-player was not in that big box which went away by express, what was?" questioned Ted with a certain ghastly significance.

Then, too, there was the bed which Molly, the chambermaid, averred had

been neatly made up that afternoon, now all tumbled and awry; and when they came to turn down the covers the entire group fell back with a sense of sick horror, for the sheets were stained and discolored with great splashes of a dark, viscous fluid.

Dave was taken aback for a moment, and could not explain it even to himself, when this latter gruesome phenomenon was detailed to him, until he finally recalled that some parts of the machine had been covered with a reddish oil which he had found some difficulty in removing from his hands.

In fact, as he saw, there was not a single point in the case built up against him which he could not easily refute and explain; and he was consequently about to protest vehemently against being held any longer upon such a farrago of misconceptions, when it suddenly occurred to him that to do so would open him up to serious suspicion in another direction.

Were he, in short, to attempt an explanation of all the circumstances which Ted Green and the police deemed so convincing, he must reveal the whole story of his experiences with Mrs. Knipes's piano-player; must renew in the minds of every one the doubts now effectually laid to rest, that his prospective mother-in-law might have had any connection with the theft of the diamond necklace, and must, by confessing that he had purposely cheated the detectives and forestalled them in an exploration of the instrument, place himself in anything but an enviable light.

He was between Scylla and Charybdis, so to speak; and either way he looked, he saw breakers ahead.

On the whole, though, he decided that it was wiser to hold his peace, and therefore choked back the eager words of defense which had been surging to his lips.

He could disprove this ridiculous murder charge at any time; but there were certain things in connection with the diamond robbery which would be hard to account for until Mr. Knipes either turned up or it was definitely shown just how the missing necklace had disappeared.

If he waited, moreover, and kept his

mouth shut, the very facts themselves which now furnished his accusation would speedily demonstrate his innocence; for the police must very soon find out that the box he had shipped away to Riverhead contained a disintegrated piano-player instead of the dead body of his friend, and a chemical examination of the fluid on the sheets would quickly indicate its harmless character.

At any rate, he determined that he would make no attempt to justify himself until he had a chance to consult his attorney; and since he was informed that this privilege could not be accorded him before morning, he resigned himself, with the best grace he could, to the prospect of a night behind the bars.

Before he went back, though, he thought it no more than his duty to expostulate with the police captain who had been interrogating him, and to urge that some more intelligent effort be made to find out what had become of Hal.

For, despite the utter imbecility of Ted Green's conclusions, there was one fact the latter had unearthed which was causing Dave a good deal of disquietude. Why was it that Hal had failed to show up at the hotel to which he had sent his trunk, and what had befallen him after he had stalked angrily out of the apartment the evening before?

"As I understand it," Dave said earnestly to the captain, "your hypothesis is that I murdered my chum during, or subsequent to, a quarrel which we are alleged to have had in our rooms last night; that I then concealed the body in the bed, and, in order to prevent the chambermaid from finding it, shook out the mattress and spread the sheets myself; and finally that I removed the corpse late this afternoon, packed it in a box, and shipped it off to Riverhead, Massachusetts?"

The captain removed his thick black cigar from his lips and blew a shaft of smoke up into the air as he nodded assent.

"Correct," he commented, "all except the shipping of the box to Riverhead. We haven't been able to inform ourselves definitely in regard to that point yet. But the rest we have figured out exactly as you state it; and," he added, with a shake of his head, "I am bound to tell

you, young man, that it makes a pretty serious chain of evidence against you."

"Pooh," rejoined Dave, snapping his fingers. "I could pick a hundred flaws in it this minute, if I only cared to. But," he went on, his face growing anxious and worried again, "that is not the phase of the case which I wanted to speak to you about. I am not so concerned over my own vindication at present as I am in regard to what really may have happened to Francis.

"I tell you, captain," he averred forcefully, "you are wasting precious time, and doing something you will regret later, when you conclude that the mystery of his disappearance is disclosed by my arrest. As a matter of fact, it has only become deeper, and more inexplicable than ever.

"True, I am reserving my defense," he admitted, "and I grant that, as you see the circumstances, I may well be deemed guilty; but I promise you, when I do speak, this case will not hold water for a single second.

"And if I am innocent," he went on, "what then in regard to Mr. Francis? He has been missing for a solid day and night; and Heaven alone knows what has happened to him or what may be happening to him now. I tell you, captain, you will be derelict in your duty if you don't cause a general alarm to be sent out and every power of your department invoked to the end of tracing him."

He made his little plea so vigorously, and with such apparent sincerity, that for a moment the official wavered, convinced of Dave's guilt though he was. Then the recollection came to him of equally glittering bluffs which had been put up to him by other clever criminals, and he steeled his resolution.

"Oh, I guess there isn't much doubt about what has happened to Francis," he scoffed, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Or if there is I am ready to assume all responsibility for not looking any further into the case.

"So if that is all you have to say to me," relighting his cigar and turning once more to his desk, "you may as well go back to your cell. You will have to stay with us to-night, you know," he explained; "but to-morrow morning you

will be taken down to the Tombs and have your preliminary examination."

And despite Martin's almost appealing efforts to argue the point further, he would listen to nothing more, but directed bruskiy that the prisoner be taken back and permitted no communication with any one from the outside.

Alive to this mandate, the turnkey who had Dave in charge conducted him rapidly through the big room, keeping him well out of reach of the reporters, who surged forward at their appearance, eager to get new details of the story. The two passed through an iron door which clanged heavily behind them, and into a low, whitewashed chamber filled with rows of cells.

"Sorry," the man observed apologetically, as he took down a key from the rack on the wall, "but we are pretty well filled up to-night, and I can't give you a room to yourself. The best I can do, I guess, is to put you in with that suspect who was brought in last night. He's clean, at least, which is more than can be said of most of them."

"Well, that's some comfort at least," smiled Dave, striving to make the best of the situation, "and if he doesn't mind, you needn't bother about crowding me. I don't fancy I shall be able to sleep much to-night, anyway."

Nevertheless, he could not help shrinking back a little from the figure stretched out upon the bunk in the narrow compartment into which he was ushered. He was not used to associating with prison-birds, and he could not conquer his fastidious aversion all in a second.

But the sleeping man, waked up by their entrance, turned over, pushed his hat back from his brow, and struggled up on one elbow.

Dave gave a stifled cry of amazement, rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not dreaming, and then grabbed the other in a rapturous bear-hug of ecstatic relief.

His cell-mate was none other than Hal Francis!

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRONG WAY OUT.

OF course, word was immediately sent out to the desk of the startling climax to the sensational case; but the captain,

as it happened, had gone out immediately after his interview with Dave, and in his absence no one cared to take steps looking to the release of the prisoners.

Besides, it was necessary to send for people who could properly identify Hal, as it was hardly likely that either his word or Dave's would be taken as final under the circumstances, so in one way and another quite a little time elapsed before the chums were finally set at liberty.

It cannot be said, however, that the intervening period of incarceration appeared especially long to either of them, so many questions had to be asked and answered before each was fully informed as to the straits through which the other had been passing.

First Dave had to relate in detail all the circumstances of the murder charge, and this of course brought out the still more lengthy recital of the various predicaments into which he had been thrust on account of his possession of the piano-player.

Then, too, it was hardly likely that he would fail to apprise Hal of a certain other piece of news which caused the latter to grip his hand in a congratulatory clasp and to wish him all kinds of good luck.

But at last his experiences were all told, and he turned to his companion to inquire eagerly what it was that had also landed him behind prison-bars.

"Heaven knows," exclaimed Hal, "unless it is sheer bad luck, or, perhaps, a punishment inflicted on me by Providence for the bad temper and general cussedness I displayed in our little altercation last night.

"There is no charge against me, as I understand," he went on to explain. "I am simply held here on suspicion of being a possible burglar.

"What do you think of that?" he cried indignantly. "Me, a New Yorker born and bred, with thousands of acquaintances all over this city, picked up on suspicion of being a burglar, and caged in this foul place for twenty-four hours without redress, and without even being granted the opportunity of communicating with my friends! Oh, I am going to make somebody suffer for this ordeal when I get out."

It was true. Francis had been brought into the station-house as a suspect, and, since he resembled, in a way, a certain much-wanted Chicago crook, was detained for a Bertillon examination.

Then, through some sort of police bungling—and such cases are not so infrequent as might be imagined—he had been overlooked in the morning round-up, and had been held in his cell *incommunicado* throughout the entire day.

In fact, he asserted that if it had not been for the fortunate circumstance of Dave's being put in with him he might still have been permitted to languish there, and even eventually be railroaded over to the "Island" as a vagrant.

"Had I had money with me it would have been very different," he declared bitterly, "for one has to tip here as certainly as at a swell restaurant. But, sad to say, I had scarcely car-fare on me when I was arrested, and consequently my appeals and protests went unheeded."

And yet, for all his resentment, when Hal did get out, he did—nothing. He was like nine-tenths of all the other inhabitants of the big metropolis—ready enough to rage and criticize, but unwilling to bestir himself or to take any trouble to right an imposition or a wrong.

"But how did they come to pick you up?" probed Dave. "Merely on account of your resemblance to this Chicago chap?"

"Well, not entirely." Hal flushed up a bit at the admission. "Really, I can hardly blame them for that part of it, since I suppose my behavior must have appeared a trifle questionable.

"You see, Dave," he went on, "I was in a good deal of a wax when I went out of the apartment, so furious, in fact, at you and all the rest of the world, that in my absorption I quite forgot to take the turn in the hall toward the elevator, and first thing I knew found myself at the end of the corridor, clear over on the other side of the house.

"Now, as you know, the freight elevator is there, and the car was standing at that floor as I came up; so the idea struck me that, rather than tramp back

to the Forty-Fourth Street side, I would ride down on it, and go out the back way of the hotel. Henry, the elevator man, was nowhere in sight, but that made small difference to me. I knew I could let myself down all right, and that he could pull the thing back again to our floor whenever he needed it; so on I piled, and down I went."

"Ah," exclaimed Dave with sudden comprehension, "so that is how it was that nobody saw you leave the hotel?"

"Exactly. Strange to say, there wasn't a soul in sight down around the servants' quarters, and I had not the slightest trouble in getting out the back door and into that little passageway which leads toward Forty-Fifth Street.

"It was dark in there, though, and as I had to pick my way carefully to avoid the garbage-cans and ash-barrels, and also as in my wild state of mind I had my hat jammed down pretty well over my eyes, I fancy, to any one watching me, I must have presented the appearance of a skulking intruder, all right.

"At any rate, when I came to the mouth of the alley I was suddenly startled by having a dark lantern flashed in my face and being asked by a big patrolman what I was doing there?

"I was so taken by surprise and flustered that—would you believe it?—when he demanded to know where I belonged I pointed to the right instead of to the left, and before I could stop him he had marched me up to the cook of that private house back there, who, it seems, was a friend of his, to find out if I was telling the truth.

"Well, of course it was all off then as far as he was concerned. Nothing I could say or do was able to make the slightest impression. The only thing he knew was the station-house for mine, and rather than appear disobliging or cause any ill feeling, to the station-house I came.

"The rest I have already told you," Hal concluded, "and, as I say, I can't really blame the patrolman much. He did no more than was his duty. But I'll swear to you, Dave," with a return to his grievance, "when I get out of here I'm going to make somebody suffer for the other things I have had to endure."

"Yes," rejoined Dave vindictively, "and when I get out I am going to make somebody suffer, too; and that somebody is no one but our mutual friend, Ted Green. When I get through with him he'll think that Kansas cyclone I was telling him about this morning has come along for sure."

But they had not much longer time to indulge in their dreams of vengeance; for very shortly after this the captain came back, accompanied by the clerk and proprietor of the Waldree, whom Dave had caused to be sent for. Satisfactory assurance having been given that this was the real Hal Francis rather than the supposititious corpse which had been shipped away in the box, and that consequently Dave Martin could not be his murderer, the two were presently once more breathing the delightful air of freedom.

Still, that did not end the proceedings by a long shot. The police captain had to make due amends to them for the trouble they had been through, and the

(To be continued.)

newspaper boys also remained to be dealt with.

So, by the time the pair had satisfied the hospitable instincts of the former, and had given to the latter as much of the complicated story as they deemed it prudent for the public to know, it was getting well along toward the hours when the milk-carts begin to rumble through the streets.

And even then there were still other felicitations to be received, for when the chums returned to the Waldree they found almost the entire colony of tenants up, and waiting to greet them.

More than that, with his usual audacity there was Ted Green in the midst of the throng, his buoyant spirits undashed even by this second blow which had been administered to his conceit as a detective in that one day.

Dave did not see him at first; then Ted laid a hand upon his arm and murmured in his ear: "Come over to one side. I have something important to say to you."

TRAGEDY AT TRAVERS.

BY JOHN MONTAGUE.

Which concerns a quarrel in haste and a repentance more at double-quick than at leisure.

TRAVERS is a pseudonym. It would not be wise for several reasons to give the actual name of the town where this tragedy occurred. The principals might see the account and object; the city officials would doubtless consider it a desecration; and the gruesome occurrence is best credited—if at all—to an unknown community.

At this particular moment Dunning Brown—often referred to as "Stunning Dunning" on account of his general appearance—had called and saluted his hoped-to-be fiancée as fiancées-to-be should be greeted. He then started to divest himself of such outer garments as are usually dispensed with when one intends making a visit that will doubtless terminate in the small hours of the following morning.

The little gold clock on the mantel-

piece said it was eight-forty-five, but a mother's forethought and knowledge of one Dunning's staying powers can safely be credited with a discreet adjustment of the hands of that clock before the arrival of her daughter's admirer.

Henrietta Smythe didn't mind if the clock stopped altogether, but her mother was not so heedless of the strict propriety that should obtain between hoped-to-be-engaged persons.

After his overcoat, hat, and gloves had been safely moored on the hat-rack, Dunning glanced toward the clock on the mantelpiece and smiled. A comparison with his open-face timepiece showed him the deception. But his thoughts did not long dwell on the matter of the hurried hour. His eyes had fallen on a prettily framed photograph, perched conspicuously beside the clock.

His chest swelled as he looked at it.

"Say, it's great of you, Henrietta, to frame up that face of mine in such style. Never saw a frame like that before."

"Guess you haven't. I tramped all over Travers before I was able to find just what suited me. Do you like it?"

"Like it? Why, I'm tickled to death. It goes great with the background of the photograph, doesn't it? You couldn't have selected a more appropriate frame."

"Well, you needn't think you are the only one on earth who possesses some artistic taste," she retorted, with mock asperity, slapping a varied-hued sofa-pillow into an unconventional shape. "I haven't studied art at home or abroad, as you have, but I know what is pretty, just the same."

"I have never said you didn't, my dear," replied Dunning, at the same time thoughtlessly flopping himself down on the pillow she had been arranging with such care, though still retaining the framed picture. "And this little act proves that I have been right in not saying so. Even I couldn't have done better."

"My, how complimentary!"

"This was the last picture of this kind I had——"

"Gave all the rest to other girls. I suppose?" interrupted Henrietta, tilting her head to one side and allowing her voice to ascend interrogatively.

"Well," replied Dunning, with a tantalizing smile, "you don't suppose I had them taken to—er—put in storage, did you?"

"Humph! Smarty."

"I gave a picture to a girl one time——"

"Oh, you did!" She wheeled and faced him, and her voice came dangerously near trembling.

"Yes. It——"

"That girl across the street. I suppose?"

"No, not that girl."

"Oh, then there is still another. Dunning Brown, you have said all along that I am the only girl you——"

"And so you are, Hen——"

"Don't call me Henrietta any more!"

"Well, then—Miss Smith," corrected Dunning, with a courteous inclination of the head.

"Nor Miss Smith. My name is Smythe——"

"It used to be Smith, didn't it?"

"No, it did not! It never was. It has always been Smythe, and you know it."

"I've only known you two years. You might have changed it some time previous to that during your twenty years of——"

"I'm not twenty years old! I'm only nineteen. Mr. Dunning Brown, and I think you are very insulting to-night. I don't care in the least for that picture, either. I only framed it because Jack Rathfield dared me to. He said that if I framed it——"

"Oho!" exclaimed Dunning, with a rising spirit, "so you only framed it on a dare, did you? I might have known you didn't care enough for me to go to this trouble. And so that donkey Rathfield has been here to see you, has he? You never told me he was calling on you."

"I don't tell you everything," retorted Henrietta, with equal heat. "I suppose I can have other callers besides you if I want them. Mr. Rathfield is a perfect gentleman, *at least*."

"Gentleman—humph! He's a mush-head, and I'll make a porridge pudding out of him if he gets too numerous. And so it was on account of him that you framed my picture. Well, that is a compliment, upon my word!"

And with these remarks the disgusted Dunning deliberately removed the back of the frame by turning down the small catches thereon and extracted the photograph. He transferred it to his coat-pocket and replaced the frame on the mantelpiece.

Henrietta saw these movements from the corner of her eye as she reclined on the sofa among a multitude of cushions, but said nothing. She figured that Dunning wished her to make a remonstrance, and this she emphatically decided not to do.

He could take back his old picture and give it to the other girl if he wished. She would let him see that she was not so concerned as he evidently thought she would be.

Several minutes passed, during which neither deemed it advisable to speak.

Each was busy with his own thoughts. Henrietta eyed the chandelier, while Dunning's brows were drawn into a horizontal line and his expression was anything but congenial.

He had been hurt. She had said she did not care for his picture, and this had cut him deeply. Big as he was, he was very sensitive.

He forgot that she had tramped all over town trying to secure a suitable frame for it; that it was the only photograph of any of her callers she had seen fit to frame; and that he had no right whatever to it after having once given it to her. He forgot all these things, and only remembered that she had said she did not want it, and that it had been framed on a dare.

He took it from his pocket and looked over to where she was half sitting, half reclining, on the sofa.

"So—you—don't like my picture?" he asked softly.

She said nothing.

"And you don't want it?"

He might as well have spoken to the walls.

"All right; neither do I. If *you* will not have it, no one else will." And he deliberately tore it in two.

She heard the ominous sound and was on her feet in an instant. She rushed at him and wrenched the bits of cardboard from his fingers before he could tear them again. For a moment she was speechless with amazement, and then she broke out in an oral torrent.

"Dunning Brown, what have you done! I never expected such a thing of you. I wouldn't have believed it. You must be crazy—an idiot. You—you—I never want you to speak to me again—never, never, never! My picture! I—I—oh——"

She flung herself on the sofa and wept as though her heart would break, holding tightly the frayed pieces of the photograph the while.

The guilty Dunning stood and gazed at her blankly. He hadn't expected such a demonstration. Her onslaught had knocked the wind out of him for the moment, and now, seeing her crying, he realized that he had made a fearful mistake.

He crossed the room and sat down

beside her. "Little girl——" he began consolingly, but she cut him short.

"Don't you dare speak to me! I'm dis—gusted with you——"

"Disgusted, Henrietta!"

"Yes, disgusted. You——"

"Don't say disgusted——"

"I will say disgusted. That is the very word I mean. You have fallen in my estimation and you can never get back. I hate you. Do you understand me? Hate you, and I never want to see or even hear of you again. You can go, and I don't care what be—becomes of you. Tearing up that picture! You are childish. You belong in an asylum."

"I am not childish. I tore up that picture because you said you didn't want it, and if you didn't want it I was going to make sure no one else got it. That's the reason, and if you didn't mean it you shouldn't have said what you did."

"I meant every word of it," returned Henrietta from among her cushions, and she tried to believe she was not telling a lie. "I never wanted your picture; it's nothing to me. But I didn't think you were so puerile as you have shown yourself to be to-night. Your actions just demonstrate what you really are. You can go back to that girl across the street. Perhaps she will put up with such goings-on, but I sha'n't. I'm through with you altogether. Good night."

"Henrietta—do you mean it?"

"I mean it—yes."

"Are you positive?"

"Positive!"

Dunning rose and, after a slight hesitation, expecting, in spite of her words, that she would relent, walked from the room and put on his overcoat. Two minutes later the slamming of the front door told Henrietta that he was gone.

Gone! Her heart felt like cast iron. She scrambled to her feet and rushed over to the front window, just in time to see his big broad shoulders disappear around the corner of the block.

She remained at the window several minutes, looking at the spot where she had last seen him, and then, with a weary little sigh, turned to look again at the torn bits of photograph.

And as she gazed on them her resentment grew afresh, and she told herself

that she didn't care whether she ever heard of him again. She would blot him from her memory and never think of him more.

She went to bed, but not to sleep. It was only about ten o'clock, and, despite her earnest efforts, she kept hearing his last words repeat themselves with annoying persistence.

It was impossible not to think of him, as she soon discovered, and she began figuring what he could be doing at that moment.

Had he gone home direct, and to bed, as she had done? Was he as miserable as she felt? Or—horrible thought! had he called on the other girl?

No; for she had seen him disappear around the corner. But probably this was but a trick and he had come back by another street.

She could not lie still, and getting out of bed, went to the front window and peered forth.

A sigh of relief escaped her. The house across the way had no lights in the front room, and so of course Dunning was not there. Foolish of her, anyway, to think such a thing. He was probably now in bed, where she ought to be, and where she hastily tucked herself.

The pillow was rather damp with her tears, so, turning it over, she rested her still burning cheek on her palm and went to sleep.

She was at her dressing-table the next morning when her brother Will bolted into the room.

"Morning, sis! Hear of the tragedy last night?" he asked, fearful lest some one else had brought the news.

"Tragedy!" exclaimed Henrietta, allowing her brush to come down with a rap on the table before her. "No. What tragedy?"

"What every one in town is talking about this morning. See, here it is in the paper—three columns—but I can tell you better than they have it. The papers put in so much that isn't true, and fill up with repetitions, so that you don't know what they have been talking about when you get through reading."

"Well, you tell me about it, then. I don't feel much like reading, anyway. Was some one murdered?"

"Yes. No, I don't know. They haven't found out yet. You see, it was this way: You know where the Alpine Avenue cars come down that steep grade near Center Street?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was near the bottom of the grade. It was about ten o'clock last night——"

"Ten o'clock!" Henrietta's heart jumped to her mouth for some unaccountable reason.

"Yes. When car No. 124 turned the corner at the top of the hill the motorman noticed about a block away half a dozen men near the middle of the street, but thought nothing of it just then. As the car came closer to them it became evident that two of the bunch were having a scrap——"

"A what?"

"A scrap. A fight, you know. And they were dangerously near the car-track. So to avoid any possible accident the motorman threw on his brakes, intending to stop the car or go past the crowd more slowly. But the wheels refused to brake and the car kept moving along at an increasing speed. Of course, it all happened in a very short time.

"The steep incline caused the car to travel pretty fast, and in spite of his exertions, the motorman could not check its speed in the slightest. The car continued to rush down the hill and toward the group of wrangling men. The fighters could now be seen plainly, and several of the passengers near the front windows jumped to their feet. Among them was a woman, who, of course, screamed at the top of her lungs, and this threw the whole car into a panic. Every one stood up.

"Just as the car was nearly on top of the fighting men, who were clinched together, one of them tore himself loose from the other's hold and, drawing back, delivered a right-hand blow which sent his antagonist reeling backward and right in front of the street-car, which passed straight over him.

"The motorman had given up all hope of bringing the runaway car to a stop before the foot of the hill was reached, and when it did finally come to a standstill the doors were opened and the passengers hastened back to the scene of

the fight. But they were too late. The gang, whoever they were, had vanished, taking with them the injured—or probably dead—man, and the only traces of the tragedy were some spots of blood on the car-track."

"Ugh! Don't tell me any more about it. Will."

"That is, all except a hat—a black Fedora."

"A black Fedora!" exclaimed Henrietta.

"Yes," continued her voluble brother. "It was found a few feet from the car-track, and was supposed to have been worn by the injured man. I saw it down at the constable's office. It had a couple of initials in it——"

"What were they?" asked Henrietta, in a voice she could hardly call her own.

"D. B., I think. The letters were rather blurred—why, what's the matter, sis? You're fainting. Here, let me help you to the sofa. I'll tell ma."

And her brother rushed from the room to summon his mother and get a glass of water. They returned on the run, and in a few minutes had brought Henrietta back to consciousness.

Her mother wanted to know what had caused the attack, but Henrietta said it was nothing.

"Has Willie been telling you of that dreadful affair last night?"

"Yes—but——"

"It was that," declared her mother, and taking her son by the arm, she led him from the room, reprimanding him for his thoughtlessness.

Twenty minutes later Henrietta was in her trap, driving like mad to the home of Dunning Brown. His people were all in Europe, but he had preferred staying at home, to do "a little painting," as he put it, but in reality to try to win the hand of one Henrietta Smythe.

The Brown mansion was in charge of a housekeeper, who incidentally looked after the wants of Dunning. Hither Henrietta sped, only to learn that young Mr. Brown had not come home the night before.

Her worst fears were confirmed, and she nearly fainted again as she sank on the nearest chair.

"He usually comes home nights, doesn't he?" she asked anxiously.

"Of course," replied the housekeeper, "except when he stays at the club."

"Oh! he sometimes stays at the club? What is their telephone number?"

The housekeeper furnished the necessary information, and Henrietta rang them up. Again she was doomed to disappointment. Dunning had not been there that night.

She turned, her face white as chalk, and stared at the housekeeper.

"Mrs. Harding, where could he have gone last night?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Smythe. Now that we know he wasn't at the club, I am getting anxious."

And then, after a slight pause, during which she thought deeply, she looked into the tear-filmed eyes of Henrietta and uttered an ominous "Oh!"

She grasped the trembling girl by the arm.

"That street-car accident last night! You don't think——"

"I don't know—I don't know," faltered Henrietta, her hands gripped together.

"It couldn't be."

"But it might have been. Oh, Mrs. Harding, I am nearly wild with anxiety. I'm trying to think it isn't so, but something tells me it was—Dunning. There was a black Fedora hat found——"

"He always wears one."

"Yes, I know. And this one had his initials in it. I am afraid—oh—I can't think of it. It couldn't have been."

"Why, of course not," the housekeeper reassured her. "He was visiting you last night, wasn't he? It was his usual evening."

"Yes—for a while. But—but we had a quarrel, and he left early—about a quarter to ten. I told him I never wanted to see or hear of him again, and probably he just went out and got into a fight on that account. I can never tell what he is going to do. I didn't mean half I said, but he thought I did. I expected him to come back, but—but he didn't, and now it looks as though he had met with a fearful accident. Oh, I can't bear to think of it!"

And the frenzied Henrietta burst into a fresh flood of tears.

The housekeeper tried to console her, but she herself was considerably un-

nerved by the evidence. She asked what it was best to do—whether or not they should inform the authorities of their fears.

But Henrietta decided it would be better to say nothing just yet. She had another plan.

"He has an aunt and uncle living in Locustville, hasn't he?" she asked.

The housekeeper replied in the affirmative.

"Well, I think we should get word to them first of all, and allow them to do what they think best in the matter. And as Locustville is only six miles from Travers, I shall go myself and tell them of our fears. I can drive over in less than an hour easily."

And so it was arranged. Henrietta dried her eyes and started her pony at a brisk trot.

All the way, she sat as one in a trance, and several times narrowly averted accidents with passing vehicles. Their drivers looked at the fair occupant of the smart little trap and wondered at her compressed lips and drawn features.

She gave them no thought, however. Her mind was on a pair of broad shoulders disappearing around a corner in the electric light—a pair of shoulders she had probably seen for the last time. The last time! Tears came to her eyes anew, and she lashed the pony to a gallop.

By the time it drew up in front of the house she knew to be occupied by Dunning's aunt and uncle the animal was in a white lather, despite the nipping atmosphere. Throwing the reins around the whip-socket, Henrietta jumped from the vehicle and hurried up the long walk to the porch-steps. Mounting these, she gave the bell a vicious pull.

When, lo and behold! As though by magic, the door flew open and she found herself encircled by a pair of arms whose pressure seemed decidedly familiar. She disengaged herself and started back with a little cry.

"Dunning!"

"Henrietta!"

"You!"

"Yes. I saw you coming up the walk. Did you come to forgive me?"

"Forgive you? Never. I came to

tell your relatives I thought you were dead."

"Dead! Well, after all, I suppose that would not have been far from the truth. All last night and this morning I have felt like something that had never existed."

"But about the tragedy——"

He hung his head.

"Yes, Henrietta, that was a tragic happening, wasn't it? I confess I was a brute. I hope you have forgiven me. I feel now that I was all in the wrong in tearing up that picture——"

"Picture!" she exclaimed. "I'm not talking about the picture."

"You are not? Then what are you talking about?"

"I'm talk—— Where is your aunt?"

"Gone visiting. Come in and sit down. You look tired out. I'm in charge—nobody at home but me—and Fanny."

"Who's Fanny?" sharply.

"The setter pup. After I left you last night I decided Travers wasn't large enough for both of us, so I came down here."

"Yes, and a pretty scare you have given us by so doing. I want to use your telephone."

"Haven't any—here. The old folks never could see their usefulness."

"Then I must be going straight back. I have to get word to your housekeeper, or the poor woman will have a spasm."

"What about?"

"Why, about the affair last night——"

"But I didn't tell her we had had a split."

"Oh, you goose, I'm not speaking of our quarrel. I'm talking about a man who was run over by the street-cars and no trace of him but a few spatters of blood found afterward. Haven't you heard of it?"

"Nary a word."

"Well, you are mixed up in it to a big extent, I can tell you. A black Fedora was found right near the spot where the accident happened, and—listen to this—it had *your* initials in it. Is there any wonder I have been worried? But of course it wasn't yours."

"But it was. I remember now, after leaving you, I started for the railroad station, and hearing a train just pulling

in, I began to run for it. My hat flew off, but I was in no state of mind to go back for it or to care whether I lost everything I ever owned, after losing you——"

"Oh, Dunning, did you really care, then?"

"Did I really care! What a question!"

And then, after what occurred during the next two minutes, Henrietta had to go to a mirror to see if her hat was on straight. She found it wasn't, and after some adjustment she wheeled around and announced that she must get back to Travers to relieve Mrs. Harding's anxiety.

Dunning helped her into the trap and piled in after her.

"But where are you going, sir?" she demanded.

"With you, my dear, to prove to Mrs. Harding that I have not been creased by any street-car wheels."

"But the house? You said you were in charge."

"Oh, it can take care of itself. Besides, Fanny is here to keep guard until Aunt Sarah returns. Get along, there, Nancy Hanks," he added, touching the pony with the whip-lash.

As they drove up the main street of Travers a newsboy greeted them with an afternoon paper, just issued. On its front page was an article headed: "Mystery Cleared Up. Man Run Over by Car 124 Found." Then followed an account of the finding of the supposed corpse by Policeman Sutton in an alleyway between Hamilton and Stanton avenues.

It consisted of an old suit of clothes, stuffed with grass, rags, and leaves, while a number of slender pine sticks had been

inserted into the interior of the dummy to give the impression that bones were being broken.

It also stated that one of the "bunch" concerned had called up on the telephone and confessed that the whole thing had merely been a joke to scare the motor-man on car 124, as he was new in his position, but it was later discovered that they had scared—or attempted to scare—the wrong man.

The tracks had been greased with soft soap, which had caused the brakes to fail in their duty; while the blood had been obtained at the slaughter-house the day before.

The only thing the informant could not account for was the presence of the black Fedora containing the initials "D. B."

As Dunning and Henrietta finished reading they looked at each other and broke into a merry laugh.

"Then there was no one hurt, after all," exclaimed Henrietta, placing her hand on Dunning's sleeve. "Their purpose was merely to frighten the motor-man."

"Yes, and although that failed, still the 'tragedy' accomplished a much more important purpose, didn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean," he replied, sliding his arm around her slender waist. "We had a falling out last night, didn't we?"

"Well?"

"Well, we're not angry now, are we?"

"Aren't we?" was all she said, but a close observer might have noticed that she made not the slightest effort to dislodge the arm that was holding her prisoner.

THE PRESS.

BUT mightiest of the mighty means,
 On which the arm of progress leans,
 Man's noblest mission to advance,
 His woes assuage, his weal enhance,
 His rights enforce, his wrongs redress—
 Mightiest of mighty is the Press.

Bowring.

WHEN SUSPICION STRUCK HARD.*

BY STEPHEN BRANDISH,

Author of "At the Mercy of the Unseen."

A victim of circumstantial evidence, and his thrilling adventures in his pursuit of the man he felt to be really guilty.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ROBERT and Albert Radford, of Bondville, own, respectively, a moribund newspaper and a prosperous drug-store. Robert has just decided to turn his paper into a yellow sheet, when a slight trolley accident sends two evident friends into the drug-store, one of whom drinks an orange phosphate, is immediately taken ill, and blames the beverage. Robert and Albert both go for doctors, leaving the sick man with his friend; when the brothers return they find the man alone and dead. Physicians pronounce death to have been caused by poisoning. Things seem to point to Albert's guilt, even more so when it is learned that the dead man is Thomas Bandmann, professional exposé, who is now engaged in exposing the drug and patent-medicine trust. Albert is subjected to a rigorous cross-examination, falls under greater suspicion, and finally Sherwood, the sheriff, comes to warn him that he is to be arrested for murder.

Radford, convinced that the man who entered his store with Bandmann can throw light on the mystery if he can only be found, disguises himself and starts in pursuit by the trolley route. He ascertains that he goes by the name of Catterson, misses him in one town, and in Worman Center confronts Phil Sherwood, the sheriff, on the piazza of the hotel. Radford starts away; the sheriff comes after him with "Say, Bert, that don't go." Radford puts up a bluff, but feels that in another minute the sheriff will pull off his false beard, when a miracle happens. A rough-looking individual comes up behind and lays a hand on Radford's shoulder, exclaiming, "Where did you come from, Benson?" Radford grasps the outstretched hand and cries enthusiastically, "Well—Dan!" at a venture.

The bluff carries. Sherwood seems convinced that he has been mistaken, after all, and leaves Radford with his supposedly old friend, who turns out to be bird of a feather with Catterson. By judicious questioning, the druggist learns that the other is Pig Ryan, that the man now known as Catterson is really Pender, and that the latter has gone on to Blackfield, where he may probably be found at Dunn's Hotel. Radford betakes himself thither by the next trolley, and on being asked for his card has an inspiration. Requesting paper and envelope, he writes this message and sends it up to Catterson: "Here, and got to see you at once. Pig Ryan."

CHAPTER IX.

CONFRONTED.

SOME five minutes of anxious waiting dragged along as Radford watched the stairway.

Then the boy came into view again, and the druggist walked to the desk. The clerk looked up with a smile.

"Mr. Catterson seems to have gone out," he said. "The boy tells me that he left the key with the maid, who is working in the room."

Radford's heart sank, metaphorically, at least, with a thud.

"Has—he been gone long?"

"Only ten or fifteen minutes, I should judge."

"But he hasn't left the house?"

"Oh, his things is all in the room, mister," the boy put in.

"And he didn't leave any word with the maid or any one else as to when he expected to return?"

"I guess not, sir."

The druggist considered for a little.

"I'll stroll around outside for a while and wait for him, I think," he muttered.

"Very well."

"This is the only door to the house, isn't it?"

"The only one Mr. Catterson will be likely to use," said the clerk.

Radford walked out into the sunshine again.

He looked about, for a minute or two,

*This story began in the January issue of THE ARGOSY. The two back numbers will be mailed to any subscriber on receipt of 20 cents.

for a place which would offer a view of the door, and which would at the same time keep him fairly well out of sight. He found it at last behind a massive cigar-store Indian, two or three doors down, and settled himself for the wait.

Had he been fooled again? Radford pondered for a little, and finally thrust away the notion. It was possible, of course, that he had made another break—that the note had betrayed him because of the writing—but it seemed unlikely.

No, Catterson was probably there, and would return in the course of time. After that——

The sun was extremely hot. After half an hour Radford found himself wishing very earnestly indeed that his man would appear. After an hour he was fairly fuming.

His eyes had not been removed from the doorway of the hotel in all that time, and there had been no sign of Catterson.

Could the fellow have suspected his presence, in some mysterious way, and fled again, abandoning his effects? Could he have been seen and recognized by Catterson from one of the upper windows, at his first approach?

No, that was too absurd. After fooling the sheriff, who had known him all his life, Radford could hardly have been detected by a man who had seen him just once.

And still—where on earth *was* the man?

It was well toward two now, and Radford was conscious of very real hunger. Watching still, he crossed to the dubious little delicatessen shop on the other side and asked for sandwiches.

Standing in the doorway, he munched them and reflected somewhat bitterly that it was not exactly the sort of mid-day meal to which he was accustomed. It was not at all like Richeer's place, at Bondville, where the waiter hustled around when he crooked his finger and leaned over his shoulder respectfully to suggest one or two of the most inviting things on the bill of fare—and thereafter rushed them to him, piping hot and invariably delicious.

No, it was not at all the sort of meal he relished, but he was not at all the sort of man he had been. He was no

longer the druggist; he might now consider himself only as the disguised fugitive from a court warrant, and thank Heaven that he had even leathery sandwiches. If not delicious, they were better than prison fare was likely to prove.

The afternoon waned. There was no sign of Catterson. Once, when twilight was coming on, the druggist returned to the hotel and asked. The large person had not put in an appearance.

Radford waited until dark; then, with a groan, he abandoned his watch and retired to the darkest corner of Dunn's dining-room for a meal.

He emerged, presently, a little more cheerful and inquired again. Catterson had not arrived!

Well, he had fled—that was all, and he might have expected it! Catterson, or Pender, or whoever he was, had wisely abandoned his rôle of traveling business man, after consideration, and had taken to his heels!

Radford sauntered drearily down the street. What now? What——

The druggist barely repressed an exclamation. Right before him, just passing him on his way to the hotel, the man was approaching!

Radford stepped aside and refrained from lifting his eyes. Catterson stepped past briskly, and behind him came a train of very excellent cigar-smoke.

If he had perceived the druggist, he had given no indication of the fact. Radford, as he fell in cautiously behind, caught the soft humming of a tune from somewhere in the neighborhood of the cigar. Catterson seemed well satisfied with himself and things in general, and the easy air rather staggered the druggist.

He had had small experience with murderers; it seemed hardly possible that this fellow could have taken a human life.

The big man entered the hotel. Radford remained out of sight and watched. Was he going in for dinner or not? Was he——

Ah! The clerk had handed him the envelope now! Catterson was opening it—now he was reading the line. He crumpled the two and tossed them on the floor; he spoke to the clerk with an expression which combined frown and

grin. The clerk nodded and handed Catterson his key.

Radford stepped back a little, the better to gather speed for a hurried effect in entering—he took a long breath—he strode in quickly and crossed to the desk.

"Well, I guess this'll be the last trip for me," he announced. "I suppose Mr. Catterson ain't here yet? Most likely he won't be back till to-morrow, eh?"

The clerk looked up and smiled.

"On the contrary, he has just come in. He's up-stairs now."

"Did you give him my note?"

"Of course. He left word for you to be sent up should you appear again this evening."

He struck the bell, and the boy came to the desk. The clerk indicated Radford with a nod and his destination with:

"Forty-two, Fred."

Breathing hard, Radford walked up the stairs behind the youngster.

At last it had come! At last his chance had arrived! What use was he to make of it? The druggist gripped the revolver in his pocket and growled so savagely and suddenly that the boy turned.

"This is the room, sir."

"All right; you needn't knock," Radford whispered hurriedly, as he dropped a half-dollar into the youngster's hand. "You just—skip!"

The boy left swiftly, carrying with him the impression that at last a millionaire was beneath their roof. When he was out of sight Radford gathered himself and tapped forcefully on the panels.

"Come in!"

The druggist drew his gun and held it behind him. He turned the knob and opened the door—to what?

Back toward him, Catterson was writing rapidly. He did not turn; he merely ignored:

"Well, what the devil brings you here, Ryan?"

Radford did not reply. The other scribbled on unconcernedly for a minute or two, blotted and folded a sheet, and placed it in the envelope. Then, with a slow swing, he turned.

And Radford's revolver, steadily held and aimed straight for his heart, was not ten feet distant!

"What—what——" gasped the dumfounded man.

One hand dropped oddly to his side. Radford noted the move and stepped nearer.

"Hold on!" he cried softly. "If you're feeling for a gun yourself, don't do it! Keep both hands in front of you—keep 'em there, I say! Now raise your voice just once or try to attack me, if you want to die on the spot!"

"Why—you infernal idiot——"

"I mean it!" Radford snarled.

His eyes glared furiously. Catterson sank back in his chair and stared hard.

But after a little he seemed to have recovered from the shock; his voice was rather calmer as he spoke again:

"Young man, do you mind informing me——"

"I'm going to inform you of everything!" the druggist cried bitterly. "Look! Here's a beginning!"

His free hand went to his chin. He gave a little tug and the beard came away. He stood before the startled man with shaven, set jaw.

"The—the druggist chap!" gasped Catterson.

"Yes! The druggist chap, and you didn't quite expect him!"

A slight smile appeared on Catterson's lips.

"Frankly," he said, "I did not."

"But he got here all the same, and he got to you!" Radford went on hurriedly. "And now do you know what that same druggist chap is going to do?"

"Well, really——"

"He's going to take you back to Bondville, if it has to be done at the point of this gun!"

"And just why?"

"Because you murdered Thomas Bandmann, Pender!"

"Eh?" The amusement fled from Catterson's face, and he frowned a little.

Breathing rapidly, Radford almost bent over him, and rage boiled within him.

"Oh, you didn't get away this time as easily as you did last night! I made a fool of myself in the Center by giving you a hint of who I was, but I haven't done it this time. I sent up the bait and you bit it—and I've got you where I want you!"

Catterson shrugged his shoulders and seemed divided between astonishment and annoyance. Certainly, he had a wonderful nerve, Radford reflected. He was sitting there, despite the revolver, as placidly as he might have sat upon the porch of the hotel. In a way, it roused the druggist.

"And for your further edification," Radford snarled, "I may tell you, Pender, that the same 'Pig' Ryan whom you expected to see when I knocked gave me your whole criminal career only this morning." He paused and licked his lips. "And now get up! We're going to start!"

"For where?"

"Bondville, Pender, and all the way there this gun is going to be pressed into your side through my pocket. You'll go to Bondville, or you'll go—considerably farther!"

He straightened up and took a new hold on the pistol. Catterson seemed slow in obeying. Indeed, he looked up once more with his cynical smile.

"My dear young man," he murmured, "do you greatly object to my smoking? That cigar is going to burn the table in another minute."

"Then use one hand in getting it!"

The big man regained his weed and puffed it back to redness without comment or move. When the task was accomplished satisfactorily he leaned back and surveyed Radford calmly.

"I say," he began, "*would* you mind giving a hint of why you're calling me 'Pender'?"

"Because it's your real name, my man!" snapped the druggist. "Cut that out! Get up and on the move! We're going to leave on that ten-o'clock trolley!"

"Well—er—that's possible enough without going down-stairs now, you know." Catterson glanced at the clock. "We've a full half-hour to walk down two flights—and really, that gun's uncomfortable enough as it is without being pressed into my side. I wish you'd sit down a moment."

He leaned forward and clasped his hands, the cigar in one of them sending up fragrant clouds. He eyed Radford calmly and keenly; and the druggist, to his own slight dismay, found himself

thinking how utterly the rascal represented, or counterfeited, the type of square, solid, and successful business man.

Without the positive knowledge he had gained, Radford felt that he would have been almost inclined to apologize and retire. But he had gained the knowledge, thank fortune, and he had caught his man!

Catterson was silent for a while. He seemed to be looking over the man with the gun, and as he looked his eyes grew almost contemptuous. At last he spoke up sharply:

"You absolute chump!" he said. "Shall I size up the case for you?"

"Keep your compliments to yourself." Radford retorted grimly, "and you needn't do any sizing up. It's all sized up."

Catterson laughed almost good-naturedly.

"Druggist—er, what was your name? Oh, yes, Radford, of course—you're more than half out of your head. I'm perfectly sane, I assure you. You'd better let me talk and bring you back to your senses.

"I'm not seeking to deny that I was in the store or anything of the sort. The reason I disappeared was the same that would have actuated you or any other busy man—I simply couldn't afford to be dragged back to Bondville a dozen times to testify about an utter stranger. Once I was sure that the man was beyond help, I simply cleared out."

"After writing a note and thrusting it under the body?"

"Eh?" Catterson stared blankly.

"Oh, drop the bluff!" the druggist said.

"We'll come to your part now," Catterson smiled, a little dazed, as it seemed, by the interruption, but willing to be tolerant and pass it over. "Some blasted carelessness sent poison into your soda stuff, eh? Man died, and I had disappeared. I was the only one who could be expected to prove that you didn't put in any dope when you mixed the soda—therefore, you decided to come after me and force me to return with you. Then excitement got the best of you, and at the present moment you don't know more than half what you're talking about!"

He laughed again.

"I haven't read much of the case—been too infernally busy—but isn't it pretty nearly the truth, eh?"

"Have it all your own way," said Radford quietly. "The truth is that you killed the man, and that I happen to have proof of it."

He waited; the dart—spurious, of course—seemed to have had little effect.

"Your friend, Mr. 'Pig' Ryan, and I happened to meet this morning, and from him I gained some particulars about your charming self. Bah! Do you think you're dealing with a child or—"

"Only a man excited," Catterson said thoughtfully. "You're not much to blame, Radford. I understand it pretty well, I think. A man isn't accused of murder every day, and you're a bit off color as the result. Really," he laughed, "I didn't kill Mr.—er—Bandmann. If they hadn't found poison in him I should be inclined to think that he expired from a sour disposition and an inclination to expose everything on earth but himself."

He took another puff.

"And positively," he finished, "I'm not acquainted with your friend the pig."

"Ryan——" Radford began.

"When you sent up that fool message," Catterson smiled, "I thought for sure that it was Ed Ryan, of Chicago—the kid millionaire, you know—off on another of his transcontinental jags. I supposed he'd discovered me and—oh, all that sort of thing." He chuckled a little. "And I believed that he had recognized himself for the pig he is!"

"Keep on, if it amuses you!" the druggist said unpleasantly.

Catterson rose suddenly and thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets with an abruptness that very nearly cost him his life.

Radford's finger, on the trigger, relaxed only at the last millionth of a second. In a way, the absolute carelessness of the move had disarmed him.

But if his mental state was apparent to Catterson, that gentleman paid no attention whatever to it. He stalked slowly back and forth, puffing in an irritated fashion on his excellent cigar and frowning now and then.

"Oh, I say!" he began sharply.

"It's all right, you know, and I understand your side of the case perfectly, but—why—I absolutely *cannot* go back there and testify, you know!"

"No?" Radford smiled.

"No, indeed. There are a dozen things to keep me in Chicago this next month or two. There's that—well, never mind just what, but it's a big deal, and if I have to spend half my time down here it'll be all off!"

"Ah?"

"And that C. B. & D. matter, too! I'm vice-president of the road, you know, and there's no getting away from the fact that I've got to be present at the annual squabble, next week, as a majority stockholder!"

He stopped squarely before Radford.

"See here, my son. Why not call this off? I'll pay cash for it if you'll kindly disappear. This Wild West business is very melodramatic and very charming, of course, but it's all balderdash if you come down to facts. If you insist on my returning to Bondville I'll—well, perhaps I'll go and perhaps I won't, but——"

He ended with a snap of his fingers. Radford smiled, and tried to fill the smile with a confidence he did not feel.

Acknowledged or not, this large person was making an impression upon the druggist. Face to face with him, and in spite of all, it seemed to Radford very nearly impossible that Catterson, or Pender, could have committed the crime.

"You'll go!" he said briefly, however, and the revolver came up again.

"My dear boy"—Catterson's hands were in view again, and the clenched right pounded emphatically upon the flat palm of the left—"can't I make you listen to reason? Must you sit there with that elephantine gun and flourish it to talk sense? I tell you, it'll cost me thousands of dollars to go back there and be held for—God knows how long. You've been spotted as the murderer, haven't you? All right, then. Go back. Let 'em try you. It's a fool case, of course, and they can't possibly convict you!"

Radford looked at him, and the pistol lowered slightly. From his seemingly worst enemy, the druggist was receiving precisely the sort of consolation he most needed.

"And if you should get into serious trouble, Radford," the other went on earnestly—"I mean, if it should really come to a pinch—I'll come down from the city and testify. I'll see my own lawyers first and coach up on such a line of evidence that you'll be turned loose as soon as I leave the chair."

He smiled slightly.

"I know you're innocent of anything intentional here, and if that fool bunch of jays doesn't acquit you I'll come down with the best legal talent in Chicago and see that it is accomplished. How about it? Is it worth while to pocket that gun and sneak, Radford?"

He stood over the druggist and looked down earnestly. For the moment the gun dropped to Radford's lap.

And that moment was fatal!

In the twinkling of an eye—so rapidly, indeed, that the druggist barely noted it—the clenched right fist shot back of Catterson—sped forward again with the force and the speed of a projectile—landed squarely between Radford's eyes.

The revolver flew from his hands and exploded with a crash.

The druggist himself, without a groan, rolled from his chair and went down in a heap upon the floor.

CHAPTER X.

FROM MORNING TO NOON.

MORNING again. Another gloriously bright and cool morning, too, with sweet breezes from the farming country and a brilliant sun to gladden humanity.

Radford opened his eyes—painfully. They met the bare brown boards of an unplastered, unlovely ceiling.

Just where was he? How had he landed there? Why was everything in his head so sadly tangled?

Events returned slowly, as he stared at a knot-hole above.

Yes, he remembered Catterson now, and the suddenly raised fist and all the rest. The crook had worked a neat little game very successfully. He had thrown Radford off his guard completely. He had come near enough to strike—and he had struck the mark unerringly.

At that unfortunate instant, most assuredly, Radford had been knocked farther into unconsciousness than ever before in his life!

But there were other memories, vague, uncertain things at best.

The druggist seemed to recall, in the most nebulous way, being laid upon a bed. He seemed to remember seeing a physician and watching him mix a powder with water; he could not quite tell just what had been said, but he recalled mumbling something incoherent and hearing remarks about "shock."

He thought, too, that he had swallowed the dose.

But where was he now?

Radford raised his aching head and looked about.

At first, he appeared to be alone in the bare room; then he caught sight of a small heap in the farther corner—the bell-boy, and sound asleep! That, at least, seemed to indicate that he had not yet left Dunn's hospitable roof.

Radford sat up and stretched. He was very achy and very sore, but beyond that he felt little discomfort. He felt himself over gingerly; nothing seemed to be missing. Indeed, on the contrary, his anatomy, between the eyes, seemed to have taken on quite an addition.

The druggist groaned, and then suddenly ceased to groan. The fighting spirit boiled up within him as it had not done before.

This infernal scoundrel had fooled him twice now, once by craft and once by force. All right! Radford was still alive and in the ring, and the third meeting should be brought about. And then!

"Boy!" he called sharply.

The youngster shot to an upright position.

"Gee!" he mumbled, rubbing his eyes. "Did—did you come to?"

"I've—come to!" Radford said grimly. "Where's Mr. Catterson?"

"The guy you tried t'—kill?" The boy was on his feet and edging toward the door.

"The—*what?*"

The youngster was in the corridor now, and eying Radford with a dubious expression.

"I guess you better stay there," he

remarked. "The boss told me to let him know as soon as you came around."

"But——"

Quick steps upon the stairs told that the youngster had fled beyond the danger zone.

The druggist looked around for his clothes. They did not seem to be in the apartment. He retired between sheets again, and sitting up, waited expectantly.

Some five or six minutes passed before he heard any one approaching. Then the clerk of the day before appeared, carrying his bag and his raiment.

The latter he laid gingerly upon a chair, and then turned to regard the druggist with an extremely disapproving expression.

"Come around, have you?" he remarked.

"Unquestionably." Radford glared at him. "Will you kindly tell me what the devil——"

"I think we'll just omit that sort of thing," the clerk replied brusquely. "Please remain where you are. Mr. Dunn himself will be here presently, and he has given me strict instructions not to talk to you until his arrival."

"But——"

The disapproval increased.

"Young man, I should strongly advise you to be silent. You are more than lucky in escaping the jail you so richly deserve. Now——"

"Say, you blasted——" burst from Radford.

Then he stopped. What under the sun was the use in getting mad at this person? He set his teeth and waited.

He had not long to wait. Within a matter of seconds heavy steps ascended and reached the upper landing. Into the bare apartment came a portly and highly important individual.

"This is Mr. Dunn himself," the clerk announced, with a bow and a wave of the hand.

Radford, despite his misery, could hardly repress a smile. He had a vague notion that he could not have been introduced to the President of the United States or the King of England with more ceremony.

"Well, I'm charmed, of course," he began.

Dunn seated himself upon a wooden chair and puffed his big cigar.

"That'll do," he said briefly. "Able to walk?"

"I presume so," Radford replied, "if I had the clothes to walk in."

"Able to leave town?"

"Certainly."

"Then get into your clothes as soon as possible, eat the breakfast I'll send up, and leave by the back door—and do it quick!"

Radford gasped; his wrath boiled over again.

"Will you kindly tell me," he shouted, "who the devil you think you are, to talk in that fashion?"

"I'm the owner of this hotel, that's been doing business at the same stand for forty-nine years without one shady episode taking place here. You're the first crooked character that ever managed to get into this house since my father started it—and I can tell you that it's only because I don't want publicity that you're not in the town lockup at this minute."

"And for what?" the druggist asked blankly. "Having my head knocked off?"

Dunn regarded him sneeringly.

"If you'd been knocked into another world, my man, it would have served you right," he informed him. "You've only the good name of this house to thank for the fact that you're free."

Radford pondered for a little. Plainly, he was in bad odor here—as he seemed to have been everywhere these last two days. Still, one catches more flies with molasses than with vinegar.

Radford had swallowed insults enough; he might as well swallow a few more, if the process would serve his ends.

"Do you mind telling me," he said evenly, "whether this so-called Mr. Catterson is still in the house?"

The clerk and the proprietor glanced at each other, and the latter shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Mr. Catterson left the house last evening, shortly after your dastardly attempt upon his life," he remarked pleasantly.

"Thank you," smiled Radford; "and where has he gone?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Dunn returned. "If I had, I should most certainly not inform you."

"You know this Catterson pretty well, then?"

The proprietor looked angrily at him.

"That is immaterial. There are times when one can judge pretty clearly of another man's character and standing by his appearance."

"And there are times when one can be mistaken. Was Catterson ever here before—did you ever see him before in your life?" the druggist asked earnestly.

"I—what on earth does that matter?"

"Only this——" Radford began, and stopped short.

He had been on the very point of accusing the absent man of the Bondville murder. Now he held his tongue. What good could it do, after all—save to involve himself in further trouble?

Instead, he adopted another tack. He shifted his position and looked rather dryly at the important owner of the house.

"Do you mind telling me," he said again, "just what I happen to be accused of—just why I'm so horribly fortunate not to be in jail?"

Dunn rose with an impatient grunt. The clerk, however, stepped forward, unexpectedly, if deferentially.

"Perhaps, Mr. Dunn, the man is entitled to that?" he remarked. "He—he looks rather respectable."

"A person who enters this house disguised with a false beard—who goes to the room of one of our guests and creates a disturbance, not to mention threatening his life—is entitled to nothing at all," said Dunn, as he walked to the door. "Driggs, see that this man dresses and gets out of the house as rapidly as possible. I am leaving it to you."

He walked out heavily and disappeared down the stairway. Radford smiled somewhat forlornly after him.

"So I'm supposed to have threatened Catterson's life?"

"Well, I—I—I think you may have done so," the clerk stammered uncertainly. "Everything seems to point toward the truth of Mr. Catterson's story."

"And what was the story?"

"Well—er—to the—er—effect, you know, that you have been cherishing an old grudge against him and followed him here."

"Ah?" Radford remarked.

"He stated that you followed him to his room, disguised and under an assumed name, and threatened to shoot him unless he complied with certain conditions."

"Did he mention the conditions?"

"No."

"I hardly thought so. Go on, please."

"There is little more. He said that he managed to circumvent you and knock you senseless before you accomplished your purpose. The pistol exploded and made considerable noise and excitement about the house."

"I don't doubt it."

"It was all hushed up, however, by Mr. Dunn, who called a physician. He said that you were suffering mainly from shock, and he gave you something to put you to sleep, and—well, I suppose, revive you. Mr. Dunn, who cherishes the good name of this hotel more than he does his life"—the clerk smiled slightly—"implored Mr. Catterson not to prosecute you or have you arrested in this instance, on account of the notoriety that would attach."

"Eh?" The news almost took Radford's breath away.

"And Mr. Catterson, although he was reluctant at first, finally agreed not to have you arrested here."

"Well—*really!*" Radford sat back and breathed hard.

How utterly kind of Catterson it had been! And how beautifully this little incident chimed in with the rest of his recent misfortunes! He had been spared jail only on the condescension of the real murderer!

"Well, if I should tell you——" he began thickly.

The clerk hurried toward him with upraised hand.

"I must go below now," he said. "There are your clothes. You will find the pistol in one of the pockets, although Mr. Dunn ordered it emptied and your pockets searched for the other cartridges. The—the beard is downstairs, also. Shall I get it for you?"

Radford thought a little. Great good that beard seemed to have done him, all things considered.

"Never mind the beard," he said wearily. "Bring it up, if you like, and I'll take it along. I—I wore that thing for a purpose, you know, but it doesn't seem to have served that purpose so glowingly that——"

His voice trailed away. The clerk left.

The druggist dressed slowly and in some discouragement. The pain in his head was of a nagging sort, and the pain in his heart worse. Most sincerely did he wish that, come what might, he had perforated that infernal Catterson, or Pender!

Two opportunities had come to naught. Radford paused and looked out of the high window, across the farming country beyond Blackfield.

He snarled aloud, too, and registered a vow; next time, whenever that might be, he would plant the pistol at Catterson's heart and give him the choice between returning or dying on the spot!

His toilet was hardly completed, when a man entered with a tray of food and the order from Dunn that the mystery up-stairs should eat in his present apartment. The druggist assented sourly.

"Tell Dunn I want a bill for whatever I owe him," he snapped.

"I was told to tell you that there ain't no bill, mister," was the reply. "The boss says"—the man giggled—"he says he's only too darned glad to get rid of you, and to eat quick and leave!"

Radford restrained a mad desire to hurl the man down-stairs, follow, and macerate the proprietor. He shut his teeth and ate silently, and the person departed with a last curious stare at the man about whom every employee had been cautioned not to say one word.

The unlucky beard, neatly sealed in an envelope, lay at the side of the breakfast-tray. The druggist pocketed it as he finished his coffee. He found his hat and picked up his bag.

He was going, but just where he could not have told. At all events, he would leave by the front entrance.

But at the foot of the upper stairs a boy stepped out, politely, perhaps, but with determination.

"You'll have to go down this way, sir," he said. "The boss says so."

Radford paused; a minor thought came to him.

"See here, kid," he said, "weré you on duty last evening?"

"Yes, sir, till twelve."

"Did this man Catterson really leave?"

"Sure he did. Just after midnight. I took down his things."

"Where did he go?"

"Away in a carriage, I think. That's all I saw."

Radford groaned and began his descent by the servants' stairs.

A carriage! That opened up new and worse possibilities. What earthly means was he to take to discover whither the carriage had gone—more particularly in a town where he had already put himself in a queer position?

The back door closed behind him, and the druggist trudged through an alley and out into the street at the rear of Dunn's.

A carriage! Walking slowly, Radford metaphorically revolved that carriage in his mind. How could he get track of it?

But after a block or two he began trying to place himself in Catterson's position, and to reach some result by reasoning backward.

Catterson, undoubtedly, had left town. Which way would he naturally take? Not toward Bondville and the Center, certainly.

On the other hand, he could not journey farther by trolley, for the trolley stopped at Blackfield.

Radford tried hard to think whither he might have traveled in the carriage. He could not name a place. North or south, within driving distance, there were no towns so large as the three which Catterson had visited; indeed, they were all small hamlets, where his impressive person would have attracted too much attention.

That carriage had been a blind! Radford grew more certain of it the longer he debated the question. Catterson had made tracks for regions far remote, and there was only one means for that—the railroad.

Yes, that was the only clue to work on. He would go to the station and dis-

cover what trains had left around midnight and try to learn whether the big man with the grip had gone on one of them, and which direction he had taken.

His step quickened again as he turned toward the depot. The fresh sunshine and the shadow of a new hope were bringing out Radford's optimism again.

He took to looking around, and the false beard occurred to him again. Perhaps, at this stage, it was just as well to assume it again. Should inquiry be made, or had he been watched, the person who had just left the hotel was beardless.

The druggist stepped into a little saloon, adjusted the thing and fastened it—and left by the rear door, rather to the astonishment of the bartender, out of whose sight the change had been made.

The depot lay just ahead now, and he entered briskly.

Ah, he might have expected that! Of course the night man was not on duty now. But the porter who had been there till after midnight would return in a little while. Perhaps he could tell something.

Radford walked to the back platform and sat down on the ledge.

That porter was his only hope, but—but by the time he got there Catterson might have reached Chicago and taken a train for New York!

However, there was no helping it. The druggist looked about for means of diversion. His eye fell upon a somewhat crumpled sheet; then it caught the heading: *The Bondville Morning News!*

Radford laughed oddly.

So, somebody or other, desirous of catching an early train out of Blackfield, had taken the long trolley ride from Bondville. They had brought along the morning paper and had thrown it aside here.

That was, of course, if it happened to be that day's edition, and it seemed fresh enough to be.

Curiosity arose within the druggist. What had Bob been able to think up last night in his defense? What sort of thunderous exoneration of himself would he find? He reached forward and picked up the *News* and straightened it out upon his knees.

His mouth opened; he rubbed his eyes incredulously; he gasped once or twice.

But there it was before him, absolutely irrefutable in the glaring black-face display:

DRUGGIST-MURDERER STILL AT LARGE!

And there followed in smaller type:

Radford, Arch-Criminal of the Middle West, Escapes Justice! Detectives on Trail of Cold-Blooded Poisoner of Bandmann! Motive for Hideous Crime Fully Established—Prosecuting Attorney Says Electric Chair but a Matter of Days for Albert Radford.

Radford dropped the paper to the dust with a little cry of pure agony.

Even his own brother had turned against him.

CHAPTER XI.

TWO HARD BLOWS.

MINUTE after minute, Albert Radford sat fairly petrified.

The *News*—his own brother—had turned squarely against him! The little sheet lay in the dust still, and Radford stared dazedly into the hot, sandy space before him!

What could it mean? His tired brain struggled hard over the problem—and without success.

Plainly, it meant one of two things, this attack by a paper he might reasonably have considered his best journalistic friend on earth. Either something had occurred to convince Robert absolutely of his guilt, or—what?

The latter he could not answer. The former seemed as absolutely impossible as anything his exhausted mind could have wrought.

Why, Robert—all blood relationship apart—had been his dearest and best chum since his first recollection of anything. It had been Bob, years and years ago, who led him about by the hand when he could no more than toddle; it had been Bob who cheerfully and enthusiastically thrashed everything afoot that sought to impose upon him; it had been Bob, despite his assumed cynicism, who had in later life given him the soundest of advice and guidance—and

the most sincere love of which a brother could be capable!

And now Bob—owner and editor of the *News*—oh, it *couldn't* be!

The unlucky druggist, with shaking hands, picked up the sheet again and sought hurriedly for the editorial page. Something had happened; he would find the explanation there, of course.

But he did not. The page dealt mainly with the murder, and at the head stood out in clear black type:

ROBERT E. RADFORD, EDITOR.

Another groan escaped Radford. Could it possibly be? Was Bob actually attacking him in this fashion?

No, of course not! It was some mistake, beyond doubt. The druggist had misread the headings—he had mistaken their import—he—well, he would look them over again and strive to calm his excited brain. Then, certainly, he would see that everything was all right!

But the lines, the words, had not changed in the slightest particular. They were all there, just as they had been before—just as damning, just as unbelievable as ever! Every letter of that flaring heading was directed straight against him and his fight against unjust suspicion!

In a dull, fascinated way, Radford folded back the sheet and began to read systematically. The hot, dusty street vanished for him. His whole being was absorbed in that awful series of black lines.

It has been established beyond the shadow of doubt that Radford, the escaped druggist-murderer, is guilty of the murder of Thomas Bandmann, the eminent writer and investigator.

"Good God!" gasped the innocent man, as his eyes ran quickly down the column of fiery words.

Mr. Ferns, the prosecutor, in an interview last evening, stated that the case was completely formed in his office. It has been ascertained, he says, that Radford had every motive for killing the so-called muck-raker. He has pursued two lines of investigation, each of which, Mr. Ferns says, has proved eminently and unexpectedly successful.

The prosecutor declined to go into details. Nevertheless, from his talk with the *News* reporter, it was very clearly

gleaned that Radford was actuated by two things: his desire to settle a grudge with an old enemy and his desire to serve the Drug Trust, to which he was deeply indebted.

Bandmann, it would appear, far earlier in life had incurred the enmity of this dastardly fugitive. When he entered the store on the fatal evening of the trolley accident, Radford recognized him, while he failed to recognize Radford. Thereupon the druggist—

"But I never saw the man in my life before!" cried the druggist. "And for that matter, I'm deeply indebted to the so-called Drug Trust at the first of every blessed month!"

He moistened his lips and read on:

One thing Mr. Ferns begged to assure most definitely the public of Bondville and of the county of which he has such capable charge. The murderer's trail has been taken up by several very competent detectives, in addition to Sheriff Sherwood. He says that there is not the slightest doubt that Radford will be apprehended within a very few days. Once brought back to Bondville, an indictment of murder in the first degree awaits him—and after that, the reporter was told, there exists not the slightest doubt that the State will have the unpleasant task of getting out of this world one of the most hypocritically malevolent human beings at present within its confines.

It was all quite plain! It was all quite definite! It was all as hellishly inimical as words could make it!

Yet—Radford concluded hopelessly; after many minutes—perhaps there was some mistake. Bob might be ill; something might have happened to prevent his attendance at the office; the stuff might have slipped in somehow. Well, the editorial page would settle that!

Either Robert wrote his own editorial page or there was no page in the *Bondville Morning News*.

Radford turned the paper anxiously. The page was there, and on it he would find matter as exonerative as the rest was condemnatory. A little, almost hopeful, smile illumined his features until:

Even in these modern days of too much sensation and too great hyperbolic utterance, it is impossible to give sufficient force or too much publicity to the

very recent cold-blooded murder of Thomas Bandmann, the writer, by our ex-local druggist, Albert Radford.

That this crime could occur in a civilized and enlightened community such as Bondville testifies but poorly to our vaunted advancement. That the druggist and no one else is guilty, he himself has assured an angry public by his pell-mell flight on the eve of arrest. That the wretched, cowardly taker of a human life—

The paper dropped again.

Either the druggist must believe himself insane or he must accept the bitterness of all his woes with what fortitude might be. Bob, like all the rest, had turned against him!

His eyes glazed with hot tears. What should he do now? Continue the almost hopeless pursuit of the true criminal, or—return and meet death in the disgraceful, hideous electric chair?

Visions rose before him in nebulous fashion. First came Ethel.

Radford shrank unconsciously backward. By now she must be one of the curiosities of the little town. She would remain true to him, and as true as steel—but what would that avail either of them?

He could picture her, later on, hearing and reading the gruesome accounts of his end—and Radford groaned anew. Better by far to buy some new cartridges for his empty weapon and turn it upon himself!

Then, with overwhelming force, the first shock returned—Bob! Radford looked up at the hot sky.

"*And Bob—Bob could do that!*" he cried aloud.

Emphatically, he had expected no sort of answer, sympathetic or otherwise; yet, all without warning, one came!

From just behind, a grim voice remarked sourly:

"It looks that way, doesn't it, Bert?"

As if galvanized, Radford shot to his feet. His wild, tired eyes glared around for an instant. The station swam for a little; there seemed to be several forms about.

Then his vision cleared and he saw—Sherwood, the sheriff!

"It's—you!" gasped the fugitive.

Sherwood regarded him with hard, sharp eyes. His former friendliness,

while perhaps not altogether dead, seemed now to have changed mainly to enmity and bitter reproach.

"It's me, Bert," he replied.

For an instant, the druggist contemplated once more depending upon his false beard. The ruse, however, was far too thin now.

Sherwood, still suspicious, had followed him, strong in the belief that he had been deceived. Now he had caught up—and very likely had overheard the unconsciously uttered words of the druggist.

"Well, Bert?" he muttered.

Radford could not reply at the moment. He moistened his lips, but speech would not come.

"Are you ready to turn around and march back to Bondville, boy?" Sherwood inquired flatly.

The druggist's knees weakened. He hesitated for a moment; then he sank once more to the edge of the platform and looked up at the sheriff.

"Sit—sit down, Sherwood," he said thickly.

"What for?" the sheriff inquired gruffly.

"I want—to talk to you."

Rather grudgingly, and after some hesitation, Sherwood settled himself on the edge of the platform.

"It ain't any use trying to work that mistaken identity game over again, Bert. It won't go twice. And it also won't do for you to cut and run. If you think I'm going to settle down and suddenly have you skip out—well, you're a way off, my boy. I've got a gun, and even on you I'd use it, after what you've done!"

"But what the dickens *have* I done?" burst from Radford.

"For one thing, you betrayed the confidence I put in you, Bert. You no sooner knew that things were turning against you than you—skipped out!"

"And you believe I'm guilty, Sherwood?" asked the druggist.

The sheriff bit his mustache for a little.

"If you wasn't guilty, why did you run, Bert?" he inquired, in a low voice.

"But do you *believe* I'm guilty?" Radford laid a hand on the other's knee and looked almost wistfully into his face.

"Darned near everybody else does," Sherwood muttered.

"But do *you*?"

"It's the way you've acted, and——"

"Do you?"

The sheriff turned and faced him with a grim little smile.

"Bert," he said, "if you want the truth, I don't! I couldn't believe your father's son guilty."

"Then why——"

"Why did I chase you?" Sherwood broke in sharply. "Because it's the law and my sworn duty, and even friendship don't count when these things come up!"

"I know, but——"

The sheriff waited for him to finish. Radford, apparently, had nothing more to say. The former went on, more gently:

"You've given yourself the worst sort of black eye, Bert. Innocent men don't run away from justice, as a rule, no matter how bad things may look against them."

"They do when it's the only chance they have to vindicate themselves, Sherwood!" the druggist cried. "This man—Catterson's his name, real or assumed, by the way—killed Bandmann. Until I bring him back and make him confess or—have him where we want him until we have a chance to look him up, well, what chance *have* I got?"

"Not much, Bert," Sherwood muttered. "What chance have you got to get him, though?"

"I was face to face with him last night! He took me off my guard and knocked my senses out, but—I'll get him yet!"

The sheriff twiddled his thumbs.

"I'd deduced as much from what I heard at Dunn's when I landed there this morning. However—he's gone now, I take it?"

"Yes."

"Therefore"—Sherwood straightened up—"there's only one thing left, boy. You'll have to come back with me now and face the music! Ready?"

"With even my own brother against me?" Radford cried forlornly. "Sherwood, whatever turned Bob?"

"I dunno, son. Maybe—I dunno."

"Don't know what?"

"There was three or four strangers around the *News* office when I left Bondville, early yesterday morning, Bert. Bob and that young chap o' his were talking to them. They—they may have changed his opinions."

Radford swallowed hard and was silent. It seemed incredible, yet—there was the paper, still in the dust at his feet! Something choked him and choked hard. He looked steadily at the hot ground, while Sherwood waited.

Minutes passed, and more minutes, and still Radford made no move. The sheriff, at last, straightened up abruptly.

"Come along, boy."

"Bondville?" Radford asked dully.

"There's no help for it. I've got a warrant for your arrest right here in my pocket, Bert. Want to see it?"

"No, but——" Radford found himself shuddering a little. He gathered himself and turned swiftly to the sheriff:

"Phil Sherwood, I've heard you say, time and again, that you owed a big debt of gratitude to my father!"

"It's the truest word you ever heard."

"And you never succeeded in paying it off—that, you said, was one reason why you tipped me off."

"It was a thing I never expected you to take advantage of as you did, Bert," the sheriff murmured.

"Even so—let it go at that," the druggist hurried on. "You can have the chance now to square all accounts!"

"Eh?"

"Let me escape!"

Sherwood's grizzled head was raised suddenly and the hard features were turned on Radford.

"Boy, do you know what ye're saying?"

"Yes, I——"

"You're asking me to turn tail on the duty I'm paid to do—the duty I've sworn to do! Your own father wouldn't have asked that of me!"

"He would under the circumstances!" Radford cried earnestly; "he'd ask it of you now if he was here to do it! Oh, I know what you're going to say—that it would disgrace you forever to let me escape, when once you'd caught up with me! It wouldn't, I tell you! It'd be blood on your head if you took me back and I was convicted and

executed, for it would mean that through you an innocent man came to his end—and the son of your best friend at that!”

“But——”

“Come, Phil! It isn't so much to ask, after all! Nobody knows you've found me. Just let me walk away from this spot—you leave in ten minutes or so—that's all there is to it!”

“That's all there is from your standpoint, boy, but from mine——”

“Listen!”

Radford clutched his arm with an iron grip.

“Phil, if you'll let me go, I'll take a week—just one little week. If I haven't found my man and brought him back in that time I'll turn around and return to Bondville of my own accord!”

“There's others after you since I started, Bert. Ferns got excited and turned two or three professionals out on your trail. I haven't seen them or talked with 'em, but they're hereabouts and——”

“All right. So be it. It won't be your fault if I'm taken, then, and you've

never tried establishing a record as a detective. There'll be nothing for you to feel bad about. I'll take my chance. Let me go, Sherwood!”

“It's—no use,” the sheriff muttered sadly.

“But it is—it must be—you're bound to do it!” Radford cried. “You *must* give me that one loophole to save my own life!”

“And if you did find the man—what then?”

“Leave that to me. Just give me the last opportunity to get him!”

The sheriff's head bent low. He was evidently thinking hard—and Radford trembled for the result.

For a long time Sherwood remained silent. A train from somewhere rumbled in—stopped for a little—rumbled on again, with a prodigious puffing and clatter. The noise brought Sherwood's head up again.

“Bert!”

“Yes? Yes?”

“It's no good, boy; I can't do it! I can't do it, nohow!”

(To be continued.)

THE GREEN PARROT.

BY C. LANGTON CLARKE,

Author of "An Expensive Boarder," "Cousin Almira's Baby," "A Domestic Treasure," etc.

In which Mrs. Scales makes a purchase and Mr. Scales loses his temper.

MRS. GEORGE SCALES, flushed, disheveled, and tired, leaned against a small table in a corner of the large disordered drawing-room and glared angrily at the motley crowd which surged around the perspiring auctioneer.

She had seen a Yaprak rug, an imitation Chippendale cabinet, and a Dresden dinner-set soar to prices far beyond the limits of her purse, and her woman's soul revolted at the absurd sums paid for them. She had come to the sale with the fixed purpose of buying these articles, but had failed to reckon on a certain sentimental element which had enhanced values. A family socially prominent and reputed wealthy had come to an inglorious smash as a result of business

transactions which had landed its head in jail, and in the prevailing desire to own something which had belonged to them the original cost of things seemed to have been totally forgotten.

The auctioneer was expatiating on the beauties of a chromoesque painting by an obscure artist, and as the bids rose by ten and twenty dollars at a bound Mrs. Scales, with a muttered exclamation of disgust, forced her way to the door.

She replied tartly to the hasty apologies of a fat man who, in the excitement of bidding, had thrust his elbow into her ribs, and having strangled the offer of an elderly female competitor by deliberately planting a small French heel

on her extended foot, she made her way into the hall and thence up-stairs to a small chamber as yet uninvaded by the detestable throng.

Here she sank into a well-worn easy chair and glanced around disparagingly at the dingy furnishings.

"So tiresome," she reflected. "I did so want that rug, and I'm sure George would have liked the cabinet. Those people down-stairs seem to have gone crazy. No sense at all. And now I suppose I shall have to put up with some rubbish which nobody will look at. I must buy something."

Her eyes roved about the room, and she mentally rejected in succession the various articles on which they rested.

"That little oak table might do," she added musingly. "It's awfully shabby, but I could get it polished up and put it in the drawing-room. I suppose it would cost more than the thing is worth, but I must have something."

"Get out of here," said a harsh voice, almost at her ear.

Startled and indignant, Mrs. Scales wheeled around in her chair and saw, standing on a table and half concealed by a curtain, a battered gilt cage containing a small green parrot.

Seated round-shouldered on his perch, the bird returned Mrs. Scales's gaze with a pair of hard, unwinking eyes, and repeated his remark even more imperiously.

"Oh, you dear bird!" cried the lady. "And how beautifully you talk. I wonder——"

Her sentence was cut short by the sound of a multitude of feet tramping up the stairs, and a high-pitched voice which adjured the owners of the feet to "Take it easy, please, ladies and gents. Plenty of time; plenty of time." The next minute the room was thronged by an eager crowd headed by the auctioneer and his assistant.

The shabby appointments were soon knocked down at absurdly high prices, even the oak table, much to Mrs. Scales's annoyance, bringing about double its original cost, and at last the auctioneer came to the parrot.

"Hold him up, Joe," he said, as the assistant seized the cage, "and let the ladies and gentlemen have a good look

at him. One of the finest talkers you ever heard. Bryan isn't in it with him."

There was a hush of expectancy, like that which precedes the opening remarks of a popular monologue artist, but the parrot, ruffling his feathers in protest at the reckless manner in which the assistant was swaying the cage, maintained a dignified silence.

"He's thinking what he's going to say," suggested a humorist in the audience.

"Wind him up, Joe," said another.

"Seeing such a good-looking lot o' people has took his breath away," explained the auctioneer. "How much am I bid for him?"

For the first time a lot hung fire. No one seemed to want the parrot, but finally somebody hesitatingly bid five dollars.

Mrs. Scales looked at the parrot, their eyes met, and the bird winked—an unmistakable wink.

"Six dollars," said Mrs. Scales.

"Seven," said the fat man, who had bid on everything which had been put up.

"Eight," cried Mrs. Scales.

The fat man bid nine, and the bids rose slowly, a dollar at a time, the fat man acting under strong pressure from the auctioneer.

"Come, sir," said the latter, when the price rested at fifteen dollars, with Mrs. Scales in the lead, "you don't want to lose a bird like that for the sake of a dollar. Shall we say sixteen?"

The fat man shook his head vigorously.

"It ain't worth it," he said. "I've got a wife an' six children already."

The crowd snickered, and Mrs. Scales heaved a little sigh of relief.

"Going," said the auctioneer, looking reproachfully around him. "Going at the ridiculous sum of fifteen dollars. Worth fifty if he's worth a cent. Going—and sold to the lady in the arm-chair. Name, please?"

Mrs. Scales, flushed with gratification and confusion, paid over the fifteen dollars, and, cage in hand, made her escape.

Once in the street, she was confronted with the problem of getting the bird home, being unwilling to entrust it to any of the expressmen who were gathered like vultures on the sidewalk.

She was sensitive to public opinion, and aware that the sight of a well-dressed and good-looking woman carrying a dingy green parrot in a battered cage through the streets was likely to evoke comment. Unfortunately she knew no one in the neighborhood, and inquiry of a passer-by elicited the information that there was no pay-station available from which she could telephone for a cab.

"There ought to be one," she said sharply, as her informant turned away.

"So there ought," warmly assented the man, who, as it happened, had the grievance of a disappointed office-seeker. "This city's away behind. Our council ain't worth shucks. I tell you, if some people I know of had the running of it——"

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Scales, ruthlessly cutting his criticisms short. "Is there a livery-stable anywhere near?"

"Not as I know of," replied the man. "But I'll tell you what you can do. There's a street-car line at the bottom of this street. That'll take you wherever you want to go. I'll show you, if you like, and carry your bird."

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Scales, with dignified aloofness. "I know where the car line is." And she turned away, leaving the pessimist muttering something about the lack of common gratitude in women.

With head very erect, and bearing the cage in as inconspicuous a manner as possible, Mrs. Scales made her way to the car-track and boarded a car. Her temper, already on edge, was still further tried by a slight difficulty in getting the cage through the door, and when the conductor, overzealous in the interests of his company, wanted to charge an extra fare for the parrot she became positively snappy.

"If you bring a dog into the car you have to pay for him," persisted the conductor argumentatively. "That's the rules."

"This isn't a dog," replied Mrs. Scales angrily. "Don't you know the difference between a dog and a parrot? I never heard of such insolence. I shall report you to the company."

The conductor retired discomfited but unconvinced, and a shabby man on the

opposite seat, who smelled very strong of spirits and had exhibited a lively interest in the argument, took up the conversation.

"Nice bird that, miss," he said, with a tipsy grin.

Mrs. Scales, staring hard over his head, pretended she had not heard.

"Polly want a cracker?" persisted the man, leaning over and breathing hard between the wires of the cage.

Either the odor of whisky awakened memories of past associations in the breast of the parrot, or like his mistress, he was becoming irritated at the attention he was receiving. Whatever the reason, he broke silence for the first time.

"Go to Hades!" he said, with extraordinary distinctness.

Mrs. Scales flushed scarlet, several of the passengers tittered, and the man threw himself back with a roar of laughter, slapping his legs with delight.

Unabashed by Mrs. Scales's haughty air and stony glances of disapproval, he made several unsuccessful attempts to draw the parrot again into conversation, and only abandoned the task, which he did with extreme reluctance, when he reached his destination.

A few blocks farther on Mrs. Scales, who had been painfully conscious throughout of the looks and whispers of her fellow passengers, herself alighted, and having again warned the conductor of what he had to expect in the way of reprimand or dismissal, bore her awkward burden swiftly homeward.

Safe within her own portals, she breathed more freely, and carrying the cage up-stairs to her husband's study, looked around for a place to rest it. Tables and desk were littered with papers and books, and finally, with a sniff of disparagement at the disorder, she placed it in an obscure corner formed by her husband's writing-table and the wall.

The parrot, relieved to find his abode once more on a solid foundation, relaxed his grip of the perch, and clambering clumsily down the wires, began to explore the bottom of the cage and an empty food receptacle, in the hope of finding something to eat. Disappointed in this, he resumed his former seat and stared dejectedly into space.

"Poor birdie!" said Mrs. Scales pityingly. "Was ums hungry? I wonder what parrots live on? I don't want to give it anything that might disagree with it."

She bethought herself of a bird-store which she frequently passed on her way down-town, and, tired though she was, set off once more to obtain some expert advice on the diet of parrots.

II.

MRS. SCALES had been gone about half an hour when Mr. Scales, who had done an excellent stroke of business that afternoon and had left his office earlier than usual to tell his wife, ran light-heartedly up the front steps.

He was in the act of inserting his latch-key when there came the sound of scurrying feet in the vestibule. The door was torn open, and a pale-faced servant-girl ran fairly into his arms.

"Good heavens, Martha!" Mr. Scales cried, fairly staggering under the impact. "What on earth's the matter?"

"Oh, sir," gasped the girl hysterically and clinging to his coat lapels, "there's something awful going on upstairs. Listen!"

Mr. Scales listened, and turned pale to his shirt-collar.

"Help! Murder! Help!" shrieked an agonized female voice from the upper floor. "Help! He's killing me!"

"It's the mistress," wailed the girl. "I heard her come in a while ago. Somebody's murdering her."

Mr. Scales flung the sobbing abigail to one side, and snatching a heavy cane from the hall-rack, dashed madly upstairs.

A piercing shriek issued from the study as he reached the landing, and with his blood pounding against his eardrums like a trip-hammer, he rushed along the passage and burst headlong into the room.

His upraised weapon fell by his side; he tore frantically at his collar to relieve his laboring bosom, and stared wildly about him.

The room was empty. The silence was not broken by even a rustle.

Mr. Scales swept his hand across his bewildered eyes. A choking gasp behind him twisted him round with ama-

zing celerity, but it was only Martha, whose terrified countenance was peering round the door.

"There's no one here, Martha," he said faintly. "I don't understand it."

The girl insinuated herself a little farther into the room, and Mr. Scales, advancing a few steps, leaned against a corner of the writing-table which obscured the cage from view.

"I don't understand it," he repeated. "The cries certainly came from this room."

"It's a ghost," said Martha in an awful whisper. "Oh, I'm so frightened!"

"Ghost!" snapped Mr. Scales angrily. "What nonsense are you talking? Whoever heard of a ghost——"

He got no further. A shrill squeal rang out, almost at his knee, and a woman's voice said: "Get away! I hate you!"

Mr. Scales's galvanic leap landed him in the middle of the room, while Martha, with a frenzied yell, fled from the haunted chamber and was heard tumbling over her own feet as she half fell, half slid, down the back stairs.

Mr. Scales, wheeling about with upraised club, was frozen into a gladiatorial pose as his gaze encountered the bundle of green feathers and beady eyes in the cage.

"What the dev——" he began fiercely.

"You needn't swear, George," said a cold voice, as Mrs. Scales entered and fixed a gaze, half stern, half reproachful, on her husband. "Will you please explain?"

"Explain?" retorted Mr. Scales explosively. "Will *you* please explain? Where did this confounded bird come from?"

Mrs. Scales put aside the query with a wave of the hand.

"That is not the question just now," she said. "Oh, George, I *am* shocked!"

"Shocked?" echoed the bewildered husband. "What are you talking about? What have you got to be shocked about? It strikes me I'm the one to talk about shocks."

"You can't brazen it out that way, George," replied the wife. "What did you say to Martha? Come, I want the truth."

"Say to Martha?" cried Mr. Scales, staring at his wife open-mouthed.

"Yes," persisted Mrs. Scales, with deadly calm. "As I was coming upstairs I distinctly heard her say, 'Get away! I hate you!' and then she rushed out of this room and down-stairs. I didn't think you were that sort of man, George."

Mr. Scales, still clutching his stick, raised his hands aloft in mute appeal to Heaven.

"Good Lord!" he said. "The utter perversity and foolishness of women. It was this cursed bird you heard. It nearly scared us into fits."

Mrs. Scales pursed her lips, and raised her eyebrows till her forehead wrinkled.

"A most likely story, indeed," she said. "Scared you? That poor little innocent bird? Come, George, don't take me for a fool. What was Martha doing in this room at all?"

Almost speechless, and decidedly incoherent with indignation, Mr. Scales related the incidents of the previous quarter of an hour, and became more deeply incensed as his wife maintained her expression of cold incredulity.

"And what you mean by going and spending money on a beast like that to make all this trouble I can't think," he wound up. "Perfectly preposterous."

"I wouldn't try and bluster, George," replied the wife coolly.

Mr. Scales's indignant rejoinder was cut short by a ring at the door-bell, and a moment later Martha was heard to open the door.

"Mrs. Scales in?" asked a high-pitched voice. "Yes? How charming! And Mr. Scales, too? Isn't that lovely, Maud! To think of catching Mr. Scales at home so early. Are they alone?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Martha.

"Let them know we are here, please," said another voice, of the same tin-pan timbre as the first. "Why, what's the matter with you, child? You're as pale as death, and all of a tremble."

"There's nothing the matter with me, ma'am," replied Martha. "I had a bit of a scare just now, that's all."

Mrs. Scales, with her hand on the knob of the open study door, looked reproachfully at her husband.

"You hear, George," she said, in a low voice.

"Drunk!" shrilled the parrot suddenly—so suddenly that both husband and wife started violently. "Drunk again! Get away-y-y! I hate you!"

Mr. and Mrs. Scales exchanged glances. In the eyes of the husband was an expression of triumph, in those of the wife a look of penitence. Mrs. Scales closed the door softly.

"I'm sorry, George," she whispered.

Mr. Scales was diplomat enough to know when to be magnanimous.

"All right," he said, holding out his hand. "We'll say no more about it. I suppose appearances *were* against me, but you might have known me better. But as for that bird——" and he shook his fist at the cage.

"Oh, George," Mrs. Scales cried happily, "you wouldn't hurt him—not when he's just put things all right again. Think how he spoke out just at the proper time. See how cute he looks. I believe he knew just what he was doing."

Mr. Scales laughed and kissed his wife.

"We'll get him a new cage as a reward," he said. "I wonder why Martha doesn't come up and let us know those two old cats are here. I suppose her nerves haven't recovered yet. We'd better go down," he added, with a resigned shrug.

Together they descended the stairs, to find Martha standing in the hall with a scared and perplexed expression of countenance.

"Mrs. Worthington and Miss Scadders are in the drawing-room. I suppose?" Mrs. Scales remarked.

"No, ma'am," replied Martha, staring hard at Mr. Scales.

"No!" ejaculated Mrs. Scales sharply. "Where are they?"

"They've went, ma'am," said Martha.

"They've went?" echoed Mrs. Scales, regardless of syntax. "Why, I distinctly heard them ask if we were at home, and you said 'Yes.'"

"Yes, ma'am, they did," replied the girl, "but—but——"

"But what?" demanded Mrs. Scales sharply. "Don't stare like that."

"Well, ma'am," said Martha, rallying

her scattered faculties, "they was just going into the drawing-room when they—they heard some one speak very sharp up-stairs."

Mrs. Scales put her hand on the girl's shoulder and gave her an impatient shake.

"Speak sharp?" she said. "What did they—what did you hear?"

"Well, ma'am," returned the girl reluctantly. "we heard a lady's voice tell Mr. Scales he'd had too much, and to go away."

Mrs. Scales collapsed into a convenient chair and covered her face with her hands, while Mr. Scales gave utterance to some pretty strong expressions.

"What did they say?" Mrs. Scales demanded when she had somewhat recovered from the shock.

"Mrs. Worthington, ma'am," replied Martha, "said to Miss Scadders, 'How extremely awkward—poor dear Mrs. Scales—what a trial—no wonder this poor child was frightened,' and then they opened the front door for themselves, ma'am, and told me to say they'd call some other day, and went out."

"Oh, George," wailed Mrs. Scales, when Martha had discreetly retired, after another surreptitious but searching glance at her master. "What on earth are we to do? They asked particularly if we were alone. It will be all over the place. Those two are the worst gossips in the city."

"This," said Mr. Scales bitterly, "this is what comes of your insane weakness for buying useless things. Anything that looks like a bargain. A refrigerator we couldn't get into the house without knocking a wall down; a music-box chair which threw your Aunt Ellen into a fit when she sat on it, and nearly cost us a legacy; a washing machine which ground all my new silk underwear into pulp. And now"—he threw out his hands with a gesture of despair—"and now a beastly Poll parrot that doesn't know enough to keep its mouth shut."

"I'm sure *you* might make allowances for the poor bird," Mrs. Scales replied with spirit, "particularly as *it* doesn't know any better. Don't talk to me, please. Go up-stairs and talk to the parrot."

With an exclamation of anger Mr.

Scales stalked moodily back to the study and literally carried out his wife's instructions. He talked to the parrot without intermission for five minutes, and only checked himself when the bird, with an abstracted air, softly repeated one of his choicest expressions, as if anxious to stamp it indelibly on his memory.

III.

AFTER an excellent dinner and one of his best cigars, Mr. Scales recovered his good humor, and was inclined to treat the matter more in the light of a joke.

"Pooh-pooh," he said, in reply to his wife's renewed lamentations, "nobody believes what those women say, anyway. I'll tell you what to do: give a tea, and put the parrot on exhibition. Or better still—his reverence is coming in to-night to talk over the new church wing. We'll tell him the story, and he can put it all over the parish. The joke will be partly on the other side. That's his ring now. Run down and bring him up while I slip on a decent coat."

The Rev. Ambrose Stoner was an elderly man of ascetic exterior. There was a subdued twinkle in the stern eyes, however, which showed that he was not destitute of a sense of humor, and the severe line of his shaven lips was relieved by a little uptwist at the corners.

Mr. Scales, in spite of certain worldly proclivities and a tendency to stay away from church, was a favorite with him, and the real estate man's shrewd business qualities were of considerable assistance to the clergyman in conducting the secular affairs of the church.

"Here's Mr. Stoner, George," said Mrs. Scales brightly, as she ushered the clergyman into the study. "Come to have a nice long business talk."

"How are you, Scales?" began Mr. Stoner heartily, peering in front of him in a short-sighted fashion. "Where are you? Mrs. Scales had almost to tow me up here—I've stupidly left my glasses at home—I expect I've run down as many people in getting here as an automobile."

Mr. Scales grasped the outstretched hand of his visitor, and was beginning to express his pleasure at seeing him, when he stopped, horror-stricken.

From the corner of the room a hoarse voice poured forth a flood of profanity which would have made a male driver blush. Elaborate oaths and insulting criticisms of suppositious physical defects were hurled at the visitor in a steady stream, and among the least offensive of the anathemas Mr. Scales recognized several which he had himself bestowed on the parrot a few hours before.

The effect of the interruption was electrical. Mrs. Scales uttered one horrified exclamation and fled from the room, banging the door behind her. Mr. Scales, dropping the clergyman's hand, fairly staggered back several paces, and Mr. Stoner, when he had recovered from the first shock, drew himself up, the very incarnation of outraged dignity, and stared with half-sightless eyes in the direction of the voice.

"Who is this person, Mr. Scales?" he demanded in icy tones. "Who is this misguided and blasphemous individual who dares thus to assail a minister of the gospel?"

Mr. Scales, after several preliminary gulps, recovered his power of speech.

"It isn't a person, Mr. Stoner," he said hurriedly. "It's a parrot—a da—an abominable parrot, that my wife picked up to-day at a sale. I think he must be possessed by a devil. He's done nothing but make trouble."

Mr. Stoner, groping his way across the room, approached the cage, and stooping down, peered through the wires. The parrot, as if resenting this close scrutiny, eyed him malevolently and repeated some of his remarks in a more subdued tone.

"Poor bird!" said the clergyman. "He doesn't know what he is saying. After all, there are some humans who are hardly more to blame. What dreadful surroundings he must have had. Where on earth did Mrs. Scales pick him up?"

"At the Vandusens' sale," Mr. Scales replied.

"The Vandusens?" Mr. Stoner cried in tones of the utmost astonishment. "The Vandusens? Surely there must be some mistake. With the sole exception of the father, who I still think was more sinned against than sinning, they

are the most truly Christian family I ever had in my flock."

"She bought it," repeated Mr. Scales, with some stiffness, "at the Vandusens' sale. So she told me, and I hardly think she would lie about it."

"No—no," said Mr. Stoner hastily, "and yet—I don't understand it. I knew the family well, and I never heard them mention a parrot. I'm sure they wouldn't harbor so profane a bird as this for an hour."

"I'm sure we didn't know he could talk like that," returned Mr. Scales with some resentment. "It's the first time he's given an exhibition of his powers. I can't think what started him. Funny if the sight of a clergyman brought it out."

Mr. Stoner ignored the remark.

"I think," he said, "that you mentioned some trouble the bird had got you into."

Mr. Scales related the incidents of the afternoon, while the clergyman's eyes twinkled.

"I wish," said Mr. Scales, in conclusion, "that you would tell people—tell it as a joke on me. It's a most awkward position. A man can't go around explaining that he wasn't drunk, and, besides, it sounds a rather fishy story."

"It does," assented Mr. Stoner with disconcerting readiness. "I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, Scales. You see, I can't afford to get the reputation of going about telling jokes on my parishioners. Wouldn't do at all."

"What am I to do, then?" Mr. Scales demanded with some heat.

"Let people see, my dear boy," replied Mr. Stoner, "by your manner of life that such an imputation is unfounded. Take attendance at church, for instance——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Mr. Scales hurriedly, and shying away from the subject. "Of course. About that new church wing, now——"

Mr. Stoner sighed gently, and the two men fell to discussing architecture and church finance, Mr. Scales having first taken the precaution to remove the parrot to an empty bedroom.

"There's one thing sure," said Mr. Scales to his wife, after the clergyman

had taken his departure. "That bird goes to-morrow, if I have to wring his neck. And another thing—I'm going to find out where he came from. I don't believe he belonged to the Vandusens at all."

IV.

AFTER breakfast next morning, Mr. Scales, having carefully covered up the cage with several sheets of paper, called a cab, and conveyed the obnoxious bird down-town.

He drove first to his office, having some important business to transact, and left the parrot in the outer room. His office boy, with the natural curiosity of youth, uncovered the cage sufficiently to let in the light and give him a good view of its inmate, but omitted to replace the paper, with the result that an elderly woman customer was so scandalized by the parrot's language that she left hurriedly without waiting to obtain the information she sought.

His business completed, Mr. Scales, cage in hand, proceeded to the repository of the auctioneer in the adjoining block.

"Do you know this bird?" he demanded sternly of the proprietor.

The auctioneer, who was dusting a chiffonier, suspended his labors and inspected the parrot.

"It looks like old Bradley's parrot," he said. "You mind old Bradley as kep' the saloon on Nassau Street. I sold the bird to a lady yesterday. He's a great talker, they tell me."

"Great talker!" cried Mr. Scales explosively. "I should say he was. What do you mean by selling such a bird to my wife? And how came old Bradley's parrot at the Vandusen sale?"

"Oh, that's easy explained," replied the auctioneer affably. "That's done all the time. Things go off better at a sale of that kind. That's why I put the parrot in. The fact is that since the old man died his widow has been pretty hard up. She begged me to sell the bird for her. Said she hated to part with him, as the old man was so fond of him. It's a wonder, too, the way he was always knocking her about and swearing at her—but she wanted the money. He went dirt cheap, too. What's the matter with him?"

"Matter?" cried Mr. Scales. "His language is something awful. I never heard anything like it. He's got me into no end of trouble. I want you to take him back."

The auctioneer pursed his lips and shook his head gently.

"Couldn't do it, sir," he said. "Mrs. Bradley's got the money. We don't guarantee things we sell that way. Did you try throwing water on him? I've heard that's a good way to cure parrots of swearing."

"I'd like to throw boiling oil on him," replied Mr. Scales, wrathfully. "Look here, I'll leave him with you, and you see if you can sell him."

The auctioneer at once negated the proposal.

"I couldn't hear of it, sir," he said. "Not if he swears the way you say he does. Think of my customers."

"Well *you* could throw water on him," suggested Mr. Scales, argumentatively.

"I've got something else to do than sprinkle parrots," the auctioneer replied with dignity. "No, sir. The best thing you can do is to get rid of the bird by private sale. Maybe one of your bachelor friends might like to have him."

Mr. Scales retired in high dudgeon, and in the course of the morning made several ineffectual attempts to dispose of the bird. He was a conscientious man, and when, in response to pressing inquiries, he recited portions of the parrot's repertoire, negotiations were immediately broken off.

On two occasions when he removed the cover from the cage the parrot saved him the trouble.

When lunch time arrived he was no nearer a solution of the problem, and he drove dejectedly home, like a modern Frankenstein, with his monster occupying the opposite seat, and softly running over, in the gloom of his cage, a few of the more imperfect of his accomplishments.

"It's no use," Mr. Scales said to his wife, as he banged the cage down on the study table and waved one hand in the air, while the other rested on the apex of the wires, "I've tried every way and I can't get rid of it. No one seems to want the brute."

"I'm almost glad, George," replied Mrs. Scales.

"Glad?" shouted Mr. Scales. "Glad?"

"Yes, George," persisted his wife. "Don't you see that if we get rid of it at once nobody will believe we ever had a parrot, and they'll think that what those two horrid women are saying is true. Some of our friends ought to see it."

"And hear it. I suppose," said Mr. Scales, bitterly.

He realized, however, that his wife's argument was not without force, and scowled darkly at the carpet. While he stood revolving in his mind the difficulties which beset his path, he unconsciously slid his hand down the wires until it found a resting-place on the projecting end of the perch.

As Mr. Scales was looking at the floor and Mrs. Scales was looking at him, neither noticed a quick, cunning twist of the parrot's head followed by a stealthy, sidelong movement.

"Well, I suppose we'll have to keep it for a day or two," Mr. Scales said at last in gloomy tones. "But I hate the very sight of the brute—I tell you——"

What Mr. Scales was about to say

will never be known, for at this point the parrot, which had edged silently along its perch until it reached the side of its cage, and had made a minute inspection of the speaker's hand, deftly removed a large piece from the fleshy part of the forefinger.

Mr. Scales's yell of anguish so frightened his wife that she was powerless to avert the tragedy which ensued.

Wrenching open the door of the cage, Mr. Scales thrust in his uninjured hand and, in spite of the indignant and terrified squawks of the parrot, dragged it out, twisted its neck, and dashed it to the floor.

"Oh, George!" cried Mrs. Scales, in tears. "You've killed it."

"I hope I have," said Mr. Scales, sucking his wounded finger and glaring at the motionless form at his feet. "Serves it right."

The parrot opened an eye, swore twice in a feeble voice, shivered its feathers, and expired.

"Fifteen dollars thrown clean away," sobbed Mrs. Scales, with her handkerchief at her eyes.

"Hang the fifteen dollars," retorted Mr. Scales savagely, as he stalked out of the room to hunt up a bandage.

KING OR COUNTERFEIT?*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "Caught," "No Way Out," "Flat-Broke," and "Who and Why?"

A challenge that was unaccountable, followed by a discovery that electrified.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MADNESS OF WILLIS.

WHEN Duval entered the reception-room of the Princess Cornelia, the scowl had disappeared from his face and he had fully recovered his usual self-possession.

"Inform her royal highness that the Baron Duval desires to deliver to her a special message from his majesty," he commanded the flunky.

When the princess entered the room

her manner was haughty. She detested the king's private secretary.

She could give no reason for this dislike. There are men whom people hate without knowing why they hate them, and Duval belonged to this class.

"Well?" said the princess. "What is this message which the king sends to me, baron?"

She addressed him in almost the same tone she would have used to a lackey, and it was all the king's secretary could do to repress a scowl.

*This story began in the November, 1906, issue of THE ARGOSY. The four back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 40 cents.

"It is a message of such importance, your highness," he replied, "that he felt he could not entrust it to anybody but your humble servant."

"Doubtless he showed great wisdom in his choice of a messenger," remarked the princess icily. "What is the message, baron?"

"It is regarding the matter of your marriage, your highness," said the Frenchman, with a low bow.

"Of my marriage!" exclaimed the princess in genuine surprise.

"His majesty believes that you are aware of the fact that it is the wish of the people and of the parliament of Nordinia that the wedding shall take place as soon as possible. The king is anxious to conform to the wishes of his subjects. He has sent me, your royal highness, to ask you to be kind enough to name an early date for the ceremony."

The red blood rushed to the cheeks of the Princess Cornelia and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"And could not his majesty have come here personally on such an errand?" she cried angrily. "I have never credited the king with overmuch delicacy or refinement, it is true, but I should have thought that even he would have realized the propriety of asking such a question in person. How dare he humiliate me in this way? Does he think that I am obliged to marry him—that I dare not refuse? Such must be his opinion, since he sees fit to make his proposal through hirelings."

"Hirelings, your highness!" cried Duval, his face white with rage.

"I beg your pardon, baron. It was a slip of the tongue," said the princess. "I did not mean quite that. Will you please go back to his majesty and tell him my answer is that he is taking too much for granted? Tell him that I have not yet accepted his offer of marriage. Tell him that if, in his desire to please his subjects he would marry me and desires me to name an early day for the wedding, he must come here in person and plead for my answer. Tell him, even though he is King of Nordinia, I am the Princess Cornelia and not to be insulted by a man in whose veins is peasant blood, even though he sits upon a throne."

"But, your highness——" began Duval.

"That is all, baron," said the princess with finality. "Go to him and deliver my message."

The king's secretary felt a strong desire to swear.

"Confound him," he mused, "I thought it would turn out this way. I urged him to come here in person and ask for his answer like a man; but the wretched coward was afraid—afraid to face a young girl. Bah! He is not fit to be a king. The throne of Nordinia is many sizes too big for him."

Aloud he said:

"Perhaps your highness will be kind enough to listen to me. I would like to explain why the king did not come in person; why he sent your most humble servant to speak for him."

"Go on," rejoined the princess. "I will listen."

"Perhaps you may have noticed that his majesty, brave in all other things, is timid when it comes to matters of the heart. Not knowing what your answer would be, he shrank from coming here in person to face his fate. I assure your highness that he is awaiting most anxiously in the palace for my return, a prey to the greatest impatience, and that as soon as I have assured him that your answer is favorable, he will hasten here in person to express his appreciation and heartfelt joy."

"A pretty speech," said the princess scornfully. "But unhappily lacking in truth. It is perhaps unfortunate for Nordinia, baron, that you are not the king and his majesty your private secretary. You at least have polish and a smooth tongue, both of which the king apparently lacks."

"Your highness must be kind enough to bear in mind that his majesty's early days were spent in the wilds of America," interposed Duval hastily.

The princess was about to reply when suddenly the door of the reception-room opened and somebody entered unannounced.

It was Willis! Duval's first thought was to turn his head to avoid recognition; but he suddenly recalled what the king's surgeon had told him—that the young American's mind was a blank—

that he did not even know his own name.

So the Frenchman surveyed his old-time enemy from head to foot with a half-smile upon his evil face.

Willis returned the Frenchman's look without a sign of recognition in his eyes. It was true that he fastened upon Duval a concentrated gaze; but apparently it was the meaningless stare of a person of weak mind.

"Do not mind him," whispered the princess to Duval. "This is the young man we found in the cave. His reason has gone. I suppose you have heard about the poor fellow?"

"Yes, your highness. The king spoke to me of him. How he stares at me! One would almost think he knew me."

"It is merely his way," said the princess gently. "He is like a little child."

She turned to Willis with the intention of gently ordering him from the room, when suddenly the unfortunate young man uttered a wild cry and rushed at Duval.

Before the surprised Frenchman could raise a hand to ward off the attack, Willis had seized him fiercely by the throat with both hands.

In a second the mild-mannered imbecile had become a dangerous maniac.

The princess uttered a scream of horror as the two men, struggling desperately, staggered, swayed, and fell to the floor, the American uppermost and still maintaining a strangle hold on the Frenchman's throat.

Duval made desperate efforts to free himself, but in vain. The savage, relentless hold tightened and he began to cough and gasp.

His tongue lolled from his mouth. His eyes protruded and his complexion began to assume a blackish hue.

"He's killing him! He's killing him!" screamed the princess. "Help! Help!"

At her call frightened lackeys rushed into the room and fell upon Willis, dragging him from his victim by main force.

All the while Willis was laughing wildly.

"The Frenchman! The Frenchman!" he cried exultingly. "At last! At last! He tried to kill me three times,

and now I've killed him. Hurrah! Hurrah! We'll win out yet. We'll throw the fakir from the throne he's stolen and save the Princess Cornelia. Hurrah! Hurrah!"

He struggled furiously as they tore him from his prostrate victim.

"Get doctors, quick! Get doctors, quick!" cried the frenzied princess. "See! The baron is unconscious. Oh, what a terrible sight! I should have listened to the doctor and had him put away in an asylum. I didn't think he'd get violent like this. Oh, how terrible! Look to the Baron Duval, some of you. Don't stand there like dumb fools. Get doctors at once, before it is too late."

But it was already too late.

Pierre Duval was dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

SANITY.

THEY took Willis below and locked him in a stone-walled cellar.

He was quite quiet now and seemed dazed at the realization of what he had done.

By the time Baron Zilla, the king's surgeon, arrived, the Princess Cornelia was violently hysterical and prostrated by the shock.

Being too late to save the unfortunate Duval, the king's surgeon went up-stairs to minister to the princess.

"Oh, baron! baron!" cried the terrified girl, as the physician entered her chamber. "If I had only listened to your advice, I ought to have had the young monster put away as you suggested. Then this could not have happened. Oh, it was terrible to see him choking the life out of the unfortunate baron. Duval is not a weak man, but he was powerless in that madman's grasp. He seemed possessed of the strength of ten men. Oh, it was terrible!"

"Calm yourself, your highness," said the surgeon gently. "You must not allow that sight to occupy your mind. You must think of more pleasant subjects."

"Oh, but I cannot think of anything else. That sight is always before me. I shall never be able to get it out of my eyes. He entered the room so quietly

and peacefully that I did not dream there was any danger. Then he stared at Baron Duval with a fixed stare. I did not think that that meant anything. He has a habit of looking at strangers that way; but suddenly he sprang at the king's secretary as a cat springs at a mouse and then—then it was all over in a minute."

"Humph!" exclaimed the physician. "You must not think of it, your highness."

"But I cannot help thinking of it, baron. And the strange part of the horrible occurrence is that the young monster seems to have recovered some of his memory. While he was choking the life out of poor Baron Duval he was yelling that he would 'kill the Frenchman.' He knew that he was a Frenchman. He mentioned my name, too."

"Ha!" exclaimed the king's surgeon, his interest aroused. "That is remarkable, your highness. Can you remember exactly what he said?"

"He said something about the Frenchman having tried three times to kill him, and now he was going to kill the Frenchman. He spoke also of driving the king from his throne and saving the Princess Cornelia."

"A most remarkable symptom," said the surgeon, "I should like to see this young man. Where is he?"

"My men have locked him up in a cellar where he is out of harm's way," replied the princess with a shudder. "I suppose I must hand him over to the police now."

After the baron had administered a soothing potion to his patient he went down-stairs and bade some of the servants take him to where Willis was confined.

There was a small iron grating in the cellar door and through this grating the eminent surgeon gazed at the unfortunate ensign.

Willis was sitting dejectedly on an empty wine cask.

As the face of the baron peered through the bars he jumped to his feet and said in a calm, dispassionate voice.

"I suppose you have come to take me away. I am ready for you. Come on! You need not fear. I am not armed and I will go with you peacefully."

The king's physician understood English and was surprised to hear this rational talk.

"He's saner now than he was before," he said to himself. "He seems to know what he's talking about. It's a most remarkable case. Most remarkable."

"Do you know what you have done, young man?" he asked sternly.

"Yes," replied Willis sullenly, "I have killed Lieutenant Duval."

The straightforward answer again surprised the surgeon.

"Why did you kill him?" he asked.

"He deserved it," replied Willis. "He tried to kill me three times. The first time, fairly and squarely in a duel he forced me into. The second time, he sent me an infernal machine. The third time he lured me to a cave and his hired thugs did their best to kill me. He deserved to die, but I did not mean to kill him. I don't know how I came to spring at him in that way. I don't seem to be able to remember anything that occurred before that terrible minute. All I can remember is seeing him standing there before me with a wicked grin on his face."

"Then suddenly all the hatred that there was in me urged me forward and I rushed over to him and seized him by the throat. I must have gone suddenly crazy, I think. However, I'm not trying to dodge the consequences. I've committed the crime and I'm ready to take my medicine. What's the penalty for committing murder in this country?"

"Hanging," answered the baron grimly.

The ensign sighed.

"All right," he said resignedly. "So be it."

"He appears to be quite sane," mused the surgeon. "At all events, whether he's sane or not sane, his memory has come back to him. It's a most remarkable case."

"I ask only one favor," said Willis, through the grating.

"And what may that be?" inquired the baron.

"I would like an audience with the Princess Cornelia as soon as possible."

"Why do you wish an audience with the princess?" asked the king's surgeon sharply.

"I understand that she is to marry the King of Nordinia very shortly. I want to warn her against wedding the man who calls himself king, and at present sits upon the throne."

"Calls himself king?" repeated the astonished baron.

"Yes. For he is not the king. He is an impostor. He has stolen the throne of Nordinia. If the princess does not heed my warning she will be married to a swindler instead of a king."

"Ah!" sighed the baron. "He is insane after all. I thought his recovery was complete, but I see he still has strongly seated delusions. It is not as interesting a case as I at first thought."

"I suppose you think I am crazy," said Willis as though he had divined the surgeon's unspoken thought. "I am not, I assure you. I am thoroughly sane. I knew the real Carl Richard Felix in America and will make affidavit that he was an entirely different man to the fellow they have crowned king. The poor devil of a Frenchman was in the plot. That is why he tried to kill me on three separate occasions. He knew that I was in possession of the conspirators' secret and that while I remained at large they were in danger of exposure, so he tried to put me out of the way. Every word I am telling you is the truth."

"Insane! Insane!" muttered the king's surgeon, shaking his head disappointedly.

"If only I could get five minutes interview with the Princess Cornelia and tell her the whole story, I feel sure that I could make her believe me."

"Well, tell me the whole story," said the surgeon. "And I'll communicate it to the princess. You won't be able to get an audience with her for several days to come."

"Who are you?" asked Willis suspiciously. "An officer of the law I presume?"

"No. I am the Baron Zilla, surgeon to his majesty the king. You can speak freely to me, young man."

The baron still believed the other to be insane, but he was an extremely cautious man, so he decided to hear everything Willis had to tell.

The young American related the whole story in detail, from the day he first met Carl Richard Felix on the foot-

ball field to the adventure in the cave which had almost proved fatal to him.

The baron listened carefully, and as the story progressed became more and more interested.

"But you say that the real Carl Richard Felix has a seal branded on his shoulder," he exclaimed when the ensign had finished. "Now I happen to know, young man, that the king has this very seal branded on his right shoulder. I have seen it. A few days before the coronation his majesty was seized with a slight cold and I attended him. In examining his lungs I had to bare his right shoulder and I noticed the curious brand there. How do you account for that?"

"It is a forgery," said Willis, earnestly. "It must be. I am sure of it, baron. I'm positive that that man is not the real King of Nordinia. If you love your country, sir, you will take heed of what I am telling you."

"But you have no proofs. There is nothing to substantiate your strange, incredible story."

"Well—my chum, Ensign Cales of the battleship Arizona, can confirm a great deal of what I have told you. He knows that I met the real Carl Richard Felix on the football field; he knows that the Frenchman sought a quarrel with me and challenged me to a duel without any real cause. He knows that I received a cigar-box containing an infernal machine. He can at least tell you that that part of my story is true.

"There are many persons in America who know the real Carl Richard Felix—men who were at college with him. If these fellows saw this fake king they would detect the imposture at a glance."

"Well, why did you not cable some of these men to come over here instead of taking all those risks to secure those snapshots?" inquired the baron, intensely interested in the young man's strange story despite his better judgment.

"Perhaps that is what I should have done," admitted Willis. "I suppose I have been too impulsive and rash in going about this thing. I realize that now. It would have been better if I had waited until I got back to America, I suppose, and could have seen some of those fellows and got them interested in

my story. But no, on second thoughts, I could not have done that. You see, it would have been too late. Our squadron won't return to America for months to come. In the meantime the princess will have married the fake king. I wanted to prevent that and save the princess, if possible."

"Well, you could have written to them and told your story by letter, urging them to come over," suggested the baron.

Willis shook his head.

"Would they have believed me? Everybody I tell this story to thinks me crazy. I realize that. To talk about a swindler stealing a throne in these days does sound like a wild yarn.

"They would have thrown my letters aside as the letters of a crank. We Americans are very practical. An American would not take a trip to Nordinia to expose an impostor to the throne unless he had a good reason to believe that there was an impostor to expose. If I could have sent them photographs of this fake king, however, they would have seen at a glance that there was truth to my story and then probably some of them would have come over here."

"Perhaps you are right," said the baron. "But, of course, I don't believe a word of your story," he added hastily.

As a matter of fact, though, he thought enough of it to repeat it to the princess word for word, a few hours afterward, when she had partially recovered from the shock she had experienced.

The princess listened carefully.

"Of course there is not a word of truth in the young lunatic's story," added the baron in conclusion. "I tell it to your highness, however, thinking it may interest you. Still, he talks like a sane man. And yet the story sounds preposterous."

"I'm not so sure," said the princess, shaking her head. "To tell you the truth, baron, I've had a sort of instinctive suspicion of the king and his unfortunate private secretary for some days. The face of that poor Frenchman was of villainous mold. He looked to me like a fellow capable of any crime. As for his master the king—he's always seemed to me more of a counterfeit than a king. I think this young man may

be telling the truth. At any rate, I am going to investigate very carefully. We will send for the premier—Baron Zagart, at once."

CHAPTER XXII.

KING OR COUNTERFEIT?

WHEN the Princess Cornelia related to Baron Zagart Willis's story, the aged premier shook his head.

"This is not the first time I have heard this wild yarn, your highness," he said. "I have heard of this American and his baseless suspicions before. The American minister and the admiral of the American squadron came to see me about the same matter a few days ago.

"I told them, as I tell you now, your highness, that the story is impossible. I exacted the most convincing proofs before I would accept the present incumbent of the throne as the rightful King of Nordinia. It is not possible that I could have been deceived."

He then proceeded to tell the princess the same story he had told Minister Caruthers and Admiral Rempton.

"Well, it does look as if you could have made no mistake, Baron Zagart," admitted the princess, a shade of disappointment in her voice. "You certainly received the best of proofs as to the identity of Carl Richard. Nevertheless, I feel that this young American's story ought to be looked into. It is just possible that a mistake has been made, despite your elaborate precautions and convincing proofs. I do not intend to take the serious step of marrying this man while there is the slightest doubt in my mind. We must go to the palace and question the king."

The aged premier gasped with horror.

"Accuse the king to his face of being an impostor!" he cried. "Your highness surely is only joking. Why! Such a step would be unprecedented."

"The circumstances of the case warrant an unprecedented step," replied the princess.

"But such an accusation would be an insult, your highness—an insult to his majesty the king. Surely you are only joking."

"On the contrary, baron, I am very serious," replied the princess. "It is scarcely a subject to joke about. Have no fear, baron! Leave the handling to a woman's wit. I shall do my best to put this matter before the king without hurting his feelings too much. Let us go to the palace at once."

Very much against his will, the premier finally consented to accompany the princess.

His majesty was feeling in very poor shape.

He had received news of the Baron Duval's tragic death, and the intelligence had completely unnerved him.

It was being whispered around the palace that he had become hysterical; had cried wildly: "What will become of me? What will become of me?"

Baron Zilla was in attendance on the king.

"His majesty is indisposed and can see nobody," the king's chamberlain informed the visitors.

"You hear, your highness," said the aged premier, with a ray of hope. "Perhaps we can see the king about this matter some other time."

"Not at all," said the princess firmly. "We must see him now. I shall take no refusal. It is a matter of great importance."

"It is impossible, your highness," stammered the chamberlain. "The king is too unwell to see anybody—even your highness."

"You will tell the king," said the princess imperiously, "that I have come to give him an answer to the message he sent to me earlier to-day. Tell him we want a private audience and that we will not detain him many minutes. You might mention to him also that I, too, was prostrated by the shocking tragedy; but that I managed to pull myself together sufficiently to come here, and therefore he must receive me."

"Why is your highness so insistent?" asked the premier, when the chamberlain had retired to deliver this message. "If the king is indisposed, we can scarcely expect him to see us. Would not this matter wait until to-morrow?"

"No," replied the princess. "It is because the king is indisposed that I am determined to see him now. It will be

very much to our advantage. The king's indisposition is doubtless caused by the news of the death of his private secretary. He is probably unnerved. Perhaps you may have noticed, baron, that he leaned upon that Frenchman like a cripple upon a staff. I noticed it. He must feel his secretary's loss keenly. If we can confront him in his present nervous condition we may be able to wring a confession from him."

"Your highness seems already convinced that the king is an impostor," said the baron with a reproving smile.

The chamberlain came down-stairs a few minutes afterward and reported that his majesty would see the princess and the premier in his private apartments, since her highness was so insistent.

The king looked very ill when they entered his presence. He was able to sit up, but his face was deathly pale and his eyes shifted nervously. He seemed very near the point of collapse.

The princess smiled with grim satisfaction as she noticed his condition.

"If he really is an impostor," she thought, "he is certainly in a condition which augurs well for the success of our errand."

"I am sorry to have to disturb your majesty," she began aloud, "but we have come to see you on a matter of great importance—a matter that would not wait."

"You mean the matter of our marriage. You have come to give me your answer to the message I sent you by——" the king stopped short and shuddered.

"The message you should have delivered in person," said the princess haughtily. "Your majesty may be in ignorance of the manner in which a king should act, but you should at least be aware of the courtesy due a woman. However, we will let that pass. I have come to give you my answer, your majesty."

"For the sake of Nordinia, I am willing to accept your offer of marriage; but first of all I must be assured as to one important fact."

"What is that?" asked the king.

"That you really are the King of Nordinia," replied the princess quickly, and her penetrating glance was fastened upon the other's face.

"What do you mean?" stammered the king, his bloodless cheeks turning a greenish hue, and his eyes blinking nervously.

"I mean, your majesty. If you are your majesty, that there are grave doubts in Nordinia as to whether you are really the king. There are those who say that you are nothing more than an impostor."

"Your highness," cried the aged premier in dismay.

"Who says that? It's a lie!" stammered the king.

"There are many who make the charge and declare that they can produce proofs," went on the princess, noting that the king's eyes could not meet hers. "There are men in America who know the real Carl Richard Felix, and who will swear that you and he are two very different persons——"

"Your highness! Your highness!" cried the premier aghast. "What are you saying? Oh, take care what you are saying!"

"I am saying what is the truth," cried the princess excitedly. "Before, I only suspected that this fellow was an impostor, but I am sure of it now. Look at his face, baron. Look at his face! See how his eyes avoid mine. Let him look me in the eyes and swear that he is Carl Richard Felix, the rightful King of Nordinia."

The muscles of the king's face twitched convulsively. He tried to open his mouth to speak, but the words would not come.

"Let him look me in the eyes and swear that he is the real King of Nordinia," repeated the Princess Cornelia, triumphantly. "He can't do it. He can't do it."

The wretched man pointed a shaking finger toward the aged Baron Zagart.

"Ask him," he gasped. "He knows. I gave him proofs."

"You gave him manufactured proofs," said the princess scornfully. "You impostor! Your looks betray you. You are not the king. I know it now. I am sure of it."

The denounced man, still avoiding the eyes of the princess, pointed a trembling finger to his right shoulder.

"I hear the mark here which proves

me the rightful king," he gasped. "The Baron Zagart knows it."

"Yes, your majesty," cried the horrified premier. "Pardon the princess for what she says. Her highness is not herself. She does not mean what she says. She is unnerved by the terrible death of Baron Duval."

As he uttered the name, the king uttered a loud cry.

"Duval! Duval!" he shrieked in anguish. "Why did you leave me? Oh, why did you leave me here alone? I can't go on with this thing now. I can't keep it up. I thought I could, but I can't. I haven't got the courage."

He fell from his chair to the floor and groveled at the feet of the princess, a terrible spectacle.

"Have mercy!" he moaned. "I will confess everything. I am not the king."

"Who are you, then?" asked the princess, her voice full of scorn.

"Forgive me. I am Anton Gaspard—the son of Carl Gaspard," replied the wretched man.

"Anton Gaspard!" cried the aged baron in horror. "Good Heaven! the son of my discharged valet! The son of a lackey I dismissed for theft!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONFESSION.

For a full minute a tense silence prevailed. Even the princess was too much surprised to be able to utter a word.

She glanced at the premier. Tears of mortification stood in the old man's eyes and his hands trembled.

Finally the princess found her voice.

"Shall I summon the guard and have him arrested?" she asked, turning to Baron Zagart.

"Have mercy!" pleaded the wretched impostor, still groveling on the floor.

The princess took a step toward the bell-cord.

"Stop!" cried the premier. "Be careful, your highness. Do not do anything rash, or the consequences may be terrible. If this awful scandal leaks out there will be a revolution. The son of a valet—the son of a thief—on the throne of Nordinia! Oh, great Heavens, how horrible!"

"But this scandal must leak out some time. The truth has got to be known," said the princess.

"We must have time to think. We must be very careful what we do," whispered the wretched premier. "Oh, this villain shall suffer for this. He shall rue the day he deceived me. My honorable reputation has gone forever."

The old man broke down and wept like a child.

"Calm yourself, baron," said the princess compassionately. "The scoundrels managed this imposture cleverly enough to deceive anybody. Let us hear how they worked it. Tell us everything, you miserable one, if you hope for any mercy."

"Yes—yes," cried the wretched man. "I will tell you everything. Have mercy on me. I am not really so much to blame. It was that fellow Duval who persuaded me to do it—Duval, who is now dead. I swear it."

"Begin at the beginning," commanded the princess sternly.

"I will," said the man who was still King of Nordinia. "It was Duval who first conceived the plot. It was Duval who did most toward carrying it out. It was Duval who instructed me in every move I made. It was Duval who urged me on whenever I faltered and was afraid. I was only a tool in Duval's hands. I was, indeed.

"Duval knew my father, Carl Gaspard, who was once valet to the baron here. When the baron visited America, many years ago, my father accompanied him. When Prince Carl Richard, brother of the late king, called on the baron in Washington, accompanied by his little boy, and told the baron that he was the prince, and showed him the seal mark he had branded on his son's shoulder, my father was listening through the keyhole.

"When the prince gave the baron a piece of parchment on which was a duplicate of the seal, my father made up his mind he would see that piece of parchment.

"Afterward he did manage to lay his hands on it, took it away, unknown to the baron, and made a careful copy of the seal. My father was quite clever at drafting. Then he returned the parch-

ment to the safe in which the baron kept it.

"My father had no particular object in doing this. He simply took a copy of that seal, thinking it might come useful to him some time.

"Afterward he grew very friendly with the Frenchman Duval. He told him about the visit of the prince and about the seal mark on the young boy's shoulder.

"Duval wasn't interested at the time, but some years later, when he learned that the King of Nordinia was suffering from an incurable malady and that it was supposed there was no heir to the throne, an idea entered his mind.

"It was a daring idea; only a man of Duval's nerve and daring could have conceived it. Duval planned to have a duplicate seal made from the design my father had copied and to brand that seal on my right shoulder.

"I was the same age as the real Carl Richard Felix, Jr., and I had been brought up in America, my father having emigrated out there after he was caught stealing by the baron and discharged from his service.

"I was duly branded and then we bided our time. Duval's original plan was to kill the real Carl Richard Felix, so that he could not interfere with my impersonation of him. Fortunately, however, we did not have to resort to murder.

"After he left college the real Carl Richard mysteriously disappeared. We made a careful search and discovered that an unknown man answering his description was drowned by the upsetting of a canoe in Canada. The body was never recovered, but there is little doubt that it was he.

"When the baron recently visited America for the second time to seek the real Carl Richard, and advertised for him in the newspapers, our plans were all carefully laid.

"Duval instructed me minutely as to how I should conduct myself. My father described to me several little incidents which had happened during the visit of the prince to the baron in Washington, years before. He described to me also a curious ring he had noticed on the baron's finger at the time.

"By means of this information, I was able to visit the baron at the Waldorf and convince him that I was the man who, as a little boy, had been brought

Prince Carl Richard to see him in London. When I bared my shoulder

showed the imprint of the seal, I was completely deceived."

"You scoundrel!" cried the aged premier at this point, his fists clenched and his face red with rage.

"Forgive me," moaned young Gaspard. "It was Duval who made me do it. That man possessed a terrible power over me."

"You deserve to be hanged," muttered the baron. "But go on with your infamous confession. How did you get those respectable young men—those college graduates who identified you as the real Carl Richard?"

"Those men were not respectable young men, they were some of the smartest swindlers in America, hired by Duval for the purpose," explained the impostor.

Despite the gravity of the occasion, the princess could scarcely avoid smiling at this disclosure. The baron's chagrin was pitiful.

"And dared you hope that this wretched conspiracy would go through undetected? Did you really think you could steal the throne of Nordinia without being exposed sooner or later?" she inquired.

"I was always afraid, but Duval was confident," answered the counterfeit king. "Whenever I would express any fear, Duval would tell me to have courage and would declare that we could not fail. I was sure that sooner or later men who knew the real Carl Richard would come to Nordinia and would detect the imposture; but Duval said that once I was crowned king nobody would listen to these people.

"To make assurance doubly sure, however, Duval planned that I should marry the Princess Cornelia as soon as possible. Duval reckoned that once I was married to the princess, the government of Nordinia would not dare expose me even if they discovered the imposture."

The princess and the baron uttered an exclamation of horror.

"You wretches!" cried the princess.

"It was Duval's idea—not mine," pleaded the other. "We came to Nordinia and I was crowned. Everything seemed to be going well. From the first day I met your highness, though, I was always in deadly fear. There was something about your eyes which frightened me. I knew that sooner or later you would discover my deceit; I could feel it.

"I mentioned my fears to Duval, but he only laughed at me and urged me to marry you as soon as possible."

The princess's face went white.

"I was against this whole thing from the start," the man whined. "But Duval made me do it. He was always telling me that I was a misfit king and that he was sorry he bore such a distinctly French face or he'd have been tempted to play the part himself.

"As it was, he chose to be my private secretary so that he could always be near me to advise me when anything went wrong. I don't think he contrived this plot for his personal gain. I really don't. I think it was just his daring and his love of conspiracy which made him think of it. He was a wonderful man."

"And what of the young American—the man who killed Duval? Why did Duval hate him?" asked the princess.

"Oh, yes. You mean Ensign Willis. Duval met him in New York. Duval had nothing against him personally, but he knew too much, so Duval did his best to put him out of the way. Once he challenged him to a duel. Duval is a crack shot. Then he paid a man in America to send Willis an infernal machine.

"That plan failed, however, so recently Duval contrived an ambush and through the aid of a woman friend, who would move heaven and earth to serve Duval, he lured Willis to a cave, where he had men waiting to despatch him. Even that scheme failed. That cursed fox chanced to run into the very cave where Willis lay dying.

"Everything seems to have gone wrong. I've stood it as long as I could. When Duval was here to advise me, I could carry out the deception; but now that I'm alone I could not go on with it. I have confessed everything. Please be merciful with me."

"What shall we do with him?" asked the princess of the premier.

"Our course is plain," replied the baron grimly. "To avert a terrible scandal there is only one thing for us to do. The king must be found dead to-morrow. He must die suddenly—of heart failure."

"No—no," cried Gaspard, in terror. "Don't kill me—don't kill me. I am not fit to die. Have mercy on me!"

The princess shuddered.

"Is this absolutely necessary, baron?" she whispered.

"It is," answered the premier gravely. "His life is forfeit in any case. He is the son of a Nordinian, and therefore, by the laws of our country, guilty of treason, which is, as you know, punishable by death—death on the gallows. The wretch must choose between that sort of death or an end by which he can make partial reparation to his country for the wrong he has done. He can take his choice."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW IT TURNED OUT.

WHAT followed is more or less a matter of newspaper history.

His majesty, King Carl Richard of Nordinia, was found dead in his royal bed next morning, and Baron Zilla, surgeon to the king, pronounced the death due to heart failure.

The whole country was unutterably shocked, and the world sympathized.

Messages of condolence poured in from every country. Baron Zagart, the aged premier, announced the death of his sovereign in the lower chamber of the Nordinian Parliament.

There were tears in the old man's eyes, and his voice broke several times, as he spoke of the great loss his country had sustained and of the splendid qualities and numerous virtues of the dead king. His panegyric was so eloquent that most of his hearers were in tears before he had proceeded far.

The people of Nordinia were anxious to look upon the features of their dead monarch—a last farewell look as is the usual custom in such cases. But this privilege was denied them. The funeral arrangements were somewhat hurried.

This occasioned some comment and quite a little criticism. The people of Nordinia felt that they had been cheated of their rights, and also that scant respect had been shown their sovereign.

Ensign Robert Willis to this day declares that there was good reason for this unseemly haste on the part of the Nordinian authorities. He affirms that he is positive that the man who was buried in royal state was not the King of Nordinia, nor even the impostor who had called himself the King of Nordinia and usurped the throne.

His theory is that the aged Premier Zagart, not wishing to commit the crime of murder, and at the same time being anxious above all things to avert a scandal, availed himself of a subterfuge by no means unknown in history, and caused the body of an unknown pauper to be interred in the royal mausoleum, while the late counterfeit king was allowed to leave the country in disguise.

Of course, this is only a theory on the part of Ensign Willis; but Willis's theories are listened to more politely now, even by Ensign Richard Cales.

While the government of Nordinia has never admitted to anybody that it was buncoed out of its throne, Ensign Willis had the satisfaction of receiving a visit from no less eminent a personage than Baron Zagart, who begged him to accept the sum of ten thousand dollars as a slight token of friendship and admiration, and requested him kindly to do his best to forget a certain wild story about a fakir on a throne.

Willis gave his promise never to repeat what he knew on that subject to anybody.

The ensign fully recovered from his sad mental condition after his fatal struggle with the villainous Frenchman, Duval. By the testimony of Baron Zilla, the eminent surgeon, to the effect that the American was insane when he attacked Duval (which was undoubtedly the case), Willis was able to get off scot free. It is also a pleasure to record that on account of secret representations made to Washington by the government of Nordinia, Willis also escaped punishment for his wilful violation of naval rules and his defiance of his admiral.

After the death of the fraudulent Carl Richard Nordinia did not become a republic.

The sagacious Baron Zagart suddenly bethought him that it would not be a very difficult matter to change the constitution of Nordinia so that a woman could sit upon the throne. This was done despite the protests of the radical party, and the Princess Cornelia became queen.

Her marriage to a certain German prince followed soon afterward, and they are very happy.

Not infrequently they make an excursion to a certain cave situated five miles from Nordin.

The princess is very fond of this cave. "If it had not been for that fox running in here," she sometimes whispers to the prince, "we might never have learned the truth of that horrible conspiracy, and I might have married the counterfeit king. How I love every inch of this weird spot."

But Ensign Willis, on the other hand, can never think of that cave without a shudder.

THE END.

ART ON THE RAMPAGE.

BY HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY.

Concerning certain original methods of winning a wager.

ONE day last summer a lot of us fellows were sitting out in front of Joe Beam's tavern talking over the possibilities of this, that, and the other thing when there came a crash from the bar-room that sounded like a whole shelf full of bottles had broken down.

We all piled in to see what the row was, and there in the middle of the floor stood a strange chap with a rock in his hand that he was just going to heave into the big mirror that hung behind the bar.

"Hey, what're you trying to do there?" yelled Joe, making a dive for him and shaking the rock out of his hand.

"I was about to put a finishing touch to that mirror," answered the man, waving his hand toward it as he spoke.

Joe looked at his glass and promptly froze up like a setter pup pointing a robin. Right smack in the middle of the thing was a smash as big as a watermelon, with cracks radiating from it like the rays of a painted sun.

He didn't wait to ask any more questions, but dug into that stranger so vehemently that it at once took the combined efforts of all of the rest of us to save him from immediate and complete annihilation.

"This is no way to treat a gentleman,"

he puffed, as soon as we had him and Joe disintegrated.

"What'd you break that mirror for then?" demanded Joe.

The man looked at the glass and then at Joe with a real pitying expression.

"Do you think that mirror's broken?" he asked.

"Think!" yelled Joe. "Why, darn your hide, I *know* it's broken."

"I am of the opinion that you are laboring under a hallucination."

"You are, hey? Well, maybe I am, but my eyes ain't and they say that glass is broken. You broke it and you're going to pay for it."

"My dear sir, I assure you that you are mistaken. I have splendid eyesight myself, and I am quite certain that, with the exception of the dirt and grime, your mirror is without a flaw, crack, or blemish."

I saw Joe begin to soften. He has a brother in the asylum.

"Oh, that's all right, old man," he said. "Of course it ain't broken. Make yourself comfortable until your friends or keeper arrive."

"Oh, you needn't think I am crazy," snapped the man with asperity. "I can see that you don't believe what I tell you. Wouldn't you like to bet something that it is broken?"

"Sure," said Joe soothingly. "Sure thing. I'll bet you a million dollars."

"No, I wouldn't want to bet so much as that, but let's bet the drinks all round."

"All right, let's," answered Joe, ready to do anything to humor the man he thought was off his trolley.

The stranger took him by the arm and led him around to the mirror. Then taking a bottle of turpentine and a rag out of his pocket he went after those cracks, and in five minutes had the glass as clean as a whistle. The cracks weren't anything but paint.

That was our introduction to Uly. He passed around some cards on which was printed:

"Ulysus Rutherford Dunne, Artist."

"Gentlemen," says he, "I have come to your little town with the intention of making it my future home. I am, by profession, an artist, as my work on the mirror will testify. I took the liberty of painting those cracks when the room happened to be empty, just to demonstrate my ability. In a few days I will open a studio here, where I will be prepared to do portrait, landscape, and pastoral paintings; signs, lettering, and so forth."

And so it was that Uly settled down in our midst. He wasn't a bad sort of citizen either. Curious, as all geniuses are, but a right good fellow and jovial.

He had a dozen brushes that he used to carry in his vest pocket. Curious contraptions they were, about a foot long, hollow and filled with different colored paints. Worked something like fountain pens.

And how that fellow could paint. Anything you wanted, didn't make any difference what, he'd paint it.

Painted a head of hair on Lute Page's bald pate that was so natural everybody thought he had a wig on. The colored barber tried to comb it and was so scared that he left town that night.

There was a fellow named Jimmy Nolan lived here those days. Jimmy organized a football team among the town boys and used to take 'em around the State playing other teams for gate receipts and occasionally a small side bet.

The year Uly came Nolan had the crack team of the State. Everywhere

they went they registered a victory, and they were playing everything that came along.

The whole town was interested in that team and mighty proud of it. I can tell you. Used to meet them at the train with a brass band and haul them up through Main Street in the band wagon every time they came home from a game, whooping and yelling and carrying on like a Presidential election.

That is, everybody but Uly. He didn't like Nolan a bit and anything Nolan had an interest in was something you couldn't interest Uly in nohow.

When Nolan used to come down to Joe's place of an evening and tell us how he'd won the last game, Uly would sit in the corner and snort and grunt and show a general contempt for everything Nolan said. One night he got more obstreperous than usual, and Nolan sort o' lost his temper.

"What's the matter with you, you knocker?" he inquired, bristling up and walking over to where Uly was sitting.

"Aw, it makes me tired to hear you brag so."

"Who's bragging?"

"Why, you are, of course. You go chasing around the State with your little half-baked team, playing a lot of dinky little outfits that don't know a football from a punching-bag, and just because you happen to be a little stronger and don't get beat you think you are a football team. Why don't you line up with something that can play football? They'd take the conceit out of you blame quick."

"Oh, they would? Perhaps you know of a team somewhere in the State that would like to try it."

"Huh, I could organize one right here in town that could put it all over yours if I had three weeks in which to train them."

"You don't say so. Well, you go ahead and produce that team and I'll just lay you ten to one that they don't last as long as a snowball in an oven."

"Do you mean that?" asked Uly, brightening up. "For if you do I've got one hundred dollars that I'll put up at those odds."

"Put it in Joe's hands and I will cover it," answered Nolan.

"In just two minutes," retorted Uly, jumping up and starting for the door. "My money's in my room."

He was back in a jiffy and handed Joe a nice, brand-new one-hundred-dollar bill.

"There you are," he says to Nolan. "Now cover it."

Nolan was somewhat taken back when he found that Uly was in earnest, and I thought for a minute he was going to crawfish.

"Where are you going to get your men?" he asked.

"Right here in town. With the stones that builder Nolan rejected will the corner-stone of the superior team be laid," quoted Uly, like a preacher.

Nolan put up his thousand, but I could see that he hated to, and that he was mighty suspicious. It was too easy even for Nolan.

Next day Uly was busy organizing his team. There was a scrub eleven in town that Nolan used to practise on and Uly induced them to join him.

He showed himself to be an experienced hand at the game, and certainly did good work coaching. Still it was evident to all of us that he didn't stand a ghost of a show to win. We knew that he would have to go out of the State to find a team strong enough to beat Nolan's.

He had three weeks to get ready in and before that time was up we were all feeling mighty sorry for him; he couldn't win any way you wanted to look at it.

The papers got hold of the story and did a lot of joshing at Uly's expense; but it proved to be good advertising, and on the day of the game the people began to come in from the country and adjoining towns in numbers that surprised all of us.

When Nolan saw the crowd we were going to have he looked up Uly and proposed that the winner take all the gate receipts. Uly agreed rather reluctantly, saying that he didn't want to be all hog and was willing that Nolan get back a part of his thousand.

The game was called for three o'clock, and by two-thirty Nolan and his team were on the field. Uly had rented a shed, up at the west end, for a dressing-

room, and he and his team had gone in right after dinner and were still there.

It was five minutes to three when the shed door opened and something came piling out and tumbling down the field. At first no one could make out what it was; in fact it was within thirty feet of us before I saw it was the team.

And such a team! Uly had bought brand-new suits for his boys, everything from caps to shoes all made of nice clean white canvas. And all over these suits, caps, stockings, and even their hands and faces, Uly had painted footballs—Rugby footballs, exactly like the kind they were going to use in the game. And they were so natural that you couldn't tell them from the real thing without feeling of them.

Nolan started to kick right away, but Uly insisted that his men had on the regulation uniforms, and it was nobody's business what color they were. The umpire sustained him, and Nolan had to give in.

It was sure comical to see the expressions on the faces of Nolan's men after they began to play. They were facing what looked like a wall of rolling, tumbling footballs, and it was certainly bewildering.

Uly's team had the ball, and instead of bunching themselves and bucking their opponents, as is customary, they would scatter as much as they could, running off in all directions, but always toward the goal, with Nolan's men running from one to the other trying to locate the real ball and never finding it.

Two or three would tackle one of Uly's men, throw him down and feel all over him to see if any of the balls was the one they were after.

But it was of no use. They were just as helpless as if they were all blind, and they never got hold of the ball once. Nolan gave up at the end of the first half; the score then standing thirty-two to nothing in favor of Uly's team, they having made six touchdowns and kicked two goals in thirty minutes.

"Nolan," said Uly that night, when they met in Joe's place, "I owe you a debt of gratitude that I doubt I can ever pay. Three weeks ago I was in what you would call extreme financial

straits, being down to exactly one dollar and forty-five cents. It was imperative that I make a raise somehow within thirty days, and therefore, my dear brother grafter, I hope you will pardon my putting my ingenuity and brush-

wielding ability into play to win that game. I *had* to win it, Mr. Nolan."

"If you were broke at the time, where did you get that one-hundred-dollar bill you used to bet with?" inquired Nolan.

"I painted it," answered Uly.

DOWN AND OUT.*

BY LAWRENCE G. BYRD.

The appalling consequences of a misunderstanding in the matter of table-legs; being the tale of an unhappy aspirant to high living.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

"WIB" HARRIS, twenty-two, extravagant, and salesman for the furniture house of McCann & Lowther, falls into debt, especially to his tailor, Lomark. He expects to recoup on the strength of the sale of a made-to-order table to Mr. Peter Ware, eccentric millionaire; but because of an alleged mistake in the construction of the table, Ware refuses to accept it, throws it back on the firm, and Wib is told that he must stand the loss. His endeavors to prove this unjust are vain, since Adrian Lowther, nephew of the junior partner and in bad odor, who is the only man who might help him, has mysteriously disappeared.

Wib's trouble is increased by Lomark's threatening suit. He feels himself in extreme disgrace and jeopardy. The only one who gives him sympathy is a little lunch-counter waitress whose brother has been "sent up" for "making a touch." That day Wib receives a communication from Crosscup & Fysher, lawyers, saying that unless payment of his debt to Lomark is made within three days execution will be issued to the sheriff.

Wib fears the disgrace of imprisonment, and endeavoring to straighten out his troubles, succeeds only in making an enemy of Mr. Ware and in losing his job, by disobeying Mr. Lowther, who told him he must not attempt to find out the whereabouts of Adrian, who has so mysteriously disappeared. Wib finds, however, that Adrian is at some town named Colfax, and writes numerous letters, getting no reply from six of them. He has to change his boarding-place, and though he finally gets a new job, his hopes are killed through his arrest by a drunken deputy sheriff, who takes him to the county jail.

Here, while on a visit of inspection with a party, Peter Ware finds him, and later sends Wib a letter in which occurs the mysterious sentence: "If you wish to have Adrian Lowther's testimony, you will not have to look far afield for him."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DRAGGING HOURS.

SUNDAY came—a "day of rest." To Wib, naturally of an energetic temperament, the idle days he had endured already had strained his nerves near to the breaking-point. This was infinitely worse than the week-days.

In the first place, the men were not allowed to rise until an hour later than usual. The debtors marched out to breakfast at eight o'clock. The prisoners in the jail, and the convicts on the State side, remained in their cells.

The long, dragging hours were hor-

rible. The nervous little man was French Peter, and all day long he and the Jew walked the garden paths as though for a wager. Wib jotted down Peter's continual complaint:

"De feed not pad; de tr-treatment not pad; but de nights so lo-ong! so-o lo-ong! I no can sleep. T'ink of de wife—t'ink of de bébé; t'ink, t'ink, t'ink! Ah-h! eet ees one *pad* place."

Barney Field and Angelo, both being Catholics, prepared to attend mass at nine o'clock. Billy Grist, who was conveniently liberal in his religious ideas, told Wib that *he* attended both that and the Protestant service which followed.

* This story began in the December, 1906, issue of THE ARGOSY. The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 30 cents.

"It helps kill the worst day of the week here—two solid hours, you know. Better come."

But when Wib saw the short-term men, witnesses, and men held by the grand jury for trial (they occupied the barracks together) file slowly across the yard when the chapel bell rang he turned faint and could not fall in behind them.

He had heard the scuffle and tramp of the convicts from the State wing filing into church first, but they were out of his line of vision. *This* sight was too much for him, however.

The long line of striped figures, each man with his right hand resting on the shoulder of the man in front, their eyes fixed upon the ground, looked like some monster serpent weaving its way across the yard toward the chapel. Its effect upon Wib's mind was beyond expression.

By and by the convict orchestra began to play, and then the voices of the men joined in unison in the service. Wib sat in the debtors' court and listened, and wondered how the poor creatures could raise their voices in hymns under such conditions!

There were no quoits or dominoes today. The prison regulations made the Sabbath more rigorous for these incarcerated men than ever did the orthodox creed of the old-time Calvinists.

After church service the dinner (save the mark!) was served. Fortunately, the breakfast had been plentiful—the succulent baked bean and pork of New England; but the dinner was a mess of hash and boiled hominy.

Fortunately, some of the debtors had had other eatables sent in the day before, and they shared with their less fortunate comrades. Wib had been generous with the food Bella brought him, and he was welcome now to a portion of Barney's supplies and those of the Jew.

The latter, because of his religious scruples, was much worse off than the other debtors. His friends supplied him with almost everything he ate; but one day when they had neglected him he was obliged to fast, for the penitentiary officials did not supply kosher meats for inmates who happened to be of the Hebrew faith.

After dinner there was a long and

wearisome afternoon. The "good conduct" men could draw a book from the library and read in their cells. The debtors had the same privilege during the week, as well.

But the workhouse inmates, sitting on their hard benches, were allowed this day (and as a great favor) to peruse certain tattered magazines and religious papers that were supplied by charitable people.

No newspapers, of course, were allowed within the prison walls, and anything printed in the magazines regarding prisoners, or prison life, was torn out before the men were allowed to see them.

At four o'clock the debtors marched back to their cells. They were fortunate in being served their usual supper; but the workhouse inmates and those confined in the county jail went supperless to bed on Sunday nights.

There was no night-school on Sunday evening, either, and Wib wondered how the men used to activity could stand the long hours (saving that devoted to the church service) confined in the narrow limits of their cells. Sometimes he felt that he should go mad himself and scream aloud.

His companionship with Billy Grist was all that saved him, perhaps, from losing entirely his self-control during this first week.

Mr. Ware's mysterious letter was a subject for much cogitation on Wib's part, and every subject that took his mind off his present surroundings was welcome. He seized with eagerness the letters Bella had sent on to him from the Fallowsea post-office when they came to him on Monday morning.

There were two, the final replies from his letters of inquiry; and neither was from Adrian Lowther. The post-masters of Colfax, Missouri, and Colfax, California, neither knew of the man Wib tried to reach nor of people by his name in their locality.

At once, in his mind, Mr. Ware's veiled words took on added significance. In some way the old gentleman had learned that Adrian was near at hand. Yet, even so, how could Wib reach his witness while he remained himself confined in this jail?

It all added to the young fellow's anx-

ity, after all. Ware's letter was like the throwing of a dry bone to a starving dog. He could sharpen his teeth upon it—that was all.

He did not become utterly senseless to the miseries of his fellow debtors, however.

Angelo Lombardi, the young Italian, was as ignorant and immoral—but good-natured—as only a Sicilian peasant can be. He was in jail for a flagrant bit of dishonesty, and told of it boldly and with the frankness of the degenerate mind.

He had bought a horse, agreeing to pay for it in monthly instalments of five dollars each; but after paying two he grew tired of the peddling business, sold the horse without regard to the fact that he was not its *bona-fide* owner, and went back to his job on the railroad.

Angelo's creditor was a man named Honey—John M. Honey; but honey turned to gall for Angelo.

"He good-a man—he fine-a man," the boy said, with one of his most cheerful smiles. "He pay-a *mungie* (eating)—no haf work, eh? Sava mon', eh? No can play-a da cr-raps, no dr-r-rink-a da beer. Shon-m-honee nice-a man, eh? *Son of a gun!*" with a gesture typical of driving home a sharp blade which had so much realism in Wib's eyes that he shuddered and was glad he was not Angelo's creditor.

That day he wrote a letter to the boy's mother, promising, on Angelo's part, that if she would "pay him out" Angelo would go to work at once to reimburse her. He was a bad lot, this Italian; yet Wib could not help pitying even him.

It was this day, too, that Tom Glines learned through a letter that it was not his landlady, after all, who was paying his board in "Warden Hilary's hotel." Tom had been "shinnin' 'round," as he expressed it, a certain young lady of color before his fall from grace, and another danky, porter on a Pullman car, was trying to cut Tom out.

"He's done gone paid dat ol' landlady's lawyer fo' my bo'd t'ree weeks in advance," Tom declared, gray with rage at this discovery.

And he at once sat down and wrote to a lawyer who made a specialty of such picayune cases to arrange for his discharge. Tom was the one debtor of the

lot who really could get out if he so desired. Wib, had he really made up his mind to "take the oath," as it was called, hadn't enough money to pay a lawyer for taking the case—and one cannot move in any legal action without greasing the palm of some limb of the law.

Besides, Wib had a long talk with "Old John." Crabbed as the patriarch of the debtors was, the young man found him to have been once a man of parts, whose name had stood for honesty and decency in the community in which he lived—one of the smaller towns of the State.

He was friendless now, it was true. Everybody but his enemy—the man who was once his friend, then his creditor, and now paid his board to the county—had forgotten all about Old John.

"But there's some things a *man* can do and some things he can't do," said the old fellow. "It's a bad thing to be shut up in here, I grant you. If I'd tried to swindle anybody, or was guilty of any criminal practise which gave this scoundrel the legal power to jail me, I sartainly would feel disgraced.

"But I ain't. It's the law's put me here—the merciless, man-made, devil-inspired law that lets a man shut another up out o' spite. I owed money, it is true. But I'd ha' paid if I could, an' been given time, an' ha'f a show; old as I be, I'd cleared off the debt.

"My lawyer offered to get me out on insolvency proceedings as soon as I was shut up here. He made me the same offer several times since. He's forgotten me, too, now, I reckon.

"An' why wouldn't I take the oath? Wal, I'll tell ye. It's a cursed provision of the law that lets a man out o' here, but at the cost of every grain of self-respect that's left him.

"He never kin do business in his own name ag'in—haster advertise himself as *agent*. Every man he may owe, besides the fellow who's shut him up, will lose any holt they may have on the debtor. It wipes out all his debts, ye know, like bankruptcy.

"And to top it all, the debtor has got to swear he hasn't got a cent, and never expects to git a cent. No! Not for me. I won't be forced inter such disgraceful

proceedings. I've been here all this time, an' that scamp won't tire me out—I'll beat him yet!"

Something of this made an impression on Wib's mind. He knew that Lomark did not desire the money he owed him—which debt he had never denied—half as much as he wanted the satisfaction of knowing that his debtor had "begged"—that he had "cried enough!"

Taking the oath was a matter of record. It was likely to come up against him years hence. There are always mean-spirited people ready to dig up a man's past.

As for ever settling with Lomark, that seemed impossible now. Each week the bill would be increased to the amount of three dollars. How long would Lomark continue to pay this sum out of pure spite?

His week ended on this Monday. If his second week's board was not paid that night by closing time, Wib would be released in the morning.

He dared not hope for such release. He could not bring himself to ask Officer Marren, who kept the accounts, if his board had been paid. He lay awake longer than usual that night, hoping and praying that, for some reason, his creditor's heart had melted.

Nothing was said to him in the morning. Breakfast passed and the trusty did not come for Wib. Finally, tortured by anxiety and by his desire to know the worst, he went in to see Mr. Marren.

He learned that Crosscup & Fysher had sent their check to the warden the day before, covering Wib's board for the following four weeks! Under this blow the young man staggered; but he had learned to stifle his feelings. He went back to the debtors' court without a word.

CHAPTER XVII.

DISAPPOINTMENT AND TEMPTATION.

WIB had given Bella some money for his laundry, and for condensed milk and a few little luxuries with which to eke out the food served the debtors, and had made her promise to spend none of her own in his affairs. But when Thursday

and Bella came together he had to confess that he had never heard of two dollars buying so many things before!

He had determined to keep himself neat while he was under confinement, despite the temptation to grow careless and frowsy. He had discovered ere this that the debtors were allowed bathing privileges, although he had to take his bath under the same conditions as those afforded the "vagrants" brought in from day to day—with an officer standing by during the process.

Bella carried away his soiled linen again, while his underclothing went into the general laundry of the prison. She likewise agreed to do something for Wib which had become necessary for him to delegate to a representative, since he was confined.

His disappointment regarding the letters sent in trace of Adrian Lowther, and Mr. Peter Ware's enigmatic note, forced Wib to believe that there was really a mystery about Adrian's proclaimed absence from the city. He suspected that Mr. Ware knew Adrian to be at home all the time, and had so intimated in his letter.

He asked Bella, therefore, to go to his old boarding-house on Gallup Street and see if any letter or message from Adrian were waiting there for him. If not, the girl agreed to try to see the young man's mother and get Adrian's present address, if possible.

"Old Lowther won't suspect *you*," Wib added, after he had explained enough for her to comprehend what was required of her. "And if you can get little Mrs. Lowther to talk, I may be able to reach Adrian from here.

"I am running out of money. I can only get more through him—on the chance of his being willing to back up my statement regarding that order to McCann & Lowther."

Bella, pleased to be of service to her friend, promised faithfully to carry out his instructions. And Wib knew that in this girl who had no real reason to help him, and on whom he had no claim, he possessed a friend the like of whom he had never known before!

To know that he was confined here for at least four weeks longer was worse than the former uncertainty.

When he glanced up from the debtors' court and saw the guards pacing the walls with Winchesters on their shoulders, and knew that he was just as much in danger of being shot down by those rifles if he mutinied against the rules of the prison as any life-term man in the place—this knowledge, I say, was enough to drive him mad.

The Jewish member had gone out by this time, and "Dutchy" likewise. These defections brought the group of debtors closer together, for no new members entered for several days.

Manyon, the Portuguese, was the only one of the party with whom Wib had not become fairly well acquainted. He was a consumptive, and sometimes at night his coughing kept the prisoners awake and brought down upon his devoted head the threats of the night-watch.

He was from Fayal, the island of "eternal summer," and the harsh climate of Fallowsea had affected his lungs. His disease and inability to work had brought him here.

The sheriff had been obliged to wait two weeks for Manyon to recover from the effects of a hemorrhage before bringing him to jail. And his original debt was for three weeks' board in some foreign lodging-house down on the wharves of Fallowsea.

Wib found that he had only to ask a question about Manyon's native country to open the silent little man's lips.

Ah! it was a beautiful land—flowing in wine and fruits. December, January, and February were the only wet months, and it was never cold then.

The hills are covered with olive groves and vineyards, and Manyon smacked his lips over the remembrance of the light, harmless wine which costs about ten cents a gallon when five years old. The people drink it like water.

"But," said Manyon, "suppoes-a you dr-r-ink mooch as dat *here*, it make-a you dr-r-unk."

"You be outside de ceety; 'sposse-a you t'irsty. Ask for dr-r-ink of water. Dey say: 'No can give-a you *water*; give-a you *wine*.'"

"Plenty fresh feesh, too!" he continued, smacking his lips, his white teeth gleaming under his jet-black mustache, and the little gold rings twinkling in

his ears. "Feesherman come in 'bout sax o'clock—sell feesh all alive. Not sell out by two—t'ree 'clock, t'row back in water—no goot!"

That night Manyon had a bad coughing spell and the officer cursed him and threatened him with the dark cell if he did not "shut up." Strangely enough, this threat did not cure the consumptive's cough. With the assistance of another brute, the guard hauled him out of his bed and shut him into the dungeon reserved for refractory prisoners.

Of course, they had no right to treat a debtor so outrageously; but might makes right very frequently behind the bars of a penitentiary. And, besides, Manyon was friendless and penniless.

In the morning, when the dark cell was opened, the man was found unconscious, having had another hemorrhage, and was taken to the hospital ward, where, at least, he would have kind treatment and decent food.

Bella wrote Wib that she had called on Mrs. Kempt at the Gallup Street house.

"And say! ain't she a peach? She don't know a lady when she sees one." was Bella's comment.

The thought of the interview between the "hash-house" waitress and the stiff and particular Mrs. Kempt brought a smile to Wib's lips, disappointed as he was by the report that no letters were waiting for him there.

By word of mouth, when she came the next week, Bella related to him her interview with Adrian Lowther's mother. The little woman was evidently afraid of everybody who came to inquire about her son, and all Bella could get from her were tears and the admission that her brother-in-law received Adrian's letters and transmitted her own to her son.

"He says people will take advantage of me," she had told Bella, "so I don't even know where Adrian is now. He doesn't tell me when he writes, and Mark won't tell me. I don't know whether he's really in the West or not. I thought he went there to work on a ranch."

"You can't get anything sensible out of that woman," declared Bella. "She's a kid—just a kid. Her men-folks boss her. Huh! Catch *me* lettin' a man be the boss!"

And so Wib's last hope of reaching Adrian fell through. He became thoroughly despondent.

The days dragged abominably, and instead of three weeks, it seemed as though he had been incarcerated as many years. His health was breaking down under the nervous strain and the poor diet. Yet the oftener he thought of seizing his one opportunity for escape—through the debtor's oath—the greater was his revolt from it.

Through his misfortune and ignorance he had reached this place; but in his heart he knew he had committed no wrong or mean act. But to deliberately shame himself in court for the sake of escaping from jail—no! he could not do that.

To his amazement, one day, a call came to him from the office. He knew that it was not Bella's usual day, and he expected no other visitor, so he went into the corridor with that same fear and trembling which he had experienced once before.

"Somebody here to see you, Mr. Harris," said Marren pleasantly, and surprised Wib still further by opening the door in the screen and letting him into the main office. "He says he's your lawyer," added the officer, with marked respect.

Wib flushed angrily, and looked about the office expecting to see Fysher, who might have come out to learn if Wib was ready to "give in." But he saw only a silk-hatted gentleman with gold-rimmed eye-glasses and a general air of refinement and prosperity about him.

Wib was suddenly conscious of his own shortcomings of dress and toilet. The prison barber shaved the debtors only once a week, and Wib knew that his collar and cuffs were frayed. Besides, his boots were badly broken and needed a shine.

"You are Wilbur Harris?" asked the gentleman, eying Wib curiously.

"Yes, sir."

"This is my card," and the other passed him an engraved bit of cardboard. "I understand that you are in need of an attorney's services."

Wib was speechless for a minute. The name on the card was that of one of the best-known lawyers of Fallowsea,

and the young man knew well enough that this gentleman was not in the habit of "drumming up" trade.

He could not understand it at all. He stared from the card to the man's face and finally blurted out:

"I—I didn't send for you, sir."

"Very true."

"And—and I have no money. I cannot afford to engage a lawyer. Indeed, there is nothing a lawyer can do for me—now."

"We will waive your first statement, Harris," returned the attorney, with a smile, "and I beg to disagree with your last remark. A lawyer is exactly what you need."

"To get me out, I suppose you mean?"

"Certainly."

"Is—is there any way of doing that without my taking what they call the poor-debtor's oath?"

"No easy way—no."

"Then you cannot help me, sir, even if you were kind enough to do so without pay."

"As to that last, young man, you need not harp upon it. I am not in the habit of giving my personal attention to small matters—especially to come out here and see a debtor—without pay. I shall be reimbursed."

Wib stared at him.

"You mean somebody has sent you?"

"I do. Mr. Peter Ware, one of my oldest clients, has asked me to give my personal attention to your case. I have learned the facts, and see plainly that had you been wise enough to appear in court when the judgment was taken against you, and again when the warrant for your arrest was issued, or been represented by counsel on those occasions, you would not have been here at all.

"But now that you *are* here through such neglect and ignorance, the easiest and cheapest way of getting you out is for you to take the oath."

"Is that the only way?" murmured Wib, trying to adjust his understanding to the fact that Mr. Ware had done this.

"No, I suppose not. I can get a writ, have you reappear in court, reopen the case, and probably settle the business without much trouble. But it will cost twenty-five dollars at least to open the

case, in the first place, and the other expenses will add to the bill."

Wib began with shaking voice:

"I ought to be grateful to Mr. Ware, I suppose. I wish that I could believe he was doing this because he knows his mistake is at the foundation of my trouble; but I cannot believe that.

"But I would accept anybody's help—no matter whose—if I could get out of this place honorably. Let me ask you, sir: Would *you* take this oath, and so purge yourself of a debt and win freedom?"

"You are getting personal, young man!" snapped the attorney, flushing. "I did not come here to answer questions, but to ask them."

"And I ask you for advice?" pursued Wib, controlling himself with difficulty. "I ask you if, as a man, you could bring yourself to do what you propose?"

"You know nothing about this place here. You never have experienced what it means to be a poor debtor shut up in jail with no honorable means of escape, and no friends, and no money, and subject to rules that are galling, and dependent for life upon food that is sometimes not fit to eat! No, you do not know all this.

"Therefore, you are excusable, for you do not know how you are tempting a man who has a little self-respect left! I cannot accept your offer. I am obliged to Mr. Ware—as thankful as I can be under the circumstances. But I cannot accept this offer—I won't accept it!

"It is dishonorable to take that oath. It will always be a blot on my reputation if I do it. I may be pointed out as a man who was once shut up in prison for debt, but they shall not honestly say that I escaped from this place by declaring my inability to pay a just debt even if I were free!

"I am willing to work. Let them set me free and I will pay my debt as quickly as I can earn the money. I don't wish to be purged of it in any other way. If this is all you have to offer me, sir, you need not keep me longer."

"You're a fool!" exclaimed the lawyer wrathfully, jumping up.

"Possibly. I am not a knave," and Wib turned to the gate in the screen and Marren let him out.

The young man stumbled down the corridor, the tears blinding his eyes. Freedom had been offered him—he had viewed the promised land; but he could not enter upon it on the terms offered.

He had come to the crucial point and had acted as his conscience dictated. Perhaps he was a greater fool than ever. *Still, he had saved his own self-respect!*

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENS.

It was not a decision that left peace in Wib Harris's mind and heart. It brought him neither contentment nor confidence for the future.

Indeed, he had shut the only door of hope opened to him, and the days here in the idleness of the debtors' court seemed doubly long after the visit of Mr. Ware's lawyer.

He knew the old gentleman would be too angry to help him further. Why he should have been moved to do so at all was a mystery to Wib, who had long since set Mr. Peter Ware down as a purse-proud and arrogant man.

Wib settled into an apathetic existence, like so many of his mates. Some of the debtors went out—notably the negro and Angelo, the Italian, who, with tears and promises, assured his mother that he would "mak-a da dead" if she didn't pay his debt and have him released.

Manyon was in hospital, "the old un" lived his usual life, Billy Grist was as cheerful as ever, and the others plodded along the old rut. Incidents which would have attracted but momentary attention out in the bigger world became of utmost importance here.

The new "boarders" who came to Warden Hilary's hotel were objects of great interest to the older members of the fraternity. Wib noted down such interesting details of their stories as impressed him.

One day a Chinaman joined the group in the debtors' court, and when Barney Field learned that he had been "chummed" with the Celestial he went up in the air.

If there ever was a wild Irishman it was Barney, who swore by every saint in the calendar that there would be a

dead Chinaman in that cell if Marren didn't change him. Fortunately the Chink's Sunday-school teacher—one of those sweet young ladies who never discover the guile in the ordinary laundryman—came and bailed him out before Barney was forced to become a subject for the electric chair.

And so five weeks of Wib's incarceration went by. Bella had been each week to see him; but he had run out of money, and spoke so harshly to her when she had begged him to let her bring him food just the same that she had gone away, the last time, in tears.

He had grown morose and irritable. Although he knew that he was fast dropping into a state of mind like that of Old John, he seemed unable to help himself. He could not laugh and gibe at fate as Billy Grist did, nor could he take the hard knocks doggedly, like **Barney**.

It came the last day of the fifth week. He knew his board had been paid up to six o'clock that night, and he had every reason to believe that Crosscup & Fysher would send another check for their client, to settle, perhaps, for four weeks more in advance.

Yet he could not go in and ask Marren if his money had come. The uncertainty of it was the only breath of hope he had. He would wait until morning before inquiring how much more Lomark had "put up" for revenge.

That afternoon it began to rain, and there was a change in the usual marching order of the various gangs back to their cells. The debtors usually followed the jail men in, and were well out of the way before the State convicts came across from the shops; but as Wib and his comrades entered under the archway by the main corridor door they found a gang of county-jail men standing in line, waiting for the officer to beckon them in.

They stood close together, but the attention of the officers being somewhat engaged, the men did not observe that decorum usually demanded of them.

Some of them grinned and winked at the debtors as they slouched along. One or two were communicating with "lip language," meanwhile keeping a sharp eye upon the officers.

Suddenly Wib saw that one man had left the line and was crowding his way ahead between his mates and the wall. If his motions were noticed at all by the other prisoners, they seemed agreed to give him his way.

His was an undersized figure, and he crouched as he moved swiftly on, reminding Wib of a cat "sneaking" on its prey. Suddenly he came within striking distance of that prey, and then leaped!

Wib shouted and ran forward. The whole line of prisoners was in confusion in an instant.

The little man had sprung upon the back of a taller fellow, and now both striped bodies were rolling on the gravel in a desperate struggle. The breaking up of the rank kept the officers from the scene for several seconds.

Wib saw the bigger fellow whirl over on his back and strive to seize the little man's throat. But the latter was the more agile.

He knelt upon the other's chest, his left hand holding his enemy's head hard upon the ground, his right arm drawn back for the blow.

And when Wib saw what that threatening hand contained he shrieked aloud again. The gang was from the shoe-shop, and this fellow had hidden about his person in some way a short-handled, heavy-headed hammer. If it ever fell upon the upturned brow of the under man, his brains would be spattered about the gravel!

A shrill whistle called the officers within ear-shot to the rescue. Those in charge of this excited gang were fighting their way to the center, despite the fact that the members of it evidently proposed to let the little man have his will with his enemy.

But before Wib the way was free. He saw the hand holding the hammer descending in a lightning-like stroke; but he was almost over the two, and he caught the little fellow's wrist with both hands, yanked him up suddenly, and whirled him over on his back.

It was over in a moment. The hammer dropped from the fellow's hand, and Wib recognized him as Bella's brother, Jimmy Hoke.

His eyes then fell upon the face of the one who had been overborne. Blood

flowed from his nose and from a cut over his eye. His striped suit was disarranged, his cap had fallen off, and he was shaven and his hair "shingled."

But Wib knew him!

The officers rushed in, clubbing the men right and left. Several guards with rifles appeared from the corridor door. The incipient mutiny was over as quickly as it had begun.

Young Jimmy Hoke was led away, fighting and swearing, between two of the guards. His victim was urged in the opposite direction. A dozen officers whipped the other convicts into line.

The debtors were driven into the prison like sheep, and the excitement was general. But Wib was speechless with amazement. He walked to his cell as one in a dream, and he had nothing to say even to Billy Grist.

He could not believe it true, and yet his eyes had keenly searched the face of young Hoke's victim. Despite the change in it—the prison pallor, the shaven lip, the closely cropped head—Wib had recognized Adrian Lowther!

The letter Mr. Peter Ware had written him now came to his mind with force. He need not look far afield for his witness if he wanted him. Ware knew that Adrian was in jail!

And yet, other people did not. Wib was sure of that. He was confident that even Mrs. Lowther did not know of her son's terrible disgrace.

But this explained Mark Lowther's determination to have no inquiries about his nephew answered. It explained, too, why Wib's letters had not found Adrian in the West.

Of all his friends, his uncle must be the only person who knew where Adrian went through the uncle's hands. She had Lowther was. Even his mother's letters been told that Adrian was in some place called "Colfax," and that was how she had misinformed Wib and set him off on *that* wild-goose chase.

He went back in his mind and recalled what Bella had said about the affair that had landed her brother behind the bars for two years, while his companion received a sentence of eighteen months.

Nobody seemed to know Hoke's partner in crime; but Bella believed he had influential friends, and money, because

he had a lawyer who got him off with a light sentence.

Later, when the night-watch came on, Wib beckoned the officer to the cell-door and asked him in a whisper about the affair in the jail-yard. This man was a kindly fellow, and, anyway, Wib's part in the trouble was known and had been commented upon generously by the officers.

"I couldn't tell you who the fellow really is. It's been said he comes of good family. Of course, he only has a number here—and Number Three Hundred and Eighteen come near takin' that from him," added the officer grimly.

"*He's* a little devil. He's sore on the big feller because he gave him the double cross in court, they say. 'Kelley'—that's the name he was sentenced under."

"'Kelley' or not," thought Wib, "that man is Adrian Lowther. His uncle was willing enough to sacrifice me—to discharge me from employment—just to keep his disgrace from becoming public.

"I swear, if I ever get out of here, I'll have Adrian brought into court to testify about that table order! I've stood enough. I won't be walked upon by any of them after this.

"I've had the shame and disgrace of being shut up here. What's sauce for the goose will baste the gander. I reckon! I'll make McCann and Lowther listen to me, and if they won't let Adrian testify without a row there must be some way of making him appear in court and swearing to the truth."

Oh, Wib was bitter that night. And he paid for his bitterness by lying awake for most of the dark hours. He rose gloomily and went to breakfast without a word, unwilling to discuss the exciting happening of the previous afternoon with his mates.

Just after breakfast the trusty came out for him. He was wanted in the office.

"That lawyer again, I bet!" muttered Wib, forgetting what day it was.

He entered the corridor and approached Marren's window. There was nobody in the office that he could see.

"Well, Mr. Harris, I don't suppose you'd be sorry to leave us?" said Marren good-naturedly.

The words gave Wib a positive physical shock. His heart stopped for an instant, then leaped in rapid beats to an entirely different tune. He stared at the officer with watering eyes.

"Your man didn't send in your board last night. You can go, Harris," Marren said gruffly, noting the emotion in Wib's face.

The latter pulled himself together with an effort. The unexpectedness of the thing—the very impossibility of it—helped to keep him up. He had not thought since the previous afternoon of this being the beginning of a new week.

He turned away and walked back to the debtors' court. When Billy Grist saw his face he uttered a subdued cheer.

"By thunder! you're going out, Harris!" he cried.

The others gathered around him. He shook hands with them solemnly.

"I'll miss you like the devil, old man," Billy said. "Don't forget us."

"Goin' to take the oath?" croaked Old John from his chair.

"No, sir, I'm not," Wib assured him.

"Good boy! I'm glad you've beat 'em!" snarled the old fellow.

Wib hurried back to his cell and gathered up his possessions. He stuffed them into his bag and made his way to the office. As Marren let him through the screen into the main office, the bell at the outside door rang to announce a visitor.

The door was opened and in came—Lomark! The little tailor was red-faced and puffing. The first flakes of a snow-storm that had threatened since daybreak were clinging to his shoulders. Lomark had plainly run up from the railway station.

"There he iss—I vas in time yet!" panted the tailor, recognizing Wib on the instant. "That man cannot go out of here—no, py Heaven! He vill stay!"

(*To be continued.*)

"What's the matter with *you?*?" demanded Marren roughly.

"I peg your pardon, meester!" exclaimed the tailor, instantly humble before authority. "That iss *my* man—I pay his poard. Here it is."

"Too late," growled Marren, and turned his back on him.

Wib, who had been almost overwhelmed by Lomark's appearance, suddenly straightened his drooping shoulders.

"Too late? Vat you mean py too late?" stuttered Lomark.

"You should have paid last night before six o'clock. We cannot take your money now. The man is discharged."

"I dell you it iss a mistake," declared the tailor, stamping his foot. "My lawyer forgot to tell me—I—I—"

"Take it out of your lawyer, then. The man is free. Go on, Harris. He can't hold you a minute. And good luck to you!"

Marren wrung Wib's hand, and in a moment the young man, his head awlirl, found himself outside the prison-door, with the first breath of the storm—and of freedom—buffeting his face.

The throbbing of his heart choked him. The tears ran down his face. He walked blindly away from the penitentiary office, carrying his satchel.

He had turned involuntarily down the hill toward the railroad station. Suddenly he remembered that he hadn't a penny with which to pay his fare, and he was eight long miles from the city.

He turned into the road which, he knew, led to Fallowsea. He stepped upon a little patch of snow which had gathered in a hollow of the hard path, and was reminded by the cold contact that both soles were bare to the ground.

He had no overcoat, and no gloves, and the wind chilled him to the marrow. *But he was free!*

MUSIC.

MUSIC!—oh! how faint, how weak,
Language fades before thy spell!
Why should feeling ever speak,
When thou canst breathe her soul so well?

Moore.

THE LABEL ON THE BOTTLE.

BY MARVIN DANA.

A happening in Paris that had in it more than a single thrill.

THE first glimpse of the girl charmed me; the second frightened me.

She was as pretty a woman as there was in the room, and that is saying much, for the place was a fashionable Paris restaurant, at midnight.

Classical features of the brunette type were relieved from any suspicion of possible insipidity by the great lustrous eyes and the sensitive mouth. The perfect figure was set off by an evening gown of the seemingly simple sort that only the best taste and much money can contrive.

So much I learned in one glance toward the girl alone at the table next mine.

My second look revealed that which caused fear to leap in my breast. For the girl's eyes were wide and staring. In them was a look of mingled despair and anguish.

Her lips were trembling. The hand nearer me was lying on the table, and I noticed that it was clenched as in a spasm of torture.

I listened to hear her voice as the waiter approached to take her order, but I could only catch the low, sweet murmur of a single sentence. The waiter hastened away, and soon returned with oysters and wine.

She gave no heed to the food, but when he had filled a glass with claret she took it eagerly. As she raised it to her lips her trembling hand spilled a third of the wine on the cloth.

Wholly disregarding this, she drank about half of what remained and replaced the glass on the table.

All this time her left hand, which was next me, had remained clenched. Now, however, she unclenched it, and reached her arm toward the bottle of claret, with the evident intention of refilling her glass, as no waiter was near.

At this moment I saw that she had left standing on the table something

which her hand had held concealed—a tiny vial, and on its label I saw a skull and cross-bones!

XI.

HORROR fell on me at the sight. There could be no doubt that the bottle contained poison—the symbol of death is the same the world round.

And it needed no reflection to realize that the girl meant to employ the instrument of death on herself. The agony in her eyes was proof of disaster that she believed to be beyond remedy.

I yielded to the impulse of the moment.

Just as the girl was about to pass the bottle of wine from her left hand to her right, I thrust my cane across the space between us. I caught the vial in the curve of the stick's handle, and drew it gently toward me.

The girl, filling her glass, noticed nothing, for her face was turned a little from me.

As the glass reached the edge of the girl's table and within my grasp I leaned forward and took it in my hand. Then I looked up at her, to find her eyes burning into mine.

I shuddered at the dreadful prayer in them, but I could not yield to it. Slowly, tremblingly, I put the bottle in my waistcoat-pocket.

Whatever her extremity, I could not sit by and see a girl do herself to death.

But I reckoned without the masterfulness of her mood. Her face hardened, stilled. She beckoned me imperiously to the chair opposite her.

Shuddering anew as the tragedy thus folded me closer, I yielded to her will. But I had not the courage to raise my eyes again to that look of flame.

She spoke in a very low voice, in a monotone of supreme emotion.

"You guessed my purpose?"

I bowed assent.

"You would save me from death?"

Again I bowed.

Suddenly she leaned toward me, and spoke even more softly:

"You mean to be kind. Which is better—a painless death, now, here, or weeks of torture and a hideous, shameful death at the end?"

I was silent, dismayed by the inexorable truth that sounded in her voice.

"But——" I began weakly.

"There is no 'but'—it is one or the other. There is only the choice. It is the painless death, now; or, after a time of horror, the ghastliest of all deaths."

"You must be mistaken," I exclaimed, looking up again.

But my eyes fell before the despairing intensity of hers.

"Mistaken! Do you think I don't know? Well, listen: I have just murdered my husband!"

III.

I sat huddled in my chair, unnerved by the shock of her words. The worst of it was that I could not doubt her. Truth spoke in every accent.

Nor was she mad. My intuition taught me that she was as sane as I, though strained to the breaking-point of emotion.

Yet, that one so young, so beautiful, more girl than woman, so evidently pure, could be a murderess!

The thought was monstrous—a profanation. I could find no word to break the silence.

At last, she spoke again, still leaning close to me, her voice scarcely above a whisper, yet thrilling with her passion.

"You mean to be kind. Learn your mistake. You shall judge:

"I have been married just a year to-day. I adore my husband. For three months he has neglected me. Often he does not return home until late at night. I have reproached him. I have shown him my heart. He has only one excuse—business.

"I do not know who the woman is. It is enough that he has ceased to love me. His tenderness does not deceive me. I have threatened to kill myself. I showed him the vial of poison you have taken. He pleaded with me, but he became even more irregular.

"And to-day, to-night, the anniver-

sary of our marriage. I planned a little feast in its honor. And he did not come. He sent no word. He was with that other woman—he had forgotten the day, and the bride he swore to love."

She was silent for a minute. I stole a look at her. Her eyes were staring at vacancy, dilated, fearful in the agony they revealed.

Then they turned suddenly to me, and again mine fell. I could not bear to look on her misery.

"That was the end," she said finally. "I could not eat, nor read, nor talk. I shut myself in my boudoir—away from the pitying eyes of the servants; they, even, knew me for a thing scorned.

"I got the vial. I filled a glass half full of water. I poured in part of the poison—a drop is enough. Then before drinking it I let my head fall on my arms, as I sat leaning on the table. I must have swooned."

Again silence. But I did not lift my eyes—I did not dare. Presently:

"When, at last, I raised my head, I saw standing opposite me my husband. And at his lips was the fatal glass. Even as my eyes cleared and I realized the horror of it all, he set the glass down—empty."

IV.

SHE spoke more rapidly now, a certain fierceness of suffering in the tones.

"One instant I stared at him, his eyes in mine. I knew that already the poison had him in its gripe—in another second he would fall dead before my eyes. My soul shriveled within me; my blood was like ice. I could not hear to see his glazing eyes, hear the death-rattle in his throat.

"I went mad then for a little. I remember only that I fled shrieking from the room, from the house. Then, after an interval, I found myself here—here, where I have been so often with him!"

The grisly narrative held me in its thrall. My heart was full of horror at the tragedy, yet with the horror was mingled pity for the suffering woman.

"You understand now," she said. "The law will put me to death for the murder of my husband."

"You did not murder him," I declared eagerly.

"You do not know our French law," she replied with conviction. "It holds the prisoner guilty until he proves his innocence. What evidence can I offer? Only my word! You believe me. But the law does not permit itself to believe the word of the accused against other evidence."

I knew that she spoke the truth, and the knowledge chilled my heart.

"They would never execute you," I cried.

"They would," was her simple answer. "For that matter, better that than lifelong imprisonment, the agony of years amid the worst foulness."

She leaned yet a little closer, spoke even more softly:

"There is no escape for me—there is only the choice. They may find me here at any moment. I would not live if life offered everything else, since I have killed him. But life can offer me nothing save death as a murderess. Oh, you meant to be kind when you took the vial from me—be kind now!"

I looked up, swayed by the spell of her desire. The burning eyes met mine and held them.

I felt my strength of will flow from me as water. Slowly, I took the vial from my pocket and laid it in her outstretched palm.

Hypnotized still, I sat motionless, watching, while she uncorked it and emptied the contents into the glass of wine.

With the glass at her lips, her eyes met mine again.

"Thank you," she said gently.

I turned my face away. When I looked again the glass was empty, and the girl lay huddled in her chair, her face ghastly, only the whites of her eyes showing between half-shut lids.

V.

I WAS startled from my trance of horror by a brusque command.

"Take her feet and help me carry her. Heavens! what a search I've had! My carriage is at the door."

I looked up and saw a tall, handsome Frenchman, pale with emotion. Still passive to another's will, I obeyed.

I wondered vaguely if he were a detective sent to apprehend the supposed murderess—about to arrest a corpse.

Together we carried the body outside the restaurant and deposited it on the cushions of the carriage.

"Come on, please," the stranger bade me.

And, feeling still a vague compulsion, I obeyed again.

The instant we were both in the carriage the coachman whipped up his horses. Five minutes later we stopped before a handsome house in a quiet street.

That we were expected was evident, for the door was thrown open on the instant and a number of servants hurried out. The man with me made a gesture of command, and they stood aside, silent, while he and I carried the body inside, and on up a flight of stairs, through an exquisite boudoir, into a sleeping-chamber, where we laid it on the bed.

"Revive her, Julie," he said to a maid who had hovered about us, and he withdrew into the boudoir, to leave the servant free to her ministrations.

"Come," he bade me.

"But," I cried as I hurried after him, "she is dead!"

"Not a bit of it," he retorted.

"I tell you she has poisoned herself. She is dead," I repeated.

"Pooh! She is subject to fainting spells."

"Who are you?" I demanded angrily. "I tell you——"

"I am her husband," was the calm reply.

I stood aghast at the incredible announcement.

"But—but," I stammered, "she killed you by mistake—poisoned you. That's why——"

"Ah! that's why the water in this glass here tasted so." He pointed toward a tumbler on the center-table.

"She poisoned me out of this bottle." He took from his pocket the vial marked with skull and cross-bones. "I saw it on the table in the restaurant and took it."

I stood in gaping amazement, and he continued impatiently:

"She showed me this once, when she threatened suicide. So I took it secretly, emptied out the poison, and put in, instead, some tonic mixture I have. I thought it would be safer."

Suddenly his voice grew soft and tender.

"She is too sensitive. I've had an awful time on the Bourse for three months—thought I'd lose everything. But now all is safe, and I'll tell her, and be at home nights, too.

"To-day I wrote her a note saying I should be late, but we would go out and have a supper to celebrate our wedding anniversary. The stupid boy forgot to take it. I only found it as I was starting home."

"Then—then, there isn't—any—other woman?" I questioned, in my astonishment.

"No—bless your impudence! Nor ever will be."

The maid called from the bedchamber.

"There! She is coming to," he said hastily. "Good night, and thank you."

We shook hands. I stammered a few futile words.

But as I was at the door he spoke again, whimsically:

"I hope this will be a lesson to her. She has temperament. It is a splendid thing, but sometimes a little, just a little—er—trying to a husband, don't you think?"

"Yes, it is," I admitted.

A CALL FOR THE AUTHORS.

BY LEE BERTRAND.

What happened after the first performance of a play which meant everything to the two people who wrote it.

A TALL, young man, with a very gloomy expression on his handsome face, walked up to the clerk's desk at a certain woman's hotel.

"Is Miss Vivian in?" he inquired, with a doleful sigh.

"I don't know, Mr. Grey," replied the clerk. "I think she's in her room; but I'm not quite sure. Take a seat, please, and I'll send up and find out."

The young man sank wearily into one of the big leather armchairs, while a diminutive page-girl went in search of Miss Vivian.

After the lapse of a few minutes a very pretty girl stepped out of the elevator and, catching sight of the scowling young man in the armchair, darted across the lobby toward him.

"I thought it was you, Tom," she cried joyously. "I am awfully glad to see you. I hope you have brought me good news about the novel."

The young man shook his head sadly and gave vent to another sigh.

"Do I look like the bearer of good news, Cecilia?" he said. "If I do, I assure you my face belies my state of mind. That confounded story has come back from the publishers with the usual disgustingly polite note of regret. Did

you ever hear of such infernally bad luck? I feel wretchedly blue about it. I can tell you."

The smile disappeared from the girl's lips.

"Oh, dear!" she cried. "That is too bad! I'm so sorry! Those publishers kept it so long I thought for sure you had sold it at last."

"So did I," said the young man savagely. "It looks as if my bad luck would never come to an end."

"Cheer up, Tom," said the girl comfortingly. "You must not lose heart so easily."

"Lose heart so easily! Who wouldn't lose heart under the circumstances? I had it all figured out that, if I succeeded in selling that novel, I should make almost enough money to enable us to get married. It would have made me a name in the literary world and my work would have been in demand. Now my prospects look gloomier than ever. I can't ask you to marry a penniless pennypusher."

"But you can try another publisher, Tom. 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again,' you know. Without doubt, you'll finally sell that novel, dear boy."

But the "dear boy" shook his head, refusing to be comforted.

"I've tried every publisher in the country," he said desperately. "They've all read the thing and they've all had the brutality to send it back. I'm beginning to believe that the story is no good. And it's the best I'm capable of—I'm sure of that. Therefore I'm beginning to think I'm a miserable failure, Cecilia; and under the circumstances I consider it my duty to release you from our engagement. We can't get married without any money, you know, and it looks as if I'm never going to be able to earn enough to support myself—to say nothing of a wife."

"You deserve that I should take you at your word and give you back this ring," said the girl, looking proudly at the solitaire on her left hand. "But, as a matter of fact, I shall do nothing of the kind. Possess your soul in patience, my dear Tom. Our luck will doubtless improve later on. I am sure there is considerable merit in your novel and that you will sell it somewhere in the end. By the way, I've a great idea!"

She clapped her hands excitedly.

"What is it, dear?" inquired Tom eagerly.

"Why not turn your story into a play? I am sure it would make a good drama, and there's more money in plays nowadays, you know, than there is in books."

"By Jove! That's not a half-bad plan!" exclaimed the young man, brightening. "Come to think of it, it *would* make a great play, wouldn't it?"

"To be sure it would; and if you like I can help you write it. I know something about stage business. I took a special course in dramatic art at college, you know. I've always intended to write a play sooner or later. Let's write it together. Two heads are generally better than one."

"By Jove!" cried Tom, now thoroughly optimistic again. "You're the cleverest little woman in all the world. I always suspected the fact; now I'm sure of it."

"You've hit the right idea. The play's the thing for us. We'll collaborate. We'll grow rich together. Pinero and Ibsen and Jones and those fellows have made fortunes out of play-writing, and

there's no reason why we shouldn't follow their example. Your suggestion has filled me with new hope, dearest. We'll get busy right away. I feel absolutely confident that the play will be a success."

And the very next day the enthusiastic pair settled down to hard work.

They took Tom's rejected novel, and sitting in the parlor of the Abigail Hotel, with their heads very close together, they carefully went over each page of the manuscript, making note of every line which might be preserved for use in the play.

In a few weeks the drama had made astonishing headway. Tom found in Cecilia a surprisingly valuable collaborator.

She had a typewriter and she worked away industriously, while Tom, in his top back room at Mrs. Rorer's select boarding-house, would hammer away at the keys of his machine with equal energy.

Then he would take the pages he had written and walk to Cecilia's hotel, where the pair would hold solemn conference and compare notes.

It was pleasant work—so pleasant that both were almost sorry when the play was finished.

It was a three-act play. Tom and Cecilia were willing to admit that they might be prejudiced, but when it was done they were of the opinion that it was the best three-act play that had been written since the time of Shakespeare.

"It's great!" exclaimed Tom, with a sigh of satisfaction, as he sat in the parlor of the Abigail, reading aloud to Cecilia from the rough draft of their joint production. "It's bound to make a hit, girlie. I'll wager we'll have no trouble in selling it. I rather imagine the managers will fight with each other for the privilege of producing it."

"It certainly does sound good," replied Cecilia. "Especially that second act, Tom. That strikes me as being particularly fine. What a clever fellow you are, Tom Grey!"

"I, clever?" protested Tom, generously. "Why, I like that. You mean what a clever little genius you are, honey. You've done more than half the work. And all the best lines are yours. Why, you're a born playwright. I swear I didn't think it was in you."

"Oh, Tom!" cried the girl, blushing rosy red with pleasure, "you flatter me too much. Oh, but I do hope it will be a success."

She looked at him wistfully.

Tom nodded his head vigorously.

"You can just bet it will, little girl. I don't claim to be the seventh son of a seventh son, but I'm going to prognosticate that the first manager we offer it to will jump at that play the minute he sees it. I'll get busy retypewriting it right away. We can't let them see this rough draft, you know."

"Of course not, but you needn't retypewrite it, Tom. I'll attend to that. I'm a better typist than you are. You're so untidy and careless in your spelling."

Four days later, when Tom called on Cecilia she had the manuscript all ready for him.

Tom looked at the closely typewritten pages admiringly. She had made a very neat job of it, typing the dialogue in blue ink and the stage business in red.

"It looks fine," he commented. "I'm glad I left the job to you, dear. I should have made a botch of it and I guess the appearance of a manuscript counts for quite a little, nowadays. Now, if you'll get your hat and coat we'll go right out and sell it."

But "selling it" did not prove to be quite so simple a matter as Tom had prophesied.

They first visited the office of a big theatrical manager on Broadway. Here they were received by a cold-mannered young man who declared that it would be absolutely impossible for them to see the great manager in person.

"Mr. Snowman never sees unknown authors," he explained. "He hasn't the time. If you have a play to submit, you might leave it with me and we will let you have a verdict on it."

"When?" demanded Tom and Cecilia in eager chorus.

"In about six weeks," replied the cold-mannered young man. "You can either call again or we will write to you."

"I guess we'll call," said Tom, handing over the precious manuscript with a sigh of disappointment. "You'll see that it's read carefully, won't you, please?"

"Oh, certainly," said the cold-mannered young man.

"And be very careful not to lose it," Cecilia admonished him.

"Yes, madam."

"You might call Mr. Snowman's personal attention to the second act," added Tom confidently. "It's very strong."

"I'll be careful to remember that," said the young man.

"Of course we shall expect to have both our names on the program in big letters," said Cecilia firmly. "It isn't vanity, you know. It's a matter of business. We want to get our names before the public as much as possible, you see."

"Of course," assented the cold-mannered young man. "There won't be any trouble about that—if we take the play."

As they reached the sidewalk, Cecilia uttered an exclamation and turned as if about to reenter the office.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom anxiously.

"How stupid of us!" said Cecilia. "We quite forgot to ask him anything about the price. Don't you think we ought to pin them down in black and white?"

Tom smiled—a smile of superiority.

"Never mind about that, dear," he said. "We can attend to that later. If they don't offer us a fair price, we needn't let them have the play, you know."

With the utmost impatience they waited until the six weeks had expired and then they paid a second visit to the manager's office.

The cold-mannered young man recognized them immediately and handed them a familiar-looking package.

"Mr. Snowman is very sorry," he said. And that was all.

It was a dejected pair that walked up Broadway that afternoon. They were also inclined to be indignant.

"I don't believe that they even looked at it," said Cecilia. "It's wrapped up in the same paper as when we gave it to them."

"Oh, I guess they looked at it all right," replied Tom bitterly. "I shouldn't be surprised if they've copied the best parts of it and stolen our plot. I've heard of such things being done."

"Oh, I don't think they'd dare, Tom,"

cried Cecilia indignantly. "Come, dear, let's not be pessimistic. After all, if that horrid manager doesn't want our play it's his loss and not ours. We'll undoubtedly sell it somewhere else. Let's try another manager."

And they offered their joint production to another big theatrical man with the same result.

After their play had been flatly turned down by four of the biggest firms in the country, Tom lost heart entirely and became the most pessimistic human being in all New York, while Cecilia's usually bright little face wore a very gloomy expression.

"It doesn't look as if my bad luck would ever come to an end," groaned Tom. "Our wedding-day seems farther off than ever. I really think I ought to release you from your engagement, little girl. It's selfish of me to hold you to your promise."

But Cecilia refused to listen to this generous proposition. She put her little hand in his and said bravely: "You must not despair so soon, Tom dear. We'll sell that play yet. We must keep on trying."

And that very day their luck turned. They submitted the play to a manager named Smiley.

Smiley was not exactly one of the big pillars of the theatrical world, but he had made something of a name for himself by producing one or two successes and his star was rising.

Smiley's success, up to date, had been due to the fact that he was smart enough to realize that there were often great possibilities in the plays of unknown authors which had been "thrown down" by the bigger managers.

Therefore he read and reread Tom and Cecilia's play with careful attention, and when he had finished it for the third time he frowned thoughtfully.

Then he called in his stenographer and dictated a letter to Miss Cecilia Vivian.

Upon receipt of this letter, Miss Vivian became very much excited and sent an urgent message to Tom to come to the Abigail Hotel at once.

Tom lost no time in obeying the summons.

"Well?" he cried eagerly, running across the corridor to meet Cecilia as

she stepped out of the elevator. "What is it, dearest? Is the play sold at last?"

"Not quite," she answered, her face beaming. "But almost. Read this, Tom," and she handed him the manager's letter. Tom read:

MY DEAR MISS VIVIAN:

I have read the play written by yourself and Mr. Grey with a great deal of interest. I think there is much about it that is promising, and the second act, in my opinion, is extremely good. If some slight changes can be made in the first and third acts, I may possibly decide to produce it.

However, as I am not quite able to make up my mind I have submitted the manuscript to Mr. Cyril Bates, dramatic critic of the *Evening Star*, who sometimes reads plays for me, and I shall be guided by his decision.

Will write you further in a few days, or, if you prefer, you or Mr. Grey might call at this office.

Yours very truly,

THOMAS SMILEY.

"Well!" exclaimed the girl joyously as Tom finished reading. "How is that for good news? Why, what's the matter, dear? You don't look as if you were at all glad. Don't you think that letter sounds encouraging, Tom?"

"No," said the young man moodily. "I'm sorry to say that I don't."

"But," protested the girl, "Mr. Smiley must really like our play or he wouldn't have written us such a letter. It all depends upon Mr. Bates, of the *Star*, now. If he reports favorably, our play is as good as sold."

But Tom shook his head despondently.

"That's just the point," he growled. "Bates won't report favorably on it. He'll throw it down. He'll give us an unfavorable verdict, irrespective of the play's merits. You see, I happen to know this fellow Bates. He and I were at college together. We always hated each other cordially. It became necessary for me to thrash him on one occasion and I guess he's not likely to forget that. You can guess, therefore, what he will do with our play."

The glad look disappeared from Cecilia's face and she looked at Tom apprehensively.

"Do you really think he'd be small

enough to allow personal prejudice to govern his decision?" she cried indignantly.

"Yes, I do. I think that fellow would be small enough for anything."

"Well, why not go to Mr. Smiley and tell him how things stand?"

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"Smiley probably wouldn't believe me," he said. "It wouldn't do any good, my dear girl."

Two days later Tom and Cecilia paid a visit to Manager Smiley's office.

"We have come to inquire about our play," said Cecilia apprehensively. "Did Mr. Bates report favorably on it?"

The theatrical manager's face turned very grave.

"Mr. Bates did not read your play," he said. "Mr. Bates will never read another play. He is dead."

"Dead!" cried Tom and Cecilia in a horrified chorus.

"Yes," said the manager sadly. "He died yesterday, poor fellow. Didn't you read about it in the newspapers? The police say he was murdered."

"Murdered!" gasped Tom, his face white.

"Yes. Some cowardly wretch sent him a box of cigars anonymously through the mails. The coroner says that the cigars were poisoned. Look out for Miss Vivian there, she's fainting!"

Tom was just in time to catch Cecilia, who fell limply into his outstretched arms.

"A glass of water, please!" he cried. "Thanks. See, she's coming around all right. The unpleasant news proved too much for her, I guess."

"Weak heart?" inquired the manager sympathetically.

"Yes. I guess her heart is not over strong. I'll take her out into the air and she'll be all right. By the way, Mr. Smiley, what about our play?"

"I'm having somebody else read it," replied the manager. "Poor Bates never got a chance even to look at it. I hope that the police will succeed in catching the miscreant who sent him those poisoned cigars. Hanging would be too good for him. I'll let you know about the play in a few days, Mr. Grey. How do you feel now, Miss Vivian? You're all right, I trust?"

"Yes, thank you," answered the girl feebly. "It was foolish of me to display such weakness. I'll be all right when I get out into the cool air."

Two days later they received a letter from Smiley containing the news that he had decided to accept their play and that he desired them to call at his office to arrange terms.

II.

Two months later Detective-Sergeant Phineas Butts, of the Central Office, paid a visit to the office of Manager Smiley.

Mr. Butts was a man of interesting personality. He was not much to look at, being short of stature and homely of features; but he possessed the reputation of being the cleverest sleuth on the force.

"I suppose you're pretty busy, eh?" he remarked to Smiley, as, uninvited, he seated himself in the manager's private office.

"Busy? I should say so," replied Smiley. "Our new play opens to-night at the Gaiety, you know. I'm up to my ears in work. You know I'm always glad to see you, Butts; but if you've just dropped in here to make a friendly call, I'll have to ask you to postpone it until some other time. This play I'm producing to-night is going to make my fortune, I believe. The curtain goes up at eight-thirty and I can't spare a minute until then."

"Well, this ain't exactly a social call," drawled the detective. "You know, Smiley, I'm working on that Cyril Bates case, and somehow or other I can't get a line on it. There's no doubt the man was poisoned by those cigars, but for the life of me I can't get a clue as to who could have sent them. What I'm searching for is a motive. Now you were an intimate friend of the dead man, Smiley. It seems to me that you ought to know somebody who had reason to wish Bates out of the way. Can't you think of any person who was his enemy?"

The manager shook his head.

"No," he said. "I knew Bates very well, but I'm afraid I can't help you out, old man. Of course the poor fellow had his enemies, but I really don't know of anybody who hated him enough to seek his death. Perhaps if you come

around in a couple of days, I may be able to help you; but just now my head is too full of the new play to permit of my giving a thought to anything else. You see how it is?"

He pointed eloquently to the heap of papers on his desk.

"Yes. I see," said the detective rising. "I'll drop in to-morrow, when you're less busy. Sorry to have disturbed you, old man. Hope the new play will be a huge success. Hello! What's this?"

His small, ferret-like eyes were fastened intently on a typewritten manuscript which lay on the manager's desk.

"That? Why, that's the manuscript of the new play. Why do you ask?" inquired the manager, in some surprise.

Without answering, the detective took a fine magnifying-glass from his vest-pocket and held it over the top page.

"Who wrote this play?" he inquired eagerly.

"A young man named Tom Grey and a girl named Cecilia Vivian. They're unknown in the theatrical world now, but, mark my word, after to-night, they'll be famous. Why do you ask?"

"What I mean is—who typewrote the play?" inquired the detective.

"They did. I remember their mentioning that they typewrote it themselves instead of giving it out. What are you trying to get at, Butts?"

"Never mind! I'm awfully glad I dropped in here to-day to see you. This looks like a pretty good clue. Did either of these two authors know the dead man—Bates?" inquired the detective.

"I don't know. They might have. If so, they didn't mention the fact to me, although, come to think of it, Miss Vivian went off into a faint when I told her that poor Bates had been murdered. But what on earth are you driving at, Butts?"

"So the girl went off into a faint, did she? And the fellow—what did he do? Was he present at the time?"

"Yes, he was there. If I remember rightly, he turned rather pale. I guess news like that would be enough to upset anybody. Why do you ask?"

"You'll learn why later. By the way, you don't need this manuscript, do you? You can spare a couple of pages of it for a few days."

"Yes, I guess so. I've got copies of it. Won't you please tell me what you're trying to get at?"

"Never mind. You'll learn more later on. I won't bother you any longer to-day, Smiley. By the way, do you know the home addresses of this young man and the girl?"

"The girl lives at the Abigail Hotel. I don't remember where Grey lives. Why do you want their home addresses?"

For reply, the detective smiled enigmatically, and tearing the two top sheets from the manuscript, he folded the typewritten pages and put them in his pocket. Then he glided out of the manager's office.

"Queer cuss," mused Smiley, as his visitor disappeared. "I wonder what he's got in that bullet head of his now?"

Detective-Sergeant Butts went straight to the Abigail Hotel and inquired for Miss Cecilia Vivian.

The clerk informed him that Miss Vivian was not in her room. She had gone out early that morning.

"Alone?" inquired the sleuth.

"No. She was accompanied by a gentleman who called for her."

"A young man named Tom Grey?"

"Yes, sir. That is who it was."

"Where have they gone?"

"I don't know, but if you want to see them very badly, you'll find them at the Gaiety Theater to-night. They've written a play which is to be produced there, you know. Do you wish to leave any card or message for Miss Vivian?"

"No, thanks. I guess I'll see them at the theater," answered the detective dryly.

III.

THE curtain at the Gaiety went up at eight-thirty sharp that night.

The house was crowded with a typical first-night audience.

Behind the scenes, everybody was more or less nervous and excited. Even Manager Smiley, usually calmness personified, appeared to be in a very anxious state of mind.

As for the authors of the new play, they were delirious with joy one minute and trembling with apprehension and doubt the next.

Tom's face was deathly pale, and there were big circles under Cecilia's eyes. They sat in a stage box.

The lights in the auditorium were suddenly darkened. The orchestra stopped short in the middle of a lively air, and the curtain slowly ascended.

The momentous moment of moments had arrived.

"Courage, little girl," whispered Tom hoarsely.

Cecilia was shivering as though seized with a chill. She squeezed his hand tightly.

Dazedly, they watched the progress of the first act, and as it proceeded their apprehensions grew.

The audience seemed to be cold and unsympathetic. When the act closed and the curtain fell there was a painful lack of applause.

As the curtain went up on the second act, however, Tom and Cecilia's gloomy faces brightened with renewed hope, and even Manager Smiley looked optimistic.

This was the great act. Undoubtedly it would make a hit and save the play. The audience would be aroused from its state of lethargy to a high pitch of enthusiasm. There would be deafening applause and insistent calls for the authors to come before the curtain.

But, alas, as the act proceeded Tom and Cecilia became more and more convinced that this was not to be.

The actors did their best, but their heroic efforts were unavailing. The audience sat, bored, restless, and yawning. On the faces of the dramatic critics were sardonic grins.

The curtain came down at the end of the act amid a terrible silence that was a death sentence.

Tom and Cecilia looked at each other despairingly. Manager Smiley groaned in anguish.

"A frost!" he moaned. "The worst frost I've ever seen in all my experience in the theatrical business. And I actually thought we were going to make a hit. Good Heavens! What could have been the matter with my judgment? I thought I was wise at the theatrical game. I'm the biggest fool living. After this I ought to retire from the business. I'm a dead one."

The third and last act was as coldly

received as those which had gone before. When the curtain came down at its conclusion, the audience arose wearily and listlessly filed out of the theater.

Their faces white, their hearts heavy with dull despair, the wretched authors were about to leave the playhouse, when their progress was arrested by a short, stockily built man who displayed a flashing gold shield.

"Pardon me," he said gruffly. "This is Tom Grey and Cecilia Vivian, I believe. Thank you, I thought I was not mistaken. I am Detective-Sergeant Butts. You will have to come with me at once to headquarters."

Cecilia clung in terror to Tom. The young man turned fiercely upon the detective.

"What do you mean?" he growled. "We don't feel at all in a mood for joking, my friend."

"Of course not," replied the detective. "I'm not joking. I never joke. I arrest you both on the charge of being responsible for the murder of Cyril Bates."

Cecilia uttered a scream. Tom glared at the detective indignantly.

"This is nonsense," he declared. "You can't be serious. What grounds have you to suspect us? For Heaven's sake, don't bother us, officer. We are feeling wretched enough just now."

"I'm sorry," said the detective grimly. "You'll probably be feeling a little more wretched by the time we get through with you. I advise you not to make a scene, but to come along quietly."

"But what evidence have you to justify you in making this ridiculous charge against us?" protested Tom.

For reply, the detective took from his pocket two pages of typewriting. From another pocket he produced a wrapper bearing a postmarked stamp and a typewritten address.

"These pages are from the typewritten manuscript of your play," he said. "The machine which typewrote that play also typewrote the address on that wrapper. How do I know that? Easily. Some of the type of the machine is worn. You'll notice that the B and T, the W and S in the address on this wrapper aren't printed properly. Part of the outline is missing. Those same letters are

defective throughout your typewritten manuscript. Under a magnifying-glass, the similarity is still more striking. The same machine was used in both cases. I'm sure of it.

"That wrapper contained the box of poisoned cigars which was sent to Bates. The person who typewrote that play also sent the cigars to Bates and killed him. I don't know which one of you actually sent those cigars, but I reckon you both had a hand in it. Anyway, I'm going to lock you both up on suspicion. Out of respect to the lady's feelings, I'll take you down to headquarters in a cab, if you like."

And protestations being unavailing, down to headquarters in a cab they went, and, their pedigrees having been taken by a gruff sergeant, they were locked up in separate cells.

"Jumping Jupiter!" groaned Tom, tearing his hair in his despair. "Was ever a human being as unlucky as I? And poor Cecilia! Good Heavens, this experience will kill her!"

The next day the newspapers contained lengthy and sensational accounts of Detective-Sergeant Butts's clever capture.

The detective had built up a pretty good case against the prisoners. In addition to the typewriting evidence, he had managed to learn of the enmity which had existed between Tom and the dead man. He had also learned from Manager Smiley the important fact that the dead man Bates was to have passed judgment on the play on which Tom and Cecilia had built such strong hopes.

From these facts the police managed to establish a pretty strong motive for the crime.

In another part of the newspapers was a brief review of the new play at the Gaiety. The critics vied with each other in roasting the unfortunate production, all of them declaring that it was the most driveling, inane rot that had ever been offered to the public.

Tom squirmed in his cell as he read these caustic criticisms, and poor Cecilia wept bitterly.

They felt almost as bad over the reviews as they did over their wretched plight.

It was not until after they had lan-

guished in prison cells for three days that Cecilia suddenly remembered that she had sold her typewriting machine to a second-hand dealer the day after the play was finished, and that therefore it was impossible to charge her or Tom with having used the machine some weeks later to typewrite the address on the wrapper of the box of poisoned cigars.

She explained this fact to her lawyer, and the latter, after interviewing the second-hand dealer and learning to whom he had resold the machine, managed to find the really guilty party, a half-witted man whom the dead Cyril Bates had grievously wronged.

After this individual had been arrested, and had made a full confession, Tom and Cecilia were allowed to go free.

After their release, one of the first persons they met was Manager Smiley. The manager's face was wreathed in smiles.

"Let me congratulate you, young people," he cried, heartily.

"Congratulate us?" growled Tom. "What for? If ever there were any two persons as unlucky as we are, I'd like to meet them. The failure of our play was bad enough, but this prison experience is just about the limit."

"But your play isn't a failure," cried the manager joyously. "And your arrest was the greatest piece of luck that ever happened. Thanks to it, the play is an unparalleled success. We're doing a glorious business at the box-office, hanging out the 'standing room only' sign at every performance."

"What!" cried Tom, in amazement. "The play a success? You can't be serious. Why, that first night was the worst frost I have ever heard of, and the papers roasted the play unmercifully."

"I know they did," chuckled the manager. "But those same papers also had columns of stuff about your alleged responsibility for the murder of poor Bates. The public is greatly interested in the case, and out of curiosity they are flocking to the theater to see your play. We've made a mint of money already, and we're sold out for weeks ahead. Sergeant Butts's mistake was the best

advertisement our production could have had. I congratulate you."

And because of the morbid curiosity of the public, the play proved such a financial success that Tom and Cecilia

were able to get married soon afterward. And after they came back from their honeymoon they wrote another play which made a hit on its own merits.

Thus, this story ends happily after all.

PAWN-TICKETS TO BURN.

BY G. HERB PALIN.

A matter of uniforms easily come by and which precipitated an appearance at court.

IT happened in this way: Two cars going in opposite directions passed each other on Fulton Street, and in passing some one on the downward-bound car threw a pocketbook aboard the other, which I was running.

At first, when it fell upon the front platform and rolled under my feet, I thought some one was playing a joke on me, although it wasn't the first of April. So I decided to let it lie there and not open it, but when the end of the line was reached an intense desire to examine the contents of that plethoric-looking pocketbook came over me. So I picked the thing up and proceeded to investigate.

The word, "surprised" wouldn't half express my sensations at what I found. The wallet contained one hundred pawn-tickets, in two packages, each encircled by a rubber band.

While I was astonished at the number of tickets, my astonishment grew tenfold when I read the name and list of articles pawned. Each bore the name John J. Smith, and stated that on dates too numerous to mention John J. Smith had pawned a uniform for \$1.00.

My name is John J. Smith!

"Holy cats!" I gasped. "When did I pawn all of those clothes, and where the mischief did I get 'em from, anyhow?"

Then the thought flashed over me that some crook must be playing a game to get me into trouble.

Noticing my excitement, Bill Cronin, my conductor, walked up and asked me what the matter was. Then, catching sight of the pocketbook, he exclaimed:

"Gee, Tom, but that's a fat one!"

I had closed the pocketbook and was holding it in my hands.

"Fat, nothing!" I retorted, and then I told him the story.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been my duty to turn any article found on the car into the office, and I would have done so in this case had it not been for something that happened just then.

I had opened the pocketbook to show Cronin the contents, when suddenly I caught sight of a folded piece of paper protruding from an inner compartment that had before escaped my notice. Drawing it hastily out, I saw that it was a typewritten note addressed to John J. Smith. Opening this, I read:

MR. JOHN J. SMITH.

DEAR SIR: This pocketbook and its contents are intended for you, and it will be decidedly to your advantage to follow the instructions embodied in the following. The uniforms represented by the tickets are all new, and will fit you exactly. As you will see, they were pawned all over Greater New York, and it is the wish of the writer that you redeem them in the order that the tickets are arranged in the packages. Each ticket has a small figure upon it, and they run from one to one hundred.

If you will begin to-day and redeem these suits, putting on a different one each day and wearing it at work, at the end of the hundred days you will be one of the happiest fellows in New York. Remember, one suit is to be redeemed at a time, excepting Saturdays, when you must redeem two. On the hundredth day take out the last one and wear it. Your task will then be completed.

Very truly yours,

A FRIEND.

You could have knocked me down with a feather.

Who on earth, I wondered, could have

written the note and what did it all mean? I was surely the one intended to receive it, for the book had been thrown on my car and, strange as it may seem, I was the only John J. Smith employed by the company. There were other Smiths all right, but no other John J.

On the down-town trip I racked my brain to find an explanation.

Should I follow instructions or destroy the pocketbook and dismiss the matter from my mind? A savings-bank held a couple of hundred dollars of my own money, but should I use it for such an unheard-of purpose?

Finally I decided to see the affair through, for I figured that I could easily dispose of the uniforms, if they were new, for considerably more than a dollar each.

At four o'clock I got my relief, and catching a Bridge car, was soon on the Bowery and in front of the place where the first suit had been pawned.

Entering, I presented my ticket and was informed that it would take one dollar and nine cents to redeem the suit. Producing the money I paid the man and taking the bundle handled me in exchange, left and hurried to my room.

Arriving there I hastily tore open the package and examined the contents.

It was a new uniform, sure enough, and when I tried it on, I found that it fitted as though made for me. At the lowest estimate the suit must have cost ten dollars, and I instantly saw that, so far, I was ahead of the game.

Examining the garments carefully, I was somewhat surprised to see a figure I embroidered on each lapel of the coat.

I wore suit Number 1 the next day and Number 2 the day following, the numeration progressing in the order I redeemed them. Soon my room became filled with uniforms, and the boys all over the line, noting that I wore new clothes all the time and had a different number each day, began to make fun of me.

None of them had been "put wise," for I requested Bill Cronin to keep the affair under his hat, and he was following instructions.

Presently suspicious glances were cast in my direction, and heads were significantly tapped whenever I came around.

and I overheard one of the fellows tell another that I was "nutty." About that time I believe I was; many nights I passed without getting any sleep, what with rolling and tossing about, wondering how the whole thing would end.

One day (I remember it well, for I was wearing suit Number 50) it flashed across my mind that it would be a good idea to try to get some of my money back. The uniforms occupied all the available space in my room and I had nowhere else to put them, so after redeeming suit Number 51 that afternoon I visited a second-hand clothes dealer, whose sign I had seen on the Bowery.

On displaying the suit I was told that three dollars each would be paid for any that I might bring like it, and promising to produce a wagon-load the next day, I departed, feeling that the afternoon had been profitably spent. Less the interest paid, I would be two hundred dollars ahead of the game when the suits were sold.

Promptly at five the following afternoon a wagon containing fifty uniforms, the driver, and myself, halted before the second-hand clothes dealer's store, where the driver and myself were forthwith pounced upon by policemen, who informed us that we were under arrest.

"What for?" I demanded indignantly.

"As if yez didn't know," chuckled the officer who held me. "Why, 'Smithy John,' we're ont'er yez, so come along or I'll give ye a thaste of the sthick," and he waved his club menacingly.

Being of an obliging disposition, I complied and within a few minutes the driver and I were brought before the court, where congregated about the outer rail I noticed fully a dozen pawnbrokers whose faces had become very familiar to me since the receipt of that fateful letter.

When my case was called I was subjected to a cross-examination that made me tell more about myself than I really knew. The second-hand clothes dealer testified that my actions in his place had been so suspicious that he had at once gone to police headquarters and stated the facts.

Things began to look dark for me.

One pawnbroker after another took the stand, and each deposed that I had redeemed one or more suits from them, some intimating that I was a member of a shrewd gang of crooks, who wishing to realize quickly the proceeds of a robbery, had pawned the uniforms and then later on had decided to get more for them. Strange to say, none of them remembered who had pawned the suits.

I told my story to the court, and was not surprised when a ripple of laughter went up from the spectators, and the judge turned a sternly incredulous look upon me. Verily, that pocketbook was proving my undoing.

Thoughts of it reminded me suddenly of the fact that at this instant it was in the hands of the sergeant, who had ordered me searched, and I told the court so.

At once he instructed a bailiff to bring it in, and a few seconds later the wretched wallet was laid on his desk. Opening the pocketbook, his honor drew out package Number 2, containing the forty-nine remaining tickets.

Everybody craned forward to see what they were, and a murmur of astonishment was plainly audible throughout the room when the nature of the packet became known.

The judge glanced hastily at the tickets, then extracting the note I had kept with them, he read it. Keeping my eyes intently fixed upon him I beheld a look of deep surprise sweep across his face. Finally he turned to me.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said, "either you are trilling with this court and are playing a deep game of some kind, or this is one of the most remarkable cases that has ever come under my observation," and again he picked up the pocketbook and examined it.

"What is this?" I heard him ejaculate suddenly, and then I saw him take

thumb and index finger and draw out a slip of parchment-like paper and begin to read it.

Full of interest I watched him, for time and again I had examined the book for some clue that would lead me to the sender, and I had found nothing. The judge had evidently been more successful.

"Clear the room!" he roared at length. "This case is continued."

Then, as the spectators piled out he beckoned me to approach.

"Young fellow," said he, "this paper purports to be the last will and testament of John Smith Freeman."

"John Smith Freeman! Why, that's my mother's brother, Uncle John. I didn't know that he had anything to will to anybody."

"Well, it seems that he had, and a half million dollars at that. The old gentleman makes you his heir, and according to this, he leaves you every cent of it. It seems he learned that you were employed on the street-cars and took the queer fancy to mystify you before allowing the estate to come into your possession. When you donned suit Number 100 you would have found a letter in one of the pockets telling you everything about this will. Allow me to congratulate you."

And the judge shook me warmly by the hand.

Then he told me that I could go, and you can bet I lost no time taking the pocketbook and doing the twenty-three.

"But you got your half million?" asked one of the boys who had been listening to the story. "How ever did you manage to run through it?"

"Half million nothing! I got one hundred uniform suits and sold them for three dollars each. The old gentleman was as crazy as a loon and spent his last dollar to play that trick on me. Great joke, wasn't it?"

THE USES OF ADVERSITY.

LIFE is a shard of flint. We never feel
 How strong the youth and courage that inspire,
 Till quick misfortune, like a tinder steel,
 Has struck the blow that lights it into fire!

Aloysius Coll.

HIS WINGED ELEPHANT.

BY HOWARD R. GARIS.

Professor Jonkin turns his inventive powers to uniting the little and the big, with the usual outcome.

FOR six months Adams had heard nothing from his scientific friend, Professor Jonkin. Not since the learned gentleman's successful attempt at producing a rival to the beanstalk, associated with the fame of one Jack, had Adams received an invitation to call.

For all Adams was aware, Professor Jonkin might be crossing species of plants and raising rhubarb already made into pies as the stalks came from the earth, or he might be producing, by means known only to himself, some new and strange form of animal. Adams never knew where the professor would break out next.

So, after half a year of silence, Adams resolved, whether invited or not, to pay the professor a visit. His ring at the door was answered by John, the gardener.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Adams, is it?" said the professor's factotum. "Well, I'm glad you've called. Maybe he'll come out and speak to you."

"What's the matter?" asked Adams.

"Matter enough," replied John. "I haven't laid eyes on the master for goin' on three months now."

"You don't mean to say he's disappeared?"

"The next thing to it. He's built himself a big bungalow sort of a house down at the end of the garden, and there he's lived, night and day, for the last three months, never comin' out once, and me passin' in his meals through a hole cut in the door."

"Why—why—what in the world can be the matter with him?" inquired Adams.

"Oh, he has one of them queer inventin' streaks on," said the gardener, with a shake of the head. "If it wasn't that he speaks to me now and ag'in through a hole, askin' me to bring him somethin' from the laboratory, sure I'd never know he was alive."

John came a little closer to Adams and whispered:

"I say, you don't s'pose he's gone and played any tricks on himself, now, do ye?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean he hasn't changed himself into some plant, or some animal, like that feller in the book 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' you know. Perhaps he's got into some new shape by mistake, and is afraid to show himself."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Adams, though the idea rather jolted him. "The professor is probably engaged on some difficult problem and does not like to stop experimenting until he has finished. Why, look at Edison. He goes without eating for a week, I'm told, when he's inventing."

"Maybe you're right," agreed the gardener, with a sigh. "But it's queer he doesn't show himself. Sometimes I'm almost afraid to speak to him, for fear I'll be answered by some wild beast out there."

"Oh, come now," said Adams, "you mustn't be foolish."

"I wish you'd go out and talk to him," went on the gardener. "Maybe he'll come out for you. Think of it, three months in there and never a step outside to see the sun except at night, and then he can't see it, which isn't what I meant to say at all."

"Humph! It is a little queer," commented Adams. "I believe I will go out and speak to the professor. If he is offended at being disturbed, I can make some excuse."

He walked toward the rough shed, almost as large as a barn, where Professor Jonkin had shut himself up. As he was about to knock on the door he heard a queer buzzing sound from within.

"Must be a new kind of sawmill the professor is working on," said the visitor.

"Oh, indeed, it's nothing as simple as

a sawmill," spoke up John, the gardener, who had followed Adams.

The latter tapped three times.

"Who's there?" asked the scientist, opening a small slide in the door similar to that used at secret society meetings.

"I say, professor," began Adams, "what are you shutting yourself away from all your friends like this for?"

"Oh, it's you, is it, Adams?" answered the professor in a cheerful voice. "Well, I'm glad you called. Wait a minute and I'll come out."

Adams and the gardener heard him carefully shut several doors and bolt them. Then the outer portal opened and Professor Jonkin stepped out into his garden.

John breathed an audible sigh of relief as he beheld his master in the likeness the scientist had always worn.

"How are you, Adams?" said the professor genially, shaking hands with his friend.

"Very well. And yourself?"

"Never better. I've been a little busy of late. Indeed, come to think of it, I haven't seen you for several days."

"Days!" exclaimed Adams. "Rather months. It's six months since I last laid eyes on you. That night you showed me the magical rapid-growing beanstalk which nearly carried you off with it. Have you made any new inventions since?"

"Six months!" mused the professor in a dreamy tone. "It seems but a few days. But, then, I have been very busy."

"What now?" asked Adams. "A peach without a pit, or an egg-plant that one can make an omelet of?"

"Neither," replied the professor. "I know you must have your little fling at my life-work, my dear Adams, but, nevertheless, you must admit that I have had successes."

"Very decided ones, some of them," muttered Adams.

"I am trying my hand at something new," went on the professor. "Like the children, we scientists must play now and then."

"You don't mean to say you've been playing there all alone these six months?"

"Well, I don't suppose you would call it playing," said the professor. "I have

been experimenting, but along rather light lines. What I have done this time is of no practical benefit to science or humanity, I am afraid. It is not like my creation of combined bees and lightning bugs, so that bees can see to work in the night as well as by day. This time I set myself out to make a——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Adams eagerly, anxious to know what had interested the professor for six months.

"I forgot," said the scientist, laughing. "It is not quite complete yet, and, as I don't want you to see it until it is, I must decline to tell you any more. Can you call again, say this time next week?"

"I will be on hand," replied Adams.

He went away much puzzled, and as he passed from the garden he heard once more that peculiar buzzing sound which seemed familiar, but which he could not quite place. It came from the bungalow, however.

In the course of the next week the professor was a very busy man. He came out of his barn-like cabin on several occasions, and once John caught him carrying in a wheelbarrowful of hay.

"Sure it must be a domestic beast he has invented this time," muttered John. "I'm sure it's none of the farm animals, for they are all in their places."

The next day John's theories were rudely shattered as he caught sight of the professor lugging into the bungalow a large piece of fresh meat.

"He must have made something between a lion and a cow," thought John. "One day it eats hay and the next meat. Queer! Queer!"

Promptly at the appointed time Adams presented himself at the bungalow. The professor met him and seemed somewhat excited, contrary to his usual mood.

"I'm all ready for you," the scientist said. "He isn't in as good a temper as I could wish for exhibition purposes, but I thought you wouldn't mind."

"I infer it is some kind of an animal this time, instead of a hybrid plant," Adams remarked.

"It is," said the professor. "I have allowed myself to turn nature somewhat from her usual course, and I have succeeded, after many disappointments, in producing the first *Culex Anopheles Pachydermata*."

"What in the world is a—er—um—"

"A *Culex Anopheles Pachydermata*," replied the professor, smiling and pronouncing the long name with an ease born of long practise. "This is, in common language, an elephant-mosquito, or a mosquito-elephant, whichever you choose to call it. For common purposes I have shortened the name to Elesketer, being a sort of combination of the two English terms, the full Latin text of which I just gave you."

"Go a little easy," pleaded Adams, to whom this scientific knowledge came as a sort of blow. "Just keep to plain English all through this, if it's the same to you, professor."

"I named it as I did because it has the characteristics of both the order of pachydermata or thick-skinned animals, to which family the elephant, or proboscido ungulatos, belongs, and also of the culex anopheles, a term for mosquito."

"Are you joking?" asked Adams. "Or do you mean that you have invented and raised, by cross-fertilizing, a horrible beast that combines in one form an elephant and a mosquito?"

"I have," answered the professor. "Only it is not such a horrible beast. On the contrary it is quite handsome."

"From a scientific standpoint, I suppose."

"Of course. Now, if you are ready, I will introduce you to Professor Jonkin's Elesketer."

The scientist led the way into the interior of the bungalow. As Adams advanced he heard the queer buzzing sound, only louder this time, and mingled with it was trumpeting as if an angry elephant had broken loose!"

"I'm afraid he's a little cross," said the professor. "But don't be alarmed. He is securely chained."

The professor threw open a door that led to a large room, and there, standing in the middle of the space Adams beheld a shape of beast that caused him to start back in alarm.

He saw what at first he took to be an elephant of average size, but as he looked more closely he noted that from the back of the brute there extended two long gauzy wings, exactly like the wings of a mosquito, only much larger.

And instead of having the ordinary trunk, the Elesketer had for a proboscis a long, slender bill, the end terminating in a horny point, and this bill or trunk could be swung about, raised, and lowered and curled, just as an elephant handles its trunk.

For the rest the beast was almost like an elephant, except that the legs were somewhat thinner, and the tusks more slender and pointed.

The animal swayed from side to side, flapping its wings, which caused the buzzing sound, and blowing through the bill or trunk, which made the trumpeting noise.

"Well, you certainly seem to have succeeded," said Adams to the professor. "What a queer animal. Of what use is it?"

"Of little practical benefit," admitted the professor. "I told you I did this merely as a sort of pastime. It merely goes to show what nature can be educated to accomplish."

"How did you bring it about?"

"I began with an ordinary Jersey mosquito," said Professor Jonkin, "for I understand that there they attain their largest size and strength. I could have started on an elephant, and brought it down to this," he went on, "but I preferred to work from the small creation up to the large."

"I admit that I was discouraged at first. The mosquitoes did not seem to appreciate what I was doing for them. I fed them well, on raw beef and brandy, and in a few weeks I had several as large as robins. But they were still mosquitoes, without the characteristics of elephants."

"I reasoned that if I provided all the environments to which elephants are accustomed—the food, climate, surroundings, and so on, and let the mosquitoes grow up in them, I might bring about what I desired. Accordingly I had this bungalow built and turned it into a small section of a tropical forest."

"By my own methods I grew tall, stately palms and date trees, I produced a thicket of underbrush and a region that looked like a dense forest. Then, by means of steam-pipes I made the place as warm as if it was located on the equator. I put on a glass roof, admit-

ting the sun on hot days, and so further carrying out the illusion.

"I even had a little stream of water flowing through my jungle, and this I warmed so it would bring luxuriant vegetation on the banks. I made all the plants grow very fast and thick by special fertilization.

"Now, having the environment, I proceeded to diet my mosquitoes. I gradually left off giving them the juice from raw beef, and offered them fruit, grain, and hay. At first they did not like it, but they soon took to it.

"I was delighted to find that my mosquitoes were gaining in size. The first thing that really encouraged me was, one day, when having an insect as large as a Newfoundland dog I noticed that the mosquito was growing ears exactly like an elephant's. Then I knew my experiment was a success and that all I needed was time.

"I continued the elephant diet. My insects were now beasts, except that they had the wings of the mosquitoes. At last, after six months of labor, special feeding and expansion of growth by certain means I attained what you see before you now, the only living specimen of an *Elesketer*."

The professor allowed his chest to expand with pride as he spoke, and he led Adams a little closer to the queer beast.

The *Elesketer* regarded his creator with the eyes, small, like those of an elephant, yet which bulged out as do the orbs on a mosquito, lending to the beast an uncanny look. It swayed on its legs and curled its bill-trunk up toward its mouth, which it stuffed with hay from a pile in front of it.

The wings kept up a constant buzzing.

"I hope your *Elesketer* never gets loose," said Adams with a shudder. "Think what havoc would be caused if mosquitoes like that were flying around. And I hope you don't intend to breed a race of these horrible animals, or insects, or whatever they are."

"They partake of the nature of both," explained the professor. "But have no fear, I only raised this one as a specimen. I can readily understand it would not be nice to wake up and find one of them buzzing in your bed-room.

"I would like to call your attention

to the trunk or bill," went on the professor, approaching still closer to the animal. "As you see, friend Adams, it partakes of the characteristics of both the proboscis of the elephant and the bill of the mosquito. It has a sharp horny point capable of penetrating the thickest skin or hide covering, and at the same time the elongation and muscular structure of the trunk enables the member to be swung freely, so that my *Elesketer* can draw blood from his victim around a corner if need be, a wise provision of nature to protect the creature in case of an attack."

"It's a mean advantage to take, though," observed Adams. "Think of having a brute like that bite you from around a corner and not being able to tackle him."

"Oh, well," said the professor, "the animal must have some margin of safety, you know. Again you will notice——"

But just then there was some commotion in a corner of the big space, and with a shrill trumpet of terror the *Elesketer* strained at the chains which bound it.

"Look out!" cried Adams. "It's trying to get at us!"

"Nonsense," replied the professor, though he was a little startled at the happening. "The animal is as gentle as a mud-turtle."

"But something is the matter," insisted Adams.

And, to judge from the actions of the beast, there was. It flapped its wings with redoubled energy and the power it brought to bear in pulling on the chains made the links creak.

"It wants its freedom," said the professor in as calm a voice as he could command under the circumstances. "The instincts of nature are hard to chain. Bred even in the peacefulness of this artificial tropical forest the *Elesketer*——"

"Let's get out of here, professor," cried Adams, seizing the scientist by the arm. "We'll both be killed!"

There was another rustling in the hay that was piled in one corner of the big room, and a small mouse ran into view. At the sight of the tiny beast the ponderous *Elesketer* fairly trembled with what seemed to be fear.

Its gauzy wings beat the air until the noise was like a swift-running dynamo. It trumpeted fiercely, and its struggles shook the ground.

"That's what the trouble is," remarked the professor with scientific coolness. "Elephants, as you may have heard, friend Adams, are mortally afraid of mice, dreading lest the little animals should run up the openings in their trunk. Now, while this Elesketer is not, strictly speaking, an elephant, yet I have not altogether eliminated the elephant's instincts from it. Consequently, when it sees a mouse, it is afraid."

Once more the beast gave forth its peculiar cry and reared on its hind feet so suddenly that it burst the chains holding the fore-legs to the earth.

"Come on, I tell you!" shouted Adams. "In another minute we'll be trampled on!"

"The instincts of a mosquito, which should be to attack and bite the mouse, may prevail in a few minutes, if we have patience to wait and watch," said the professor in a calm tone, as he drew still nearer to the now frantically plunging Elesketer. "It will be a pretty scientific observation to make."

"I think I had rather make an ordinary observation of the garden outside," remarked Adams, preparing to run.

At that instant the mouse made a dash straight for the Elesketer's trunk, either by accident or design. The big brute did not await its small enemy's coming, but with a trumpet-call shriller than any that had preceded snapped the remaining chains, and was free.

It flapped its wings vigorously and rose slowly and ponderously in the air, for a flying Elesketer is not the lightest thing in the world.

Then, just as the professor had predicted, the instincts of the mosquito prevailed over those of the elephant. Only not in just the way the professor anticipated.

"Look out!" cried Adams as he observed the thing suddenly make a dash toward him and the professor.

Adams side-stepped quickly, but Professor Jonkin was not agile enough. Besides, he wanted to see what the Elesketer would do next.

He saw, and likewise felt, soon afterward.

The beast made a dash at him, its trunk-bill raised to strike and, ere the scientist could make a move, the Elesketer had bit him viciously on the back of the neck.

"Oh, my!" cried the professor.

"What's the matter?" asked Adams from the safety of an overturned barrel into which he had crawled.

"He bit me!" cried Professor Jonkin. "Right on the neck! It's swelling up fearfully!"

"What bit you?" asked Adams, with perhaps malice aforethought. "The elephant part of the beast or the mosquito part?"

"The mosquito!" cried the professor, and he rubbed the back of his neck where a big swelling was observed, nearly as large as a turnip. "And if you can imagine a thousand mosquito bites rolled into one you'll get some idea of what it means to be nipped by an Elesketer."

"Look out! He's coming for you again!" yelled Adams.

The professor ducked, but there was no need for alarm. The Elesketer was circling about the big barn, high in the air. All at once it made for the partly opened door.

Butting the portal with the large head common to elephants, the Elesketer smashed the boards as if they were paper, and the next instant was sailing out into the air, free as a bird.

"By the great green dragon!" cried the professor. "He's loose! If he goes to biting people there'll be an awful time. My lump is getting bigger and bigger every minute. Stop him! Catch him!"

The professor spoke the truth about his swelling. It was the size of a pumpkin now, and still growing.

"Catch me stopping that Elesketer!" muttered Adams. "I'd rather tackle a locomotive!"

"Something's got to be done!" declared the professor desperately.

Adams didn't know what move to make, and as for Professor Jonkin, the scientist was really unable to do anything, as the lump on his neck was now so much larger than his head that he could walk only with the greatest diffi-

culty. He was forced to recline on a pile of straw, while Adams ran for a physician.

"And to think my own creation bit me!" moaned the professor as he waited for the medical man.

Meanwhile the Elesketer, full of joy in its new-found freedom, was sailing through the air at a fast rate. Its wings buzzed merrily and the great trunk, tipped on the end with a mosquito's bill, much enlarged, swung to and fro as though seeking a victim worthy of it.

The Elesketer had tasted human blood and was thirsting for more.

On and on it sailed until at last it was far from the place where Professor Jonkin had created it, and was moving over the great Jersey meadows near the Passaic and Hackensack rivers. This was the haunt of the famous Jersey mosquitoes; their home and breeding-place for centuries. Instinct, probably, carried the Elesketer there.

Faster and faster flapped the wings. Up and down moved the trunk-bill.

Far down below him on the earth the Elesketer observed something stirring. With far-seeing eyes he noted that the dark mass was a score or more of men.

They were out on the broad meadows, in pursuit of the ordinary mosquito. The boards of health of New Jersey had combined, and sounded the death-knell of the *Culex anopheles*. By means of a mixture of kerosene oil, citronella, and other vile concoctions sprayed over the meadows the insect pests were being killed by the million.

The men wore long rubber boots, and masks protected their faces from the bites of the buzzing insects, while their hands were encased in rubber gloves.

But the Elesketer knew naught of this. He only saw down below him some men, his natural prey as far as his mosquito instincts were concerned.

He was hungry. He was starving, for the bite he had taken out of the professor had only whetted his appetite.

Like an eagle swooping upon a hapless quarry, the Elesketer folded its wings and darted downward toward the hapless men. The heavy body moved quickly through the air, and the whirr of it soon attracted the attention of the meadow-sprayers.

At first they thought it was the approach of a swarm of mosquitoes. Then, as they made out the details in the construction of the Elesketer there was a scramble to escape.

But when the Elesketer got within fifty feet of the earth, and was selecting, as his first victim, a large fat man, a queer thing happened. The fleeing exterminators observed the beast to be making frantic efforts to fly upward again. It seemed to be struggling against some overpowering influence.

"It's the fumes! The fumes of the kerosene oil and other stuff!" cried the fat man, who, not being as fast-footed as his companions, was obliged to linger behind. "The fumes are killing the flying elephant," for such he believed the thing to be.

And that was exactly what was taking place. Being more of a mosquito than it was an elephant the Elesketer was succumbing to the effects of the mosquito poison.

In another instant the ascending fumes had overpowered the Elesketer. With a last effort to flap the large wings and rise above the smell of the kerosene and citronella the Elesketer, with a mournful trumpeting, fell heavily to the marsh, toppled over into a deep pool, which had been sprayed with the mixture, and was drowned, struggling with its final breath to escape.

The mosquito instincts had prevailed at last and caused the death of the huge beast.

Full of wonder, the men came back to view the monstrosity. They could only see a little of it protruding above the water, and this slowly sank from sight, and then nothing remained but a few bubbles that floated to the surface.

As for the professor, it required several applications of the strongest kind of ammonia and other drugs before the swelling went down, and he had a stiff neck for several days.

When he heard what had happened to his Elesketer he was very sorrowful for a time, but brightened up when Adams suggested that it would be a bad thing if it had bitten many people.

"Yes, I suppose it's all for the best," admitted Professor Jonkin. "I'm glad

I didn't make another. But there were great possibilities in the Elesketer—great possibilities. And to think it was frightened by a mouse and bit me!"

"There were too many possibilities in one of those animals for comfort," observed Adams dryly. "I think you had

better stick to the vegetable line after this, professor."

"I will," promised the scientist. "I have a fine idea for producing a tree that will grow cocoanut pies already to eat," and with this the professor retired into his laboratory.

A SILVER MUDDLE.

BY JOHN QUINCY MAWHINNEY.

A middle-of-the-night adventure, preceded by a loss and followed by a predicament.

QUITE a little commotion was caused when a middle-aged woman, over weight for her height, jumped to her feet and exclaimed:

"I've lost my purse; some one must have taken it!"

Instantly every one was on the alert. A wit, several seats to the rear, began to quote *Iago's* "Who steals my purse steals trash——"

"It's not trash!" exclaimed the woman, her face reddening with anger. "It was a dear little purse, and contained six dollars and fifty-four cents. I remember, for I purchased three yards of——"

Just then the girl at her side plucked her by the sleeve and whispered something to her. With a contemptuous pursing of the lips and a glance around at the half-smiling passengers, the woman dropped back into her seat.

"But I know I had it when I got on the train, Dorothy," she said to her companion. "I am positive. I didn't leave it at Levy's, for I gave that blind man outside the door two cents as I came out."

"You might have dropped it as you got on the train, sister. But what's the use of crying over spilled milk; it's gone, and that's all there is to it. Here is the conductor."

Mrs. Parker immediately unburdened herself to this official, whose Polonius-like head bobbed sympathetically as she detailed her loss. He took her address, in case the purse should be recovered by any of the employees of the railroad. Mrs. Parker thanked him, but had little hope of ever seeing her property again.

Near the center of the car, on the

opposite side of the aisle, Tom Voorhees was taking in the incident with an amused smile. He was on his way to visit a college chum, William Sears, who lived in the little town of Greensburg.

It lay off the main line, and was reached by an excuse for a railroad dubbed the "narrow-gage." It was on the latter that the foregoing incidents had just taken place.

For a moment after Mrs. Parker discovered her loss all eyes were turned in Voorhees's direction, as he was a stranger in that neighborhood. The rest of the passengers, town and country people, were known to one another.

For a second or two, therefore, Voorhees felt rather uncomfortable, but he had to smile to himself as he caught the eye of the young companion of Mrs. Parker and saw her draw that lady back into her seat. He had been interested in the girl from the moment he had stepped aboard the train, and being an artist of no little ability, he had busied himself with making several sketches of her back hair, neck, and shoulders, all that was visible above the seat-back.

Whether the girl was aware of his presence or not, Voorhees did not know, but she would turn her profile toward him frequently, presumably to gaze out the window on the opposite side of the car. And twice she had turned her head entirely round until she was facing in his direction.

Evidently, she knew some lady in the rear of the car and was trying to catch her eye. That is, such was Voorhees's inference.

As a matter of fact, each time she had

turned her glance she had taken in Voorhees's face and had noted that his gaze was riveted on her. She could not but realize that she had aroused some interest in this handsome stranger.

She nudged her married sister.

"Have you noticed the stranger with the Fedora hat. Ella?"

"Yes, I have, and I have been thinking that possibly he may know where my purse is," returned her sister suspiciously.

Dorothy gasped.

"Surely you don't think for a minute that he would be guilty of theft! I don't think you took a good look at him."

"How can I, when he is sitting so far back. Do you want me to get a crick in my neck?"

But Mrs. Parker gave a rearward glance as she spoke.

"He doesn't look overhonest to me," she reported, as she righted herself; "and he seems to be trying to hypnotize me, by the way he is staring."

"Are you sure he is staring at you, Ella?" asked Dorothy, with a smile.

"Of course I am," retorted her sister, failing to catch the other's meaning. "He looks like one of those up-to-date light-fingered gentlemen you read about in the *Morning Derrick*. I have no proof, but I feel as if he had my purse and were watching me so that in case I should make a suspicious movement he could drop off the train and fly."

Dorothy could not help laughing outright at her sister's womanlike deductions, but their conversation was interrupted by their arrival at Greensburg.

Voorhees, in the bustle and confusion of some passengers alighting from one end of the car and some from the other, lost sight of the young girl whose back hair, neck, and shoulders, with two profile views, were scratched on the pages of the sketchbook in his pocket.

His search was interrupted by a resounding smack on the back and a familiar voice shouting a greeting.

"Hello, Voorhees, you elephant! Welcome to Greensburg!"

"Hello, Sears, old man! How's the boy?"

"Fine as frog-hair, but getting a little out of patience. That blamed train was half an hour late. Suppose the ride was monotonous enough, eh?"

"Oh, I don't know as to that. On the contrary, it was rather amusing."

"That so?" asked Sears, in surprise. "In what regard?"

"Why—er—the different types of people that were aboard, you know. Great chance for study," said Voorhees vaguely.

He did not wish Sears to know anything of his little affair; that would be a side-issue during his stay in Greensburg. He was longing to meet this young lady, as her personality had struck him quite forcibly.

She was indeed a beautiful girl, and his surprise was the greater that she should be living out here in this little town, almost in the woods. He felt that he had made a "find."

His thoughts were interrupted by his friend.

"Pile into the rig, Voorhees. As you are a lover of horse-flesh, you will be quite smitten with this nag. See her cover ground."

The horse was indeed a fast stepper, and they soon arrived at Sears's home. It happened that all his people were away on a visit, and the men had the house to themselves. Voorhees's purpose in coming to Greensburg had been twofold: first, to visit his friend; and, second, to make some water-color paintings of the magnificent scenery skirting the town. His object was now threefold: he had added the resolve to become acquainted with the girl he saw on the train.

He feared to tell Sears of his desire, however, as he knew his bachelor friend would guff him mercilessly. Therefore, he decided to bide his time.

And fate was kind to him, but in such an unexpected manner that Voorhees would remember the incident for many a day.

The two friends had decided to spend the evening together, but, as luck would have it, Sears, being a physician, was called away on a pneumonia case about nine-thirty and Voorhees was left alone. Voorhees declined an invitation to accompany his host, saying that he would retire early, after a little stroll through the town.

Accordingly, about ten o'clock he started on his nocturnal walk. After reaching the end of the block, he sud-

denly remembered that probably he would be unable to find Sears's house again, as the streets were only lighted on the corners, and very poorly at that.

Turning, he noted a large tree which he felt certain stood in front of Sears's residence, and so, reassured, he walked on. After a stroll of half or three-quarters of an hour, he retraced his steps.

The moon had evidently grown tired of shining, and had gone to sleep behind an impenetrable cloud. Everything and everywhere was dark as pitch.

Voorhees began to regret that he had gone so far. Not a soul was stirring; everybody, evidently, went to bed with the chickens in this neighborhood.

At last, however, he found his street. The rest was easy. Spot the tree, and he would be home.

He walked on. He remembered he had come down two blocks before turning a corner, and so back he went two blocks after turning into the street.

He found the tree, and sighed with relief. But the sigh was premature. He was sure this tree had stood in front of Sears's home, but, as a matter of fact, it was in front of the house next door.

Ignorant of this detail, Voorhees confidently mounted the steps of the veranda and tried the door. It was unlocked, as he had left it. Pushing it open, he entered the dark reception-room. It was not necessary for him to light a match, as he knew the way, having been shown his room before Sears took his departure.

Voorhees wondered if he had returned. He groped his way to the left of the hallway, where he knew the stairs leading to the second story were situated. He found them, and was in the act of ascending, when his ear caught a slight noise in the stillness.

He listened, and he heard it again. It came from the direction of the kitchen.

Instantly he jumped to the conclusion that Sears had returned and was taking a bite before going to bed. Voorhees felt that a small piece of cheese and cracker would not go bad after his walk, and besides, he wished to tell Sears about his troubles in getting home. He resolved to go back to the kitchen and join him.

He felt for a match to light the way, but could find none. The only thing

left to do was to grope through the dining-room until he reached the kitchen.

Through the dining-room, therefore, he went without accident, although he moved very cautiously. The door leading to the kitchen was closed, but he could see a faint stream of light underneath.

He would not call to Sears, he decided, but go in on him unexpectedly and try to scare him. He approached the door and found the knob.

For a moment he paused, and then a puerile idea seized him. He would open the door quickly and in a frightening voice exclaim, "Booh!"

He did so. His recollection of what occurred during the following ten seconds is rather hazy.

Did you ever notice two cats, probably rivals for the affections of some glossy-haired feminine feline, come upon each other quite suddenly around a corner? They stop stock still, their eyes widen and glow with hatred, their heads lower, and their backs and tails rise in indignation.

Well, that is not exactly what occurred when Voorhees "boohed" into the kitchen, but the comparison will give an idea of the scene.

A shriek followed the "booh," and then all was quiet. Coming out of the intense darkness of the dining-room into the glare of the kitchen's gaslight for a moment blinded Voorhees, and he was unable to see the person who had shrieked. Of one thing, however, he was sure. It was not Sears. It was the voice of a woman.

Gradually his eyelids ceased their blinking, his vision became clear, and his surprise increased.

For there, on the other side of the room, supporting herself with one hand on the table, stood a young girl. She was robed in her night-dress, and her hair flowed about her face and shoulders in luxurious disorder.

In her right hand she clutched a newly made lettuce sandwich. She was the girl Voorhees had seen on the train that afternoon.

For several seconds, which seemed like hours to each of them, neither spoke. The girl's face was gradually resuming the color which had fled from her cheeks,

but her eyes never for a moment left Voorhees's face.

He realized immediately that he was in the wrong house. What to do now was the question.

The situation was most embarrassing, to say the least: an attempt at explanation might fix matters, but then it might not. And if there was one thing that Voorhees detested, it was an explanation. The ludicrousness of the predicament occurred to him, and he had great difficulty in restraining his laughter. The girl evidently mistook him for a burglar. What other inference could she draw?

Voorhees took a step forward and slowly closed the door behind him. It was the only egress. The girl was aware of this fact, but did not cry out. She evidently decided to throw herself upon the mercy of this midnight prowler.

Another brilliant idea had come to Voorhees, and he determined to carry it out, despite consequences. He thought it very original.

Usually when a burglar is caught or discovered he will deny positively that he is one, insist that he has made a mistake in the house, or something to that effect, and pretend innocence of any wrong-doing. To give novelty to the affair, Voorhees would do the reverse.

He was not a burglar; he *had* made a mistake in the house, and he was innocent of any wrong intention; but would the girl believe this? Would she not rather believe a lie—that he *was* a burglar and had come to rob the place?

Voorhees thought so, and decided to play the part.

As he had seen the villain in a play do once upon a time, he drew forth his case and extracted therefrom a cigarette. Walking to the mantelpiece, he secured a match, and while lighting the cigarette he scrutinized the girl from the corner of his eye. The girl stood perfectly still, evidently waiting to hear what the intruder might say. She liked his looks, in spite of his calling, and figured that he could not be a very ferocious burglar.

"This meeting is quite unexpected, Miss—Miss——"

"Fortune," supplemented the girl.

Voorhees smiled. He admired her humor.

"What an inappropriate name! But

first allow me to understand your pun; it is rather ambiguous. Of course, it is unfortunate for you that I am here—probably."

"Not at all," she struck in quickly. "It is unfortunate for you. You came for valuables—and you find only me."

"Only you! How modest is Miss Fortune! Why, to me you are a jewel of priceless worth, more valuable by far than all things costly and precious."

"Aren't your declarations rather premature? And don't you think you had better take what you came for and allow me to retire. I am becoming quite sleepy."

"You were the only woman on the train who attracted my attention," continued Voorhees, ignoring her hint.

"As there were but two of our sex aboard, I feel quite flattered."

"I wished to speak to you then, but of course that was impossible, as we had not become as good friends as we are now."

The girl smiled.

"Your presumption is frightful, sir. Will you not please take your departure?"

"If you request it, I cannot refuse," answered Voorhees, with an elaborate bow. "But the evening has been too pleasantly spent for me to think of taking away with me anything more than a remembrance of you, Miss—Miss——"

"Adventure."

"It has been, truly. Adieu."

II.

WHEN he had gone and she had heard the front door close after him, Dorothy Winthrop's nerve forsook her. Calm as she had been during the ordeal, the after-effect brought on hysteria. She ran from the room, calling loudly for her sister to come down. At the foot of the stairway she sank down in a faint.

Mrs. Parker, hearing the cries, tumbled out of bed, and seizing her husband's revolver, hurried below. There she nearly fell over the prostrate form of her sister.

Although nearly scared out of her wits, she was able to get some water and bring the girl to.

With open mouth and palpitating heart she listened to Dorothy's account

of the burglar who had left without taking any loot. This part Mrs. Parker was unable to believe, and to make sure that such was the case, she began an investigation.

"I just knew something would happen while Harry was away," she said, referring to her husband, who had gone to the city that morning and was not expected home until the next afternoon. "Can you reach that gas-jet, Dorothy?—you are taller than I. He has always pooh-pooed the idea of burglars. But how in the world did he get in?" she asked suddenly.

"It was my fault," replied Dorothy guiltily. "When I came down-stairs for a little bite before going to bed I poked my head out on the veranda to get a breath of air, and I suppose I forgot to lock the door again."

"And you might have caught your death of cold, with only your nightgown and slippers on. You are very careless."

"But isn't it a good thing he didn't take anything! There is all that solid silver Harry gave you when you were married. It is worth a great deal, but he didn't try to find anything—after he saw me," Dorothy added archly.

"And I suppose you think he was so smitten with you that his villain's heart melted in its bad intentions," retorted her sister sarcastically. "I knew when I saw that fellow on the train that he was a bad one, and—merciful Heavens!"

She had opened the lower door of the sideboard, where the silverware was kept (it was only brought forth on royal occasions), and discovered, to her horror, empty space. Every single piece was missing!

For a moment both women were so amazed that neither could speak a word. All they were able to do was to stare into each other's face, seeking an explanation.

Mrs. Parker was the first to recover, and her sentences were plentifully punctuated with tear-drops.

"There—there is your honorable burglar. That shows how honest he was, and how he went away after seeing you without taking anything. He meant anything more than he had already taken. I knew no burglar was so soft-hearted, and that was the set Harry gave me on

our wedding-day. Oh, it's enough to set me crazy! Why did he go to town, this night above all others! There is five hundred dollars' worth of silver stolen!"

She burst into uncontrollable weeping.

"Surely it wasn't worth that much, sister," said Dorothy, thinking to console, but she merely fanned her sister's indignation.

"Do you think Harry would have bought me anything less valuable? I tell you I saw the bill for that silverware, and you can't get around that. And now it's gone, and all through your carelessness. You know you should never have left that front door open, Dorothy! Why, the idea is preposterous—insane! With the number of robberies we have had around here lately, I should think you would have known better."

Dorothy was sorrowful indeed, and began to cry also. Her elder sister grew softer then, and told her not to mind: they must send for the police.

But who could they send at this hour of the morning? It was now about one o'clock. They had no telephone, and so they had to content themselves with allowing the robbery to go without being reported until daylight. They went back to bed, but not to sleep.

III.

IN the meantime, Voorhees had found his right domicile, entered, and went to bed, laughing to himself over his joke. His laugh was turned to a look of concern the next afternoon when, while walking up one of the main streets of the town, he was tapped on the shoulder and an unknown voice informed him that he was under arrest.

"Arrest! On what charge?" demanded the alarmed Voorhees.

"Entering the home of Mrs. Parker, on Decatur Avenue, last night and robbing it of silverware to the value of five hundred dollars," replied the detective, who held him by the arm.

"The home of Mrs. Parker—silverware? Oh, I see," and Voorhees began to laugh. "Good! Fine! She has got back at me. I thought for a moment you were in earnest, and that the house had actually been robbed. I——"

"I was never more in earnest in my life," answered the detective coldly.

"The house was robbed of the silverware last night, and you are the man who did it. You fit to a T the description furnished by Mrs. Parker's young sister, even down to the eagle-claw stickpin you have in your tie at the present moment. So come with me."

"Why, my dear man, you must be crazy! There is a horrible mistake here, somehow!"

"The only mistake was made by you in remaining in town after you took the plate," smiled the officer. "But in order to avoid any further mistakes, we'll just walk around to the Parkers' and have you identified beyond a doubt."

Although Voorhees had detested explanations heretofore, he was now willing to make everything clear as crystal. He saw that he was in a tight hole. If the house had been robbed he might have a hard time proving his innocence.

Unfortunately, his friend Sears, the physician, was out on his daily round of calls, and he was the only person in Greensburg who knew Voorhees personally. The only thing he could do was to go along with the officer, who refused to listen to any explanations.

Arriving at their destination, they were shown into the dining-room by Mrs. Parker, whose face beamed with delight when she caught sight of Voorhees a captive. Behind her stood Dorothy, her face a study.

"I just brought him around to have you identify him, Miss Winthrop, although I know he's the fellow we want. I saw him get off the train yesterday, but lost sight of him in the crowd. I had my suspicions then that he was a bad egg."

Had there not been ladies present, Voorhees would have floored the detective on the spot. As it was, he contented himself with a stinging remark.

"Why, you blithering idiot, for two pins I'd take your empty head and knock it against the door-sill. We have no desire to hear your personal opinions. You have made a mistake, and I'll explain before you take me out of here or there will be a general mix-up in which you will come out second-best. Take my word for it."

Then turning to the ladies, Voorhees admitted the events of the night previous,

except that he did not take the silverware. He confessed that he was only playing a joke, and that he had no intention of doing so until he found himself in the wrong house. He added he was a friend of Dr. Sears, who lived next door, and that were that gentleman present his innocence would soon be established.

But at these explanations the detective only sneered. He had heard of excuses much cleverer before, and the "joke" was thin enough to blow through. Mrs. Parker was not convinced by a long way, although had it been up to Dorothy she would doubtless have lifted the charge immediately.

Voorhees's explanation only served to establish him the firmer in the detective's mind as one of the cleverest of modern crooks. The case against him was looking black indeed when Mr. Parker appeared. He had just come home on the afternoon train, and was filled with astonishment to find his house so thickly tenanted.

Matters were explained to him, and the loss of the silverware mournfully related. The recollection of its disappearance brought fresh rivers to Mrs. Parker's eyes, and Dorothy looked chagrined.

After all, she was the cause of the goods being stolen so easily, and she felt their loss keenly on that account.

Voorhees nearly forgot his troubles while watching her face, and several times she caught him in the act. She blushed furiously, and tried to draw her mouth into a shape indicative of contempt.

Mr. Parker waited patiently until all explanations and accusations had been made, and then, much to the surprise of every one present, he walked over to the prisoner and took his hand.

"You did wrong in playing your practical joke, but I suppose you have learned your lesson. As to the silverware, forget it. I can tell by looking at you that you are not a thief, and if you are a friend of Doc Sears you are a friend of mine. I know you did not take the silverware, because I took it."

The gasp of astonishment which followed this disclosure was large in its volume and incredulous in its sound.

Parker did not wait to be asked another question.

"I know, my dear," turning to his wife, "that when I gave you that set you thought it was solid stuff, and I didn't see any reason for telling you differently. But the truth of the matter is that it is not solid, and having had it now for some time, I thought that a little extra silver on the edges would not hurt it any, as the last covering was beginning to wear off. I did a foolish thing to take it without telling you, but I hoped to get it replated and back without your knowing it. You would not have missed it for a couple of days had this unfortunate affair not occurred last night, as you know, my dear, we rarely use the stuff except for visitors."

"You might furnish the people here with the rest of our domestic details," snapped his wife, rising and sailing from the room.

At that moment Voorhees's friend Sears arrived. He had just come up from the depot, where the station-agent had asked him if he would return to Mrs. Parker, of Decatur Avenue, a small purse which had been found on the train the night before. The women who cleaned and dusted the cars had found it under one of the seats, where it had slipped down between the back and the cushion.

Turning, he saw Voorhees.

"Why, what's the matter?"

Dorothy explained, after which she was introduced to Voorhees.

SHADOWS ON THE WALL.

When the room is tidy,
 Toys are put away,
 Eyes are growing sleepy,
 Skies are turning gray;
 Comes the children's clamor
 As they round me throng—
 Fairy lore's exhausted,
 Sung each nursery song;
 In the mellow lamplight
 Hushed their voices all,
 While they watch me making
 Shadows on the wall!

Through the happy silence
 Rings their laughter low
 As upon the wall, there,
 Shadows come and go.
 Nurse, unseen, unheeded,
 Watches from the door,
 While the children's voices
 Plead for just one more!

One by one they leave me,
 Till I sit alone,
 Seeing, in the twilight,
 Shadows of my own.
 Long forgotten fancies,
 Dreams in olden guise;
 Till from heart to eyelids
 Tears, unbidden, rise—
 Happy, happy children!
 Time has joys for all—
 Only some are fleeting
 Shadows on the wall!

Clifton Bingham.

WHAT BECAME OF TOM FULLER.

BY FREDERICK R. BURTON.

A case of mysterious disappearance that found its solution far otherwise than in the trite one of the earth opening to swallow the victim.

ALL Cranville was aware of the bitter rivalry between Tom Fuller and Francis Manning, and consequently all Cranville had its opinion when Tom Fuller disappeared mysteriously on the night of July 15.

For the size of Cranville is just such as to make it easy and agreeable for every resident to know every other resident's business.

Tom Fuller worked for wages in the shoe-factory. He was a skilful workman, and a good enough fellow in his way—quite good enough to be the hero of a conventional love-romance if that were to be the end and aim of this narration; but as it has another purpose, there is no need to expatiate on his character or arouse sympathy because his rival, Francis Manning, happened to be the son of a rich man who lived in Cranville only in the summer.

For Frank Manning was an equally good fellow in *his* way, which is not necessarily bad when you have plenty of money, a fine home, education, and a cheerful disposition.

But it might go without saying that Fuller felt that circumstances were much against him when he discovered that the handsome young summer resident was interested in pretty Isabel Fielding, and that Isabel's head was apparently turned by the wealthy suitor's attentions. It was only natural that Fuller should feel bitter toward Manning, and if he behaved a bit foolishly he should be pardoned on account of his limited knowledge of the world and the fact that the rather heartless remarks of his companions were exceedingly hard to bear with good grace.

People are not so outspoken in the cities as they are in the country. Your city friends do not grin when they meet you with your sweetheart on your arm, nor, on the other hand, do they ask of-

ensively if you've "got the mitten," or if the other fellow has "cut you out."

Fuller had to endure this latter sort of thing at the factory, in the village grocery store of an evening, and even after church service on Sunday. It is small wonder, therefore, that he vented his jealous rage one noon when he met Manning coming from the post-office.

In the words of the bystanders, he "sassed Manning good," and the high-bred city man, surprised and haughty, turned his back, and would have gone on but that Fuller snarled something that would have made a cooler fellow hot with anger. Manning wheeled about in a hurry, and there was an exchange of fisticuffs, to the delight of the younger fry, until, the dishonors about even, the postmaster and the store-keeper butted in and separated the two.

Manning hurried shamefacedly to his elegant home by the seashore, and Fuller snorted his way to the modest boarding-house where he lived at four-fifty a week.

It was foolish, deplorably foolish, and while Fuller was clearly the immediate aggressor, local opinion was strongly in his sympathy; and when you come to think of it, many a more famous battle has been fought for a precisely similar cause, even mighty wars, just because a woman—but never mind.

The important fact is that word of the affair sped before nightfall to Isabel Fielding's home, away out in the farm district, and the story lost nothing of circumstantial detail in transit.

Now, that was the meeting night of the Torrent Hose Company, and Fuller, its president, had to be present. He heard next day that Manning had spent the evening with Isabel.

That was not a pleasant thing to think about, but it in nowise affected Fuller's actions, for he was going to

see Isabel at the first opportunity, anyway, and so on this evening, July 15, he trudged up the sandy road to her father's house.

Isabel was distinctly cool. When he sought to know the cause, he soon found it. She was, or pretended to be, which amounted to the same thing, deeply offended because he had embroiled her name in a vulgar row. He demanded to know what she had heard, and she "had heard enough," with a toss of her pretty head.

He wanted to know, then, who told her, and she disdained any answer whatever.

"It was that sneaking Frank Manning!" exclaimed Fuller hotly. "I'll fix him this time. I'll get him where there won't be any interference."

Isabel cuttingly advised him to give Frank Manning a wide berth, which was most indiscreet on her part, for when she saw that he was fearfully in earnest it was too late for her to restrain him.

She begged him not to be foolish in terms that, had he been in his right mind, he would have interpreted as evidence that Manning was not as high in her favor as he had imagined. He might, if he had known more of the world, have inferred that the fair maid was trying to humiliate him for the sake of fastening him more closely in the meshes of her charms, for such is the way of country girls, but he could see nothing except the hated face of his rival, and he broke away from her abruptly, repeating his vow that he would "fix" Frank Manning.

He started forthwith across the fields, by the shortest cut, to the Manning summer residence, on the shore. It was some two miles over generally rough, open country, abundantly rocky and somewhat hilly, but to one who knew the lay of the land it was a much easier and quicker route than by the road through the village.

Manning knew the short cut as well as Fuller, for he often took it on his way to and from Isabel's home.

Fuller's disappearance dates from the moment when Isabel lost sight of him in the darkness. He did not return to his boarding-house that night, but his ab-

sence was not noticed until he failed to appear for breakfast. His landlady, fearing that he might be ill, went to his room, and found that it had not been occupied during the night.

This in itself was enough to start a mild sensation in a country town, and when Fuller's bench at the factory remained vacant the sensation was well established. Rumor had it, long before there was any real justification in known facts, that Tom Fuller had disappeared.

By evening a contribution came from Fielding's farm in the shape of information about Fuller's departure with the intent of "fixing" Frank Manning, and naturally, therefore, when Manning came to the post-office for his mail he was questioned.

The way the question was put was unfortunate. Bemis, the blacksmith, asked it.

"What happened between you and Tom Fuller?" said he.

Manning was on his dignity instantly. "I don't care to discuss it, Mr. Bemis," he replied.

"Wal," retorted Bemis, momentarily disconcerted, "p'raps you'll have to some day if you don't look out."

Manning was perplexed, and showed it.

"I don't understand you," he said. "What happened is doubtless known to everybody in Cranville. I am very sorry for it, and ashamed of myself. That's all I care to say, and it seems to me it's a good deal."

With this he climbed into his buggy and drove rapidly away.

Evidently, Manning thought Bemis was alluding to the disgraceful quarrel of two days before, and some of the hearers so interpreted his remarks, but there were those who felt a subtle allusion to the meeting of the preceding evening which everybody agreed must have taken place.

For, they argued, Tom Fuller was not the man to back out once he said he would do a thing, and as he started for Manning's summer home, therefore he must have gone there.

"'Tain't likely," they said, "that he's still hanging round there waiting for a chance to give Manning a good licking."

Some respect was given to a theory

that Manning had beaten his adversary so thoroughly that Fuller had crawled away to some friend's or relative's in the farming district to recuperate before showing himself in the village, but the only actual upshot of the discussion was a heightened prejudice against Manning, whose general good nature was forgotten in memory of his recent superciliousness.

Next morning, however, when Fuller failed to report himself in person or by letter, there was a feeling of real alarm in the village.

The early callers at the post-office and the store were seriously of opinion that something ought to be done. They were quite right. Constable Hawkins, being of the same mind, hitched up his sorrel nag and drove, first to Fielding's farm, where he had a talk with Isabel, and then to every one of the half-dozen friends or relatives of Fuller's who had farms within five miles of Cranville.

Nobody had seen or heard anything of the missing man. The constable returned in the middle of the afternoon, and as inquiry at the factory showed that Fuller was still missing, he drove on to the Manning residence.

Francis Manning was at home, and was amazed, apparently, when he heard of Fuller's disappearance.

"I haven't seen him since our scrap in front of the post-office," he said.

That was by no means the whole of the conversation, for Hawkins was persistent in asking the same question in a dozen different ways, but it was all the constable got in the way of information. He did get one other thing—a suggestion.

Offended and irritated by the inquisition, Manning at length exclaimed:

"If you're so cock-sure I know what's become of him, why don't you arrest me and have done with it?"

"Wal," retorted Hawkins emphatically, "we'll see about that."

Then he drove back to the village and invited his neighbors to join him in a search for the missing factory-hand.

Many a man went without his supper that evening for the sake of being in the searching party, which started early, in order to cover as much ground as possible before dark.

They began properly at the kitchen door of Fielding's farmhouse, where Isabel had parted from her headstrong suitor, and whence now she watched the searchers start over the rough land along the ill-defined but well-known path that led to the seashore and Manning's home. There were tears just behind her eyes, and apprehension at her heart.

At length she put on her hat and hastened after the party, overtaking it at a point about midway in Fuller's contemplated journey.

A halt had been made there because the searchers had come upon what they took to be a clue. It was at the summit of a knoll, where the path passed for a little distance beside a forest.

At the very summit a tree stood out from the woods some twenty or thirty feet, and between it and the forest there was a rather thick growth of underbrush.

In this space were signs a plenty that something unusual had occurred. Twigs had been wrenched from the slender undergrowth, some bushes were wholly trampled down, and the keenest-eyed searchers were sure they detected further evidence of a struggle in indentations of the turf, made, presumably, by the feet of men engaged in desperate combat.

That was all. Detectives, probably, would have found more, but these were unimaginative, untrained countrymen, gifted with hard common sense, and quite capable of deducing a plain conclusion from such evidence as was spread before their eyes.

They were stating their conclusions to one another when Isabel arrived.

"It's just this way," said Bemis, the blacksmith; "this hill is on the way from Fielding's to Manning's, and it's also on the way from Manning's to Fielding's. Wal, Fuller didn't know his way no better than Frank Manning does, 'cause he's used it often enough—ain't he, Belle?"

This question, addressed to the panting girl just as she arrived, brought a deeper color to her cheeks, but she made no verbal answer.

"Doesn't Frank Manning come to see you pretty often?" Bemis demanded.

"He's called now and then," she admitted unwillingly.

"Wal, doesn't he always come across lots?"

"No, he doesn't! Sometimes he drives."

This interrogation was really unnecessary, for it was well enough known that Manning had on occasion used the short cut, and the remainder of the inference from the indications was to the effect that Tom Fuller, started from Fielding's at about the same moment that Manning started from his house in the opposite direction; that the young men met midway—that is, that about this spot—and had it out in the darkness.

As Manning was in evidence and Fuller was not, it followed that the city man had beaten the rustic—and what then?

"Manning couldn't lick Fuller if 'twas a fair fight with nature's weapons," said Jones, the butcher's helper.

"I seen Manning with a revolver oncet," remarked young Jim Carey, who did chores for the postmaster.

Men turned grave faces toward the boy.

"When? Where?" they asked him.

"Day after the Fourth," he answered. "Some of us went swimming down to Blake's Cove. He was there, shooting at a target. He had a fifty-cent piece stuck in the sand-hill 'bout as high as his head, and was firing at it."

"A man might shoot up here," said the constable slowly, "and the shot never be heard nowheres. It's so fur from any houses."

Isabel turned her back to the crowd and put her apron to her eyes.

"A man that would even try to hit a fifty-cent piece must be a good shot," remarked Bemis.

"Guess if he couldn't hit the coin he could hit a man at short range," said Jones.

"Belle," the constable demanded, "did you ever hear Manning make any threats against Fuller?"

"No, I didn't," she sobbed.

"Just the same, I think it's mighty serious," observed the constable.

All agreed to this. They even questioned what disposition had been made of the body.

If Manning had shot Fuller and killed

him, he must have concealed the body somewhere, and that theory was incentive for further search. Constable Hawkins took charge, subdivided the party, and before dark the woods and all the land surrounding the knoll for a considerable distance had been thoroughly examined.

Not a trace of the missing man was found, not a clue to suggest another theory.

By common consent, when darkness made it impracticable to continue the search, the searchers gathered at the summit of the knoll. They were in the deepest sort of quandary over the unusual problem that confronted them.

It seemed impossible that a murderer, unaided, could have carried the body of his victim farther from the scene of the encounter than they had been during the search, and it was equally incredible that Fuller, having started for Manning's house, should have changed his mind and gone elsewhere.

They were still talking the matter over vaguely, undecided as to what ought to be done next, when Francis Manning and his father joined them. The villagers at once gathered in a close group about the newcomers. Manning Senior did not keep them waiting.

"I have just learned," he said, "that one of the young men of the village has disappeared, and that you suspect my son had something to do with it."

"Wal, Mr. Manning," responded the constable uneasily, "it's pretty well known they didn't bear each other any too much good-will. They had a fight——"

"I regret to say that I know all about that," the city man interrupted. "What are the facts about Fuller?"

"All we know is that he left Luke Fielding's house at about half past eight——"

"I know that, too. We have just come from there."

"Then you know as much as anybody—'less 'tis your son."

"I understand you think he and my son had another fight, and you believe my son did him grave injury. Is that it?"

"What else can we think? If 'twas light you'd see there was a scrap of some

kind in the bushes, here. It's right on the way from Fielding's to your house. Fuller started to go there, and he was bent on a fight, so if your son went across this way at that time it's likely they met and had it out. I don't say that I'm blaming your son. Mebbe he had to defend himself; but if that's the case, he ought to tell us about it."

"I see, and I think we can settle your doubts at once. This happened two nights ago, didn't it?"

"That was when Fuller was seen last, going straight toward your house."

"Very well; so far as we know, he never got there, and what became of him is as much a mystery to us as it is to you. Now, as to my son: On that evening we had visitors from the city. Dinner was at six, and was finished at half past seven or thereabouts. After dinner the men smoked on the lawn till dark. Then we all went indoors and made up whist-tables, playing till about midnight. My son was with us all the time, a fact that we can establish by a dozen witnesses at least. That settles it, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I guess it does," the constable admitted, "so fur as your son is concerned; but what the mischief became of Tom Fuller? That's what we want to know."

"And we cannot tell you, but I will do what I can to help you find him. My horses and carriages are at your service for any search you want to make, and I will give one thousand dollars to anybody who can bring us proof that he is alive."

"That certainly shows you're in earnest, Mr. Manning."

"If there is any doubt about that, here is my son. You can arrest him now and lock him up if you still think he has any knowledge of the matter."

Constable Hawkins had no desire to lock up Frank Manning under the circumstances, and apparently all his neighbors were of one mind in acquitting the young man of ugly suspicion.

The next afternoon Mr. Manning's offer of a thousand dollars' reward for proof of Tom Fuller's existence was made widely public in the form of a poster stuck to fences, barns, and all other available advertising space in the

vicinity of Cranville, and it was not until two days more had passed that some bright mind set afloat a theory that Frank's *alibi* did not amount to so much as it seemed to at first.

"Who said the fight took place early in the evening?" was asked. "Why shouldn't it be that Tom got to the Manning house and saw that Frank was busy with visitors—women-folks, you know—and that he waited around till bedtime and then got at Frank? And why shouldn't they agree to go back a piece, where there couldn't be any interruption, and have it out? And where would they go if they did that?"

"They couldn't go out to sea, and if they went along the beach in either direction they would always be near houses. So there was really only one way they could go—back into the country—and a mile would be far enough for anybody, even if they fought with pistols, which it ain't likely more'n one of 'em had a pistol."

That was the way the argument ran when it was full grown. To those who credited it, the offer of a reward was looked upon as a large bluff, though there were plenty who believed in the sincerity of Manning Senior. And the reward naturally stimulated the most extraordinary examination the neighborhood had endured since the time the first settlers hunted for arable spots big enough for garden patches.

But when a full week had passed and Fuller's whereabouts or fate was as little known as at first it seemed to those who had wasted valuable hours in vain hunting that something further ought to be done by the constituted authority—to wit, the constable.

It was time now for drastic measures. No more blinking at the situation. Frank Manning would have to prove that he had been in his father's house all through the night in question or there would always be those who would believe that he had made away with the factory-hand.

Not only was this put up to Hawkins as a public duty, but it was conveyed less directly to young Manning himself. It became decidedly uncomfortable for him to venture into the village or go anywhere that the outspoken villagers

were likely to be. They took various ways of letting him see that he was not exactly popular, and as the young man had his share of sensitiveness, he protected himself by keeping out of sight.

For three days more the constable resisted the appeals of the aggressive element to "take up" Frank Manning and have the whole thing thrashed out in the district court. Then, goaded into action, he hitched up and drove down to Manning's early one morning.

He found Manning Senior watching a game of lawn-tennis between two of his guests.

"Is Frank to home?" asked the constable when Manning Senior gave him opportunity for a private conversation.

"No," was the direct reply, "and he won't be this summer again, unless he's wanted in connection with the disappearance of that man Fuller."

"Wal, you see," said Hawkins, not a little disturbed, "the people are a sight oneasy. They don't find hide or hair of Fuller, and there's a lot of 'em will have it that your son knows a heap more'n he's told."

"Did you come here to arrest him?"

"Not exactly, but I thought p'raps you'd see that it was the best way out of it."

"Now, see here, Mr. Hawkins," said Manning kindly, "you mustn't forget that you haven't established, yet, that anything has happened to Fuller. You haven't a scrap of evidence to show that he didn't quietly slip away of his own will because his girl was cross to him. That's the probable explanation. Before you talk of arresting my son, you should have the coroner determine that Fuller is dead.

"But never mind that. I won't stand on technicalities. If you think my boy is a murderer, say so, and I'll have him here as soon as he can cover the distance. I told him to go away. He wasn't enjoying himself, and it was clear that your people wouldn't let him alone. He would have preferred arrest, at first, so as to be cleared of suspicion, but I told him to keep still. I believed Fuller would turn up.

"At last I just made Frank go away. If I bring him back it will cost the county a lot of money for nothing, for

he'll be discharged by any court that sits; but say the word, now or any other time, and back he comes."

Hawkins retired from that conversation convinced that Frank was innocent. He could not satisfy some of his constituents, however, and things came to such a pass that he offered to resign and let them elect a constable who would do their bidding. Cooler heads opposed this disruption of the body politic, and so the sensation thrived from day to day and the mystery of Tom Fuller's disappearance grew with the flight of time.

You may have seen something about it in the newspapers, for eventually a city reporter nosed the story, went down to Cranville, and wrote a two-column account that spread over a page, aided by large type and pictures of Fuller, the constable, Isabel, the town hall, and the spot where an encounter was supposed to have taken place.

It was only a one day's sensation for the city press, because Fuller was not of sufficient importance to justify the reporters in keeping at it. The second day, the "spread" story dwindled down to a paragraph stating that Fuller was still missing, and after that Cranville and its affairs dropped out of sight altogether.

But the day arrived when the reward offered by Manning Senior was claimed and paid, and this is the way it came about:

The weather had a great deal to do with it, though the people of Cranville, ordinarily expert in weather matters, failed to take it into account in their attempts at solving the mystery.

After a clear, hot day, the sky had clouded rather suddenly, so that the early evening was as dark as midnight, and there was a strong off-shore breeze blowing. Fuller noted these conditions without paying any attention to them as he strode along the rough pathway to his rival's house.

Just as he approached the summit of the knoll to which reference has been made he heard a thumping, rustling sound behind him, and turned to see what was up. What was "up" at the moment was literally so—almost over his head, in fact—but what Fuller saw

was suggestive of an inebriated serpent trying to walk on its tail.

It was very indistinct in the gloom, and his first impulse was to dodge, but at almost the same instant he heard a voice from aloft.

"Grab it, will you? We've lost our anchor."

Looking upward, Fuller saw a huge round shadow against the black background of sky and knew that a balloon was passing over him.

The discovery of the dangling rope skipping across the ground and the realization of what the phenomenon implied covered little more than a second, and Fuller willingly laid hold of the rope. He dug his heels into the ground as the gas-bag tugged in resistance, and was dragged into the thicket of undergrowth between the lone tree and the forest.

As he went plowing along he got his mad up, so to speak, encouraged thereto by voices from aloft.

"Run to your left!" one voice bawled. "You'll have us in that tree if you don't take care!"

As if the accidental rustic on *terra firma* was responsible for the actions of a balloon!

"Don't let go!" cried the other voice. "Hold hard! We want to get out!"

Just then the balloon hit the tree. The bag was not punctured, else this account of a disappearance could not be told, but what with the blow and the considerable force exerted by Fuller at the ground end of the rope, the basket canted so far to one side that both its occupants and all their loose trappings fell out.

In obedience to the frantic commands from above to hold hard, Fuller had already managed to give the rope a twist about his body, and he was hanging on like grim death, rather enjoying the excitement and novelty of the struggle. When the momentary pause due to the collision with the tree occurred he took advantage of it to twist the rope about his leg.

Then of a sudden there was an upward tug that brought his feet clear of the ground. The balloon, having lost much more than half its weight of passengers and ballast, began promptly to rise again.

Fuller knew nothing of what had happened. He heard startled cries, but supposed they came from the men in the basket, which was true enough, but they were at the instant leaving the basket in unpremeditated hurry.

He knew that his feet were off the ground, but it did not occur to him that he would not plant them on solid land again the next second. And when the foliage of the tree brushed his face he was too high aloft to drop with safety, to say nothing of the fact that he could not release himself instantly from the coils he had laid about his body and limbs.

The wind, fortunately, blew the bag away from the heavier branches of the tree, and in less time than it has taken to set down the facts Tom Fuller was flying over the landscape in tow of a runaway balloon.

The fall of the original aeronauts was considerably broken by the branches of the tree, but neither stirred for some minutes after they landed. Presently one groaned and sat up.

He stared about him, probably with a wonder-how-I-came-here look—though one cannot be positive as to that, because it was so dark—but presently he felt along the ground until he came to his companion.

In the course of some minutes the first to recover consciousness brought the other to, and then they compared bruises. Neither had a broken bone that could be located, though there were sore spots enough for the entire anatomical outfit.

They struck matches and looked around for the wreck of their balloon, finding nothing but the various small articles that had fallen from the basket with them.

"It's gone!" said one in an awestruck tone, as if announcing a grand discovery.

"And the chap that tried to stop it must have gone with it," said the other.

It was not thinkable that the fellow could have gone far, and after they had limbered themselves up a bit they hobbled over the ground near the tree hunting for the rustic's remains.

When they had spent some time and what seemed superhuman effort in their vain search they returned to the tree and held a solemn council. There was not

the slightest doubt in their minds that the rustic had been hurled from the balloon to instant death. His bruised body would be found by somebody when daylight came.

As for the balloon, that, of course, had gone out to sea, just as it was preparing to do when they decided to come down, for, like all sensible aeronauts, they preferred to land on the hard earth rather than the yielding water.

There was nothing they could do for the victim of the mishap. He was dead, somewhere, and they had already done all that was humanly possible. There remained themselves, and it occurred to them that they might have an awkward time of it explaining the circumstances if they were discovered in proximity to the rustic's body.

The best evidence of their innocence—the balloon—was gone. There might be no end of trouble for them if the farmers round about were ignorant or superstitious, or if they had prejudices against balloons, as was sometimes the case.

In short, the aeronauts decided that the best thing for them to do was to depart quietly—unobserved, if possible—and say nothing. If they should happen to meet anybody, they would make a frank statement of the truth, but if they did not, they would not invite trouble by volunteering what would seem to many like an incredible tale.

So they gathered up all the small articles that had fallen with them from the balloon and limped away, leaving as evidence of the adventure only broken bushes and a few doubtful marks on the turf. As luck would have it, they came to a road at a considerable distance from the nearest house, and trudged over it for several miles without meeting anybody.

Then they arrived at a town where there was a railway station, and the last train cityward took them away from their supposed danger and left the Cranville mystery to work itself out as it might.

While they were still unconscious, Fuller was having the time of his life. It is surely no discredit to his warlike spirit that he was scared half to death. Clinging to the rope and looking down and around, he saw the twinkling of a

few lights to the southward and knew that there lay Cranville. Directly below was simply a dark blur that grew darker and more blurred with every passing second.

Manifestly, the balloon was still rising, and the only comfort in that fact lay in the unlikelihood that he would get banged out of shape against a tree-top or a church-steeple.

But his fingers felt stiff, and his arms began to ache. How long could he hang thus to a rope, he whose previous experience with the article was limited to hauling *Torrent No. 1* to exhibition or competitive playing, for Cranville never bothered its volunteer department with a real fire?

Fuller had no thought of dropping and taking his chances with the ground, which seemed, in the darkness, farther away than it probably was, but he feared that in course of time his drop would be involuntary. Therefore, he concluded that he would be much better off in the basket, if only he could get there; and as he had recovered from the first panic incidental to discovery of his plight, he reasoned that if he was to attain the basket he should try now, before his muscles became so exhausted that he could not climb an inch.

So he cautiously squirmed his way up the rope. It was slow work, but he found that he could rest from time to time by gripping the coil with his leg and winding one arm at a time in another coil. At length he touched the basket.

Then his heart stood still. Up to this point he had been surprised and encouraged by the remarkable steadiness of his conveyance, but when he realized that the men who had been in it must have been dumped out he feared that the basket, if he put his weight to one side, would spill him, also.

But that was only one of two reasons for the temporary suspension of his heart. The other was a sound that came up from below—a melancholy rustling, now loud, now dying away to rise again almost to a roar. The surf! Fuller was flying out to sea!

The terror of it gave him the courage and strength of desperation, and he attempted what, perhaps, otherwise he

would not have dared. He clung with one hand to the rope and swung himself to and fro until with the other he caught the edge of the basket. Then he let go with the other, got a second grip on the edge, drew himself up, and tumbled in a heap on the bottom of the car.

He lay there panting for a full minute, wondering why the thing had not dumped him overboard, but too thankful that it had not to reason very far upon its construction. When he had recovered his breath somewhat he got on his knees and put his head cautiously over the rim.

The surf was still audible, but fainter. In one direction he saw the twinkling lights of Cranville, and nearer was a single small group of lights that came, undoubtedly, from the Manning residence. Far off was a dull glow that probably was caused by the lights of Baymouth, the largest port along that part of the coast, and presently he saw the flashing of a revolving light—the one on Mackerel Reef, no doubt—and, good gracious! that was more than five miles from Cranville!

Fuller dropped back again to the bottom of the basket. It was pleasantly cool, but he shivered as he might do in winter.

How long would the balloon stay afloat? He remembered his geography lessons to the extent that it was some three thousand miles in the direction he was taking before there was any other land. Not so much as an island, that he could remember, between Mackerel Reef and Europe!

He tried to get the multicolored map in his mind's eye and make out what part of Europe he was most likely to hit, but he was hazy as to details, and could only conclude that it might be somewhere between Portugal and Spitzbergen.

"Ain't no use guessing about that," he decided gloomily. "No balloon ever made has gone so far, and if it did, I'd starve to death before I was half-way."

There was the other alternative that appalled him quite as much as the prospect of starving. The balloon, which must have lost a lot of its gas already, would come down some time, and then there would be death by drowning.

He tried to recall what he had read or heard about balloons. There had been a lot about them in the Sunday papers, with pictures, and he had a vague idea that the longest balloon flight he had heard of was eight hundred miles. That was only about a quarter of the way to Europe, but presumably the water there was as deep as in mid-ocean.

He wondered how far he had gone, and again he peered over the edge. The Baymouth lights were plainer now; those of Cranville much fainter. There were other glows on the horizon—other towns, probably. It was clear that he was going steadily seaward, and he sank back again to the bottom of the car.

After some time he remembered quite suddenly that there was a valve-rope regularly attached to balloons by which the aeronauts diminished the buoyancy of the bag when they wished to descend.

Well, what of it? He had no particular desire to go down just there. It might be thought of if the wind should change and he should be borne back over the land.

That became his one hope—a change of wind—but everything up there was so quiet and steady that he could hardly believe there was so much as a breath blowing. He tried to gage his progress by getting up periodically to look at the lights of Baymouth. Wind or no wind, he was getting steadily farther away.

"Must be the revolution of the earth," he told himself, and he got so interested in trying to figure whether the revolution of the earth from west to east would take him toward Europe or away from it that he almost fell asleep.

And so time passed somehow until when he peered over the edge he could distinguish no glow anywhere on the horizon.

Then a chill of despair came upon him, and he had to grit his teeth to keep from useless crying out. It occurred to him that perhaps the direction of the journey had changed while he was puzzling over the revolution of the earth, and he peered from every side of the basket.

So, straining his eyes upon the dead blackness below, he descried a single faint twinkle almost under him.

At first he thought the wind had changed and that he was over land again, but he could hear a faint rushing, as of waves breaking, and as there were no other lights visible, he had to conclude that he was still at sea and that this was the light of a vessel of some kind.

Very well, then! Here was the chance to descend—here was the unmapped island between Cranville and Europe.

He sought now for the valve-cord, and as Fuller, despite his lack of education, was no man's fool, he found it. Tentatively he pulled it, and before long he felt that he was going down.

The light was not under him now, but it did not seem far away, and he could distinguish other lights, could hear the throbbing of an engine above the roar of waves, and presently he felt that he was rushing down faster than perhaps would be good for him, and he let go the cord.

Leaning as far as he dared over the side of the basket, he yelled like a good one, and a moment later was half smothered when the bag collapsed and he was overwhelmed with silk fabric, the meshes of the net, and the spume of tumbling billows.

It was an uncanny moment on the slow-going cattle-ship *Vancouver* when Fuller's yell was heard above the tumult of a fairly stiff breeze and the ordinary noise of the engine. The lookout forward leaped to the rail, saw something vague and vast tumbling into the sea a boat's length, perhaps, to starboard, and he shouted something incoherent to the officer on the bridge.

The latter had heard the cry, too, and was as quick to peer into the gloom and wonder what had happened. Sailors on and off duty ran to the starboard rail, and superstition laid a terror on some of them such as could have been stirred by no tempest.

But the officer on the bridge had recognized the human element in that fearful cry. He ran back to the bell and signaled the engineer to go full speed astern. Almost at the same instant he ordered the clearing away of a small boat, and for the next minute and a half the superstitious ones on board had no time for anything but hard work.

The captain came up from below and took a vociferous hand in hastening matters. The broad humanity of the sea was stirring, and whatever hapless wretch it was out there in the darkness, and however he came by his plight, he would have a chance for life if the men on the *Vancouver* could give it to him.

So, presently a boat left the steamer's side and strong arms propelled it over the waves in the direction from which the startling cry had come. The officer who sat in the stern-sheets shouted at every stroke of the great oars, and at his command the sailors shouted, sometimes in chorus.

At last they heard an answering cry, and shortly afterward Tom Fuller, of Cranville, was hauled, dripping and exhausted, into the boat.

There was none too much life in him, apparently, when at last they had him on board, but restoratives that the captain knew how to administer soon brought him to, and he was made comfortable with dry clothes and all the kindly attention that the seafaring men could give.

They marveled much at his story, but there was no incredulity, for there was no other possible hypothesis to account for his dropping from the sky quite twenty miles from the coast. In due course Fuller asked where they were going, and learned, somewhat to his dismay, that the *Vancouver* was bound to Deptford, London.

There was nothing for it but to make the slow journey and hope for the best. He had all of seventy-five cents with him—not a copper more—and though he was willing enough to work, the ship was fully manned, and the captain had no excuse for compensating him with more than his board on the way over.

"You go to the American consul in London," said the captain. "Tell him your story, and he'll send you home in the steerage of some passenger-ship under an arrangement by which you will pay your passage after you get back."

Fuller thought with dismay of his modest account in the savings-bank. He had no liking to take any part of that for an ocean voyage. It was accumulating for soberer, more permanent purposes, in which Isabel Fielding, he had

hoped and believed, would share, but there seemed to be no other course.

Accordingly, he helped attend to the cattle, messed with the men, and slept in a fore-castle bunk until, two weeks after his departure, the Vancouver brought up in the Thames at Deptford.

Then the captain proved his good heart by changing Fuller's seventy-five cents into three English shillings and giving him a gold sovereign in addition.

"I've no business to do this," he explained, "for I can't properly charge it to the pay-roll, but your case is exceptional. It isn't as if you'd stowed yourself away on purpose."

"I'll send you the amount as soon as I get home," said Fuller.

"Just as you like; but you want to get home now as fast as you can, and as there may be some delay, you want to be careful in spending this money."

He then advised Fuller how to find the American consul, and they parted the best of friends. In fact, the men generally had been so kind that Fuller felt a great lonesomeness as soon as he found himself in the thick of busy London, but it was such a blessed thing to be on land again that he set out with a high heart to find the consul and tell his story.

Of course he got lost. Of course he went miles out of his way, but he persisted in his queries, and at last, in the evening, he came to St. Helen's Place off Bishopsgate Street where the wandering Yankee is ever gladdened to see the Stars and Stripes floating from the last building on the right-hand side.

Business was over for the day, and Fuller had to seek a lodging-place. A whole book could be written about his adventures in London, though none of them were sensational, and none the result of anything but unfamiliarity, and a great deal of pathos might be wrought up over the attitude of the consul when at length Fuller managed to get into his august presence.

The consul heard his story and declined to believe it. Fuller had no proof about him that he was an American citizen except his dialect, and although that was proof enough, the consul assured him that the government did not make a business of returning stranded Americans to their homes.

"You say you have a savings-bank account," said the consul. "Very well; send for some money, or notify your friends. In the course of ten days or so you can get a remittance by cable."

That was it in very brief, and Fuller left St. Helen's Place with the prospect of looking for odd jobs to keep himself alive until his money should come. He was so dazed that he did not think of asking permission to write his letters in the consular office, and there was no place for writing in the house where he had spent the night. It was not a good place, anyway, and he decided to hunt for another and to write his letter when he found it.

Accordingly, he walked the streets aimlessly, for he had not the slightest idea of London, but some good fate led his steps past the Bank, past St. Paul's, down Ludgate Hill, and so through Fleet Street to the Strand.

It was really not a long walk, but the strangeness of it all and the unending bustle confused and wearied him. Meantime, though he had seen more than one hotel, there had been none into which he cared to venture with his slender capital, and he had seen nothing whatever analogous to his boarding-house in Cranville.

In fact, there was only one thing he had seen more unlike Cranville than London, and that was the Atlantic Ocean.

It has been said that if one stands at Charing Cross long enough he will see every man in the world pass by. A picturesque exaggeration, perhaps, but it was at Charing Cross that Tom Fuller came to the beginning of the end of his troubles.

He had paused there for a moment, seeing the end of his road a short distance away and wondering which of the many other roads he should take, when a familiar voice cried, "Well, for Heaven's sake!"

He looked up, startled, and saw Francis Manning.

For just an instant the rivals faced each other, and if it had been Cranville there can be no doubt that hostilities would have been resumed forthwith; but it was London—vast, lonesome, foreign London—and that gladness which pos-

sesses every American when he meets a fellow American there surged up in both of them.

Hostility between two men who belong to the United States? Well, I rather think not! Not on British soil. So——

"Wal, by jiminy, Frank, how be ye?" cried Fuller, and held out his hand.

"Tom," gasped the other, gripping the extended hand. "Tom—Tom—— Oh, say! let's go somewhere and get something to eat and find out all about it."

Which they proceeded to do. Rather sheepishly. Fuller admitted that he had not come to England voluntarily.

"I was on my way to give you a licking, Frank," he said, "and I got took up by a balloon. I can't help feeling kind of glad now. What's the use in you and me fighting?"

"None at all!" the other responded. "Miss Fielding will tell you so, I think, when you get home."

There was just a regretful tinge in his tone as he spoke, but Tom made no inquiries. The subject was delicate, and both fought shy of it after that.

When Fuller's remarkable story had been told, Manning explained that his trip to Europe had been arranged months before. It was no sudden leave-taking, though Cranville, knowing nothing of his plans, so regarded it.

"They made such a row about your disappearance," said he, "and were so devilish sure I was at the bottom of it, that I wanted to stay in America and face the thing, but the governor wouldn't have it. 'You haven't done anything to run away from,' he said, 'and I won't tolerate the breaking of our plans just because a lot of people like to gossip.'"

As a matter of fact, Manning Senior had put it quite another way. He wouldn't have his son stay at home for the sake of pleasing a stupid lot of ignorant country bumpkins, but Frank was too considerate to quote his father's exact words to Tom Fuller. Instead, he told about the searching party, and of his father's offer of a reward for proof that Fuller was alive.

"By gum!" exclaimed Fuller. "I'm going to claim that thousand when I get home!"

"Why not?" laughed Manning. "I'm the only one yet who can claim it, and I won't say a word. Go ahead and make the governor pay up. You could use that thousand, I suppose?"

"You bet I could! Do you suppose he'd pay it to me?"

"I don't see but that he's got to if you can get home before anybody finds out where you are."

"Then I needn't write that letter."

"What letter?"

Fuller told him of his visit to the consul and the straits he was in.

"I've got money enough in the bank," he said, "to pay my way back all right, and I can manage to keep alive, I guess, till it comes, but it seems to me the man I send to would have the right to show my letter to your father and claim that thousand."

"Sure," Manning agreed; "and we mustn't let that happen. Tell you how we'll fix it, Tom. I've got a letter of credit for enough to last me four months. I'll draw twenty-five pounds—that's about a hundred and twenty-five dollars, you know—and lend it to you. You can start back 'most any day. There's lots of boats, and there'll be room enough on those going westward at this time. You can send me the amount when you've collected from the governor."

This amicable arrangement was effected before another hour had passed, and Manning went with Fuller to the steamship offices and helped him book his passage.

As he was more eager to see the United States than London, he took the first sailing that could be had, and, in fact, left London on the following day, parting from his former rival as from a twin brother.

And so it came about that one evening Fuller left the train at the station next to Cranville and walked the rest of the distance. He had been in some terror lest an acquaintance be on that train who would recognize him and beat him in the race to Manning Senior's house, and as there were sure to be friends at the Cranville station, he let the train arrive there without him.

His way took him past Isabel's home, but he avoided it and struck into the path across the fields, thus coming event-

ually to the tree where he had so unexpectedly become a passenger for Europe via balloon.

Without pausing more than a moment to reflect on that strange adventure, he pressed on, and in due course rang the bell at the Manning residence. Mr. Manning was at home, and presently Fuller stood before him.

"I've heard," said Tom, "that you'll pay a thousand dollars for proofs that Tom Fuller is alive."

"Yes, that's right," responded Manning. "Have you such proofs?"

"Guess I have. I'm Tom Fuller."

"Indeed!"

The tone showed such a lack of interest that Tom was quite taken aback.

"I don't see why I shouldn't have it," he began to protest, "same as any other man. You didn't make any exception——"

"Oh! Of course not," Manning interrupted suavely. "I'm perfectly willing to pay you, but I must have proofs."

"Proofs?" echoed Fuller. "Why, here I am! What more do you want?"

"Ah!" said the other, looking the traveler over judicially, "I see you, or seem to see you, but how am I to know that you're alive?"

Tom scowled in perplexity, then grinned diffidently, shifted from one foot to the other, and then stooping, suddenly caught Mr. Manning by the hand and yanked so strenuously that the elderly gentleman came to his feet with a rush that almost upset the table.

"There!" said Tom; "is that like a dead man?"

"Whew!" gasped Mr. Manning, and then burst into hearty laughter.

"It's all right, my friend," he said, when he recovered. "No more proofs required. The fact is, I was waiting for you, and I felt so glad that I wanted to have my little joke, poor as it was. You see, my boy over there in England sent me an expensive cable day before yesterday outlining the situation and begging me not to put up any hair-splitting objection to paying you the reward for discovering yourself to be alive. So I made ready for your call. The money is here, Fuller, and I congratulate you on your safe return."

He counted out ten one-hundred-dollar bills and passed them over to Tom.

It only remains to say that the captain of the Vancouver in due course received five dollars from Tom Fuller, Frank Manning received one hundred and twenty-five, a certain man in Cranville who had a neat little cottage for sale received five hundred and fifty dollars for it, the storekeeper received some one hundred and fifty dollars for a modest outfit of furniture, and the balance went to swell the account in the savings-bank.

Oh, yes, one more item. Isabel had rejected Francis Manning on the evening after the fight, when he made a manly apology for being concerned in a row about her. She appreciated his good breeding, but her heart had gone irrevocably to the rival who worked for wages, and so just before the cottage received its new occupants the parson received five dollars for performing a marriage ceremony.

THE DAY OF RECKONING.

I HAVE paid well for every sin,
 And blotted out the score;
 So great I made my punishment,
 Not God would make it more!
 But these no man calls sin—too small
 For penance or regret—
 The tardy thought, the careless kiss,
 The groping hand unmet;
 The sorrow that I left unsoothed,
 The word I left unsaid,
 Ah me, I know what ghosts must stand
 About my dying bed!

Theodosia Garrison.

THE ARGOSY.

VOLUME LIII.

DECEMBER, 1906, TO MARCH, 1907.

NEW YORK:
THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, PUBLISHERS.
.175 FIFTH AVENUE.

1907.

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HOW MEN MAKE BIG SALARIES.

BY VICTOR FORTUNE.

The Story of Workers Who Make Their Work Pay Big Dividends—How They Do It.

Does your work pay?

Not just day wages, but a good, round, stiff salary.

If not, why don't you make it pay?

You see men about you who earn dollars where you earn dimes, yet they work no harder than you.

Why don't you make your work count, too?

You can.

What makes the difference? Luck?

Not often. What then?

In one word—*training*.

To illustrate: A. M. Fowler, Springfield, Mo., was a journeyman pattern-maker when he faced the proposition that now confronts you.

HOW ONE MAN DID IT

His first step was to enroll for a Mechanical Course in the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pa., an institution whose sole business it is to raise the salaries of workers. Mr. Fowler is now General Manager of the Phoenix Foundry and Machine Company, Springfield, Mo., at an increase in salary of about 400 per cent.

In telling how he made *his* work count, he writes:

"I must say that I think the International Correspondence Schools the greatest boon existing for the working man. In my own experience, they have been worth to me, without any exaggeration whatever, *thousands of dollars.*"

That is how one man did it. Take another case: Russel Cooper, 640 Morton Avenue, Green Castle, Ind.

Mr. Cooper was janitor of a church

at the time he enrolled for the Electrical Course of the I. C. S. Within two years he became Electrician in charge of the Main Shop of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. He writes:

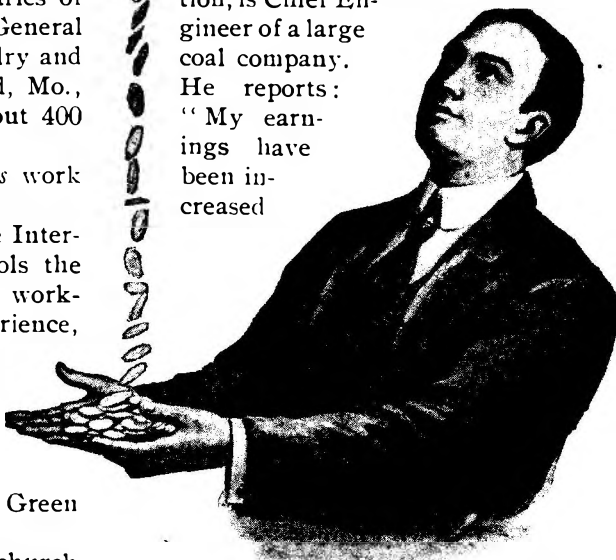
"My earnings are now over six times as much as when I enrolled, and I can see even further progress ahead."

AN INCREASE OF 1,000 PER CENT.

How G. A. Collins made *his* work pay would read like romance if it were not actual fact. Mr. Collins was a chainman with a Railroad Maintenance of Ways Department at the time of enrolling with the I. C. S. After a few months he was promoted to rodman, and then to transitman. Not being satisfied, he resigned and went into irrigation work for the government. Now he has an office of his own as Civil Engineer and, in addition, is Chief Engineer of a large coal company.

He reports:

"My earnings have been increased



during this time nearly 1,000 per cent. I can recommend your schools to any ambitious and earnest man. The I. C. S. is certainly a wonderful institution."

1,000 per cent is a pretty fair return on the small investment required for an I. C. S. Course, isn't it?

Mr. Collins' address is 112 San Francisco St., Santa Fe, N. Mex.

Here is the name and address of another worker who made his work return big dividends with aid of the I. C. S., Joseph Cain, Searles, Ala.

When Mr. Cain enrolled for one of I. C. S. Mining Courses he was a Mine Foreman at \$90 per month. He now holds the position of Mine Superintendent with the Alabama Consolidated Coal and Iron Company, at a salary of \$225 a month. Mr. Cain says:

"I know of no other method than the I. C. S. by which a man can advance so quickly and surely."

Advancement quick and sure, right where you are, is the record of I. C. S. men throughout the world. At your present work, without the loss of a minute's time or a dollar's pay, the I. C. S. takes you, trains you and shows you how to make that work pay, how to advance in it, or how to change to a more congenial occupation.

The I. C. S. can do this because it has a staff of 2700 people and an invested capital of \$6,000,000 devoted to the express purpose of training you to *make your work pay*.

When a man who is willing to do his part gets the I. C. S. organization behind him, don't you think it ought to help—a little?

Take, for instance, the case of a young man like Wilson P. Hunt, Moline, Ill.

While still a machinist's apprentice, 20 years of age, Mr. Hunt enrolled for the Mechanical Course. On finishing the course and receiving his diploma, he became a draftsman and then a machine designer. Later he started the Moline Tool Company, Moline, Ill., becoming Secretary and Superintendent of the concern. The I. C. S. supplied just the help needed by Mr. Hunt to realize his ambition.

When Chas. E. Norberg, 1026 Albany Street, Los Angeles, Cal., got in line with the I. C. S., his income began to increase in a most surprising way.

Mr. Norberg's remuneration as carpenter was \$3 a day when he enrolled for the Architectural Course. He tells us: "Previous to this I had only a common school education, but the instruction given was *so plain, so easy to follow, and so practical* that I have now become a General Contractor, and my earnings range from \$75 to \$100 a week. The I. C. S. is certainly a great blessing to the wage earner."

What Mr. Norberg says about the simplicity of his instruction is characteristic of all I. C. S. lessons and text books. They are easy to *learn*; easy to *remember*; easy to *apply*. Not even a common school education is required, only the ability to read and write.

But one obstacle can stand in the way of the success of an I. C. S. man—his own lack of ambition.

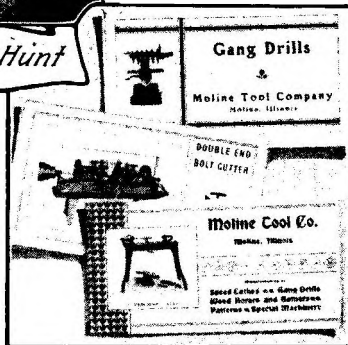
Still another Californian who dates his rise from his enrollment with the I. C. S. is Albert K. Harford, 854 Fifty-third Street, Oakland, Cal.

At the time of enrolling Mr. Harford held the position of engine-room storekeeper at \$35 a month. Let him tell what happened in his own words:

"For those who have to work for a living, there is no better way of advance-



Wilson P. Hunt



FROM APPRENTICE TO PROPRIETOR.

ment than through the I. C. S. Their excellent instruction and help enabled me to advance from one position to another rapidly, and I am now Foreman Machinist for the Pacific Steamship Company, at a salary of \$130 per month."

WHAT A BRICKLAYER DID.

Does training pay? Can you make it pay? Ask Daniel K. Albright, 319 McKean St., Kittanning, Pa. Mr. Albright writes:

"When working as a bricklayer at bricklayers' wages, I was *induced* to enroll in the I. C. S. After studying nights, through the perfect manner in which the schools carry on their instruction, I was soon able to read blueprints and was appointed foreman at an increase of wages."

Note that the I. C. S. taught him, not to work harder, but to *read blueprints*—trained him to make his work *pay*.

Was Mr. Albright satisfied with this advance? Being a true I. C. S. man—*never!* Hear the rest of his letter:

"Resigning this position (foreman), I entered the employ of the Kittanning Plate Glass Company, of which firm I am now General Superintendent, and my earnings are now nearly 600 per cent. more than when I enrolled. The I. C. S. instruction is so simple and easily understood that any man may gain unspeakable good through it."

Knowing what he does now, how much

persuasion do you think would be necessary to *induce* Mr. Albright to enroll with the I. C. S., if he had it to do over again?

WHAT WOULD PERSUADE YOU?

If you were really awake to your own interests, how much persuasion do you think ought to be necessary to induce you to write and ask how the I. C. S. can help you?

But, you say, these men are exceptions. On the contrary, they are cases picked at random out of thousands of successful I. C. S. men. The I. C. S. has gone to the trouble of putting a thousand of their names and addresses with their stories in a book, which will be sent to you for the asking. The I. C. S. organization is so perfect that it reaches, instructs and trains these men in any state of the Union or in any part of the world.

Here is former street railway worker T. R. Buzzill, care of J. E. Henry & Son, Lincoln, N. H., who writes:

"I knew nothing about electricity when I took out my course in the I. C. S. I now have charge of the telephones and lights for J. E. Henry & Son, and my salary has been increased 100 per cent. *I would never*



ADMINISTRATION AND INSTRUCTION BUILDINGS—I. C. S.

THE SOLE BUSINESS OF THIS GREAT INSTITUTION IS TO RAISE SALARIES.

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.

have been able to get above the pit work in the power house, if it was not for the instruction received from the I. C. S."

Another New Englander, Harry E. Green, Waterville, Me., a former transit-man, writes:

"I now have an office of my own and have increased my earnings 200 per cent. My course has made me more valuable to my customers, and I have been enabled to understand many things which I could not have learned otherwise. I will gladly correspond with anyone desiring to better himself by taking a Course."

Henri B. Bixler, Akron, Ohio, a former mill-hand in a screen-door factory, testifies:

"I have advanced to Superintendent of Construction of the Tri-County Telephone Company, and have increased my earnings 250 per cent. All this success I attribute to the I. C. S. I consider this method of instruction the *best plan in existence* for the young man who has his own way to make in the world."

A SURE AND QUICK WAY.

The I. C. S. gives a man who has no regular trade or profession a paying start. Before enrolling with the I. C. S., Harry M. Moxley, 564 Prospect Street, Cleveland, Ohio, was office boy, farmer boy, and painter by turns. He writes:

"After I had gone a short way in my Course, the Students' Aid Department secured for me a position with a firm in Cleveland, and from that time I have had steady advancement up to my present position as chemist with the Cleveland Steel Casting Company. During this time I increased my earnings \$80 a month. My experience with the Schools proves that the I. C. S. plan is the most *sure* and *quick way* for any ambitious man to gain advancement and increased earnings."

The Students' Aid Department, which helped Mr. Moxley to obtain a higher position, is organized specifically to assist all I. C. S. men in their efforts to make their work pay. Its connection with the largest employers of trained men in the country has enabled it to place thousands of men in better positions at larger salaries. During 1906, voluntary reports were received from 3376 I. C. S. men who had been advanced in salary or position

—only a fraction of the thousands who were advanced and did not report. What the I. C. S. did for them, it can and will do for you.

ARE YOU GETTING YOURS?

This is an era of unexampled wealth. These dozen men named are just a few of the thousands whom the I. C. S. has helped to place in the stream of prosperity. They are *trained* to get their share, and are getting it.

Are you getting *yours*? If not, why not? It's waiting for you!

The I. C. S. points the way, but you must take the initiative. The first step is yours. The expression of willingness must come from you. Are you willing to write to the I. C. S. and ask to be shown how to make your work pay? Or are you content to sit back with small wages and let your companions, who work no harder than you, walk off with all the rewards?

Bear in mind, no man need leave his own state, or town, or work. Right where he is, the I. C. S. is most valuable. *It goes to the man*, stands by him, works with him and for him, equipping him to secure that due share to which his energy and talents entitle him.

Why labor for little, when with training you may have much? Signify by postal or letter the position on this list which you prefer and mail now! Stir your will! Don't be a laggard in the race! *Make your work pay!*

Here is a List of Good Positions

Select the one you prefer, write a postal to **The International Correspondence Schools, Box 806, Scranton, Pa.**, and ask how you can qualify to fill it at a good salary.

Be sure to mention the position you prefer:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bookkeeper | Telephone Engineer |
| Stenographer | Elec. Lighting Supt. |
| Advertisement Writer | Mechan. Engineer |
| Show Card Writer | Surveyor |
| Window Trimmer | Stationary Engineer |
| Commercial Law | Civil Engineer |
| Illustrator | Building Contractor |
| Civil Service | Architect ¹ Draftsman |
| Chemist | Architect |
| Textile Mill Supt. | Structural Engineer |
| Electrician | Bridge Engineer |
| Elec. Engineer | Mining Engineer |
| Mechanical Draftsman | |

A LIST FOR YOU

New Victor Records



On sale January 28th at all Victor Dealers
throughout America.

All songs are with orchestral accompaniment. 8-in. 35c; 10-in. 60c; 12-in. \$1.00.

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| 31600 Monsieur Beaucaire—Incidental Music | 12 |
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| Soprano Solo by Miss Ada Jones | |
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| Contralto Solo by Miss Corinne Morgan | |
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| Tenor Solo by Harry Macdonough | |
| 31601 The Palms | Faure 12 |
| Baritone Solo by J. W. Myers | |
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| Songs by Billy Murray | |
| 4949 Sweet Anastasia Brady | Jerome-Schwartz 10 |
| 4974 Cheyenne Harody | 10 |
| Records by Burt Shepard | |
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| 4965 Matrimony (Talking Record) | Kendall 10 |
| Coon Song by Arthur Collins | |
| 4947 Moses Andrew Jackson, Good Bye | 10 |
| Duet by Collins and Harlan | |
| 4972 I'm Keeping My Love Lamp Burning for You | 10 |
| Duets by Miss Jones and Mr. Murray | |
| 4951 Wouldn't You Like to Flirt with Me? | Rogers 10 |
| 4975 Don't You Think It's Time to Marry? | Edwards 10 |
| Duet by Miss Trix and Mr. Quinn | |
| 4960 Fol de Idillye Idy | Bratton 10 |
| Trio by Miss Jones, Mr. Murray and Mr. Kernell | |
| 4970 Whistle It from "The Red Mill" | 10 |
| Trinity Choir | |
| 4971 Jesus, Meek and Gentle | Ambrose 10 |
| Male Quartets by the Haydn Quartet | |
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| 4966 When Her Beauty Begins to Fade | Morse 10 |

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| Victor Orchestra | |
| 4962 Traumerel | Schumann 8 |
| 4963 Popular Waltz Medley | 8 |
| Contralto Solo by Miss Corinne Morgan | |
| 4964 O Promise Me | De Koven 8 |
| Soprano Solo by Miss Ada Jones | |
| 4973 The Bullfrog and the Coon | Nathan 8 |
| Coon Song by Arthur Collins | |
| 4961 I'm Going Right Back to Chicago | 8 |
| Duet by Stanley and Macdonough | |
| 4917 Almost Persuaded | Bliss 8 |
| Duet by Collins and Harlan | |
| 4960 Arrah-Wanna | Morse 8 |
| Male Quartet by the Haydn Quartet | |
| 4918 Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep | 8 |
| Recitation by Edgar L. Davenport | |
| 4942 The Seven Ages | Shakespeare 8 |
| Descriptive Specialty by Miss Jones and Mr. Spencer | |
| 4363 "Fals" (introducing "He's My Pal") | 8 |
| Yankee Talk by Cal Stewart | |
| 2575 Uncle Josh and the Fire-Department | 8 |
| Baritone Solo by Senor Francisco | |
| 4937 La Marseillaise | 10 |
| German Solo by George P. Watson | |
| 4953 Life in the Alps (with yodel) | 10 |
| Duet by Miss Carlson and Mr. Herskind | |
| 4977 Gobble Duet from La Mascotte | Audran 10 |

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| 88039 Ave Maria (violin obligato) | Bach-Gounod 10 |
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| 88040 The Erlking (with piano) | Schubert 12 |
| 88041 (a) Verjorgene Wunden } with | La Forge 12 |
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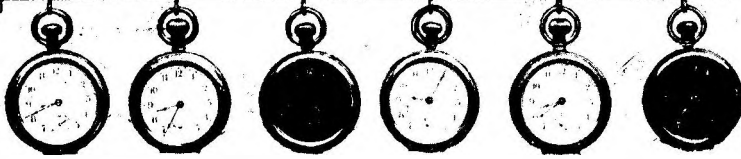
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MEANS GOOD
WATCHES
EVERY TIME

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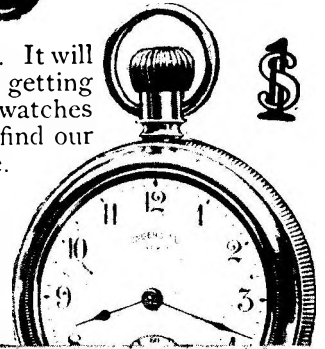
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which require cleaning and repairs are a constant bill of expense. Marble and granite stain, crack and crumble.

WHITE BRONZE
costs less than granite, looks better and will last as long as time endures. It never changes in appearance and requires no attention. Our designs range in price from \$4 to \$4,000. State amount you wish to expend and we will send you a book of illustrations.

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**\$12.50 DRESSES
Any Man**

With a
**Stylish Spring and Summer
Suit Made to Measure**

**Fine Spring Raincoat, Extra
Pair of Trousers,
Handsome
Fancy Vest** **FREE**

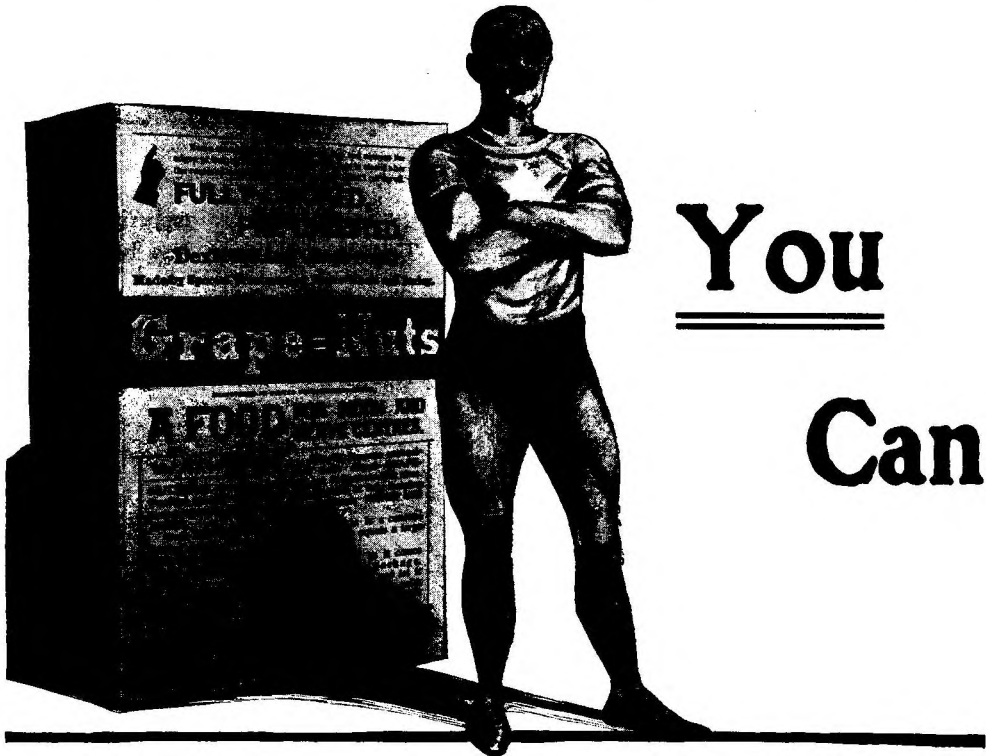
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A Spring and Summer raincoat, a stylish pair of trousers like suit, or fancy pattern if desired, handsome fancy vest **FREE**. Either of these sent with every suit order.

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Send your name and address, and we will send you **free samples** of our Spring and Summer cloth, measurement blanks and tape line. **Send no money, but write to-day to AMERICA'S LEADING CUSTOM TAILORS.**

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This food prepared from field grains—Nature's laboratory—by a food expert, contains proteids, carbohydrates and the valuable Phosphate of Potash (which combines with albumen in the blood to form the soft gray substance which fills brain and nerve cells) and builds up Modern Men to the highest degree of efficiency and power.

It's a matter of choice whether you will be strong, well and brainy.

“There's a Reason” for

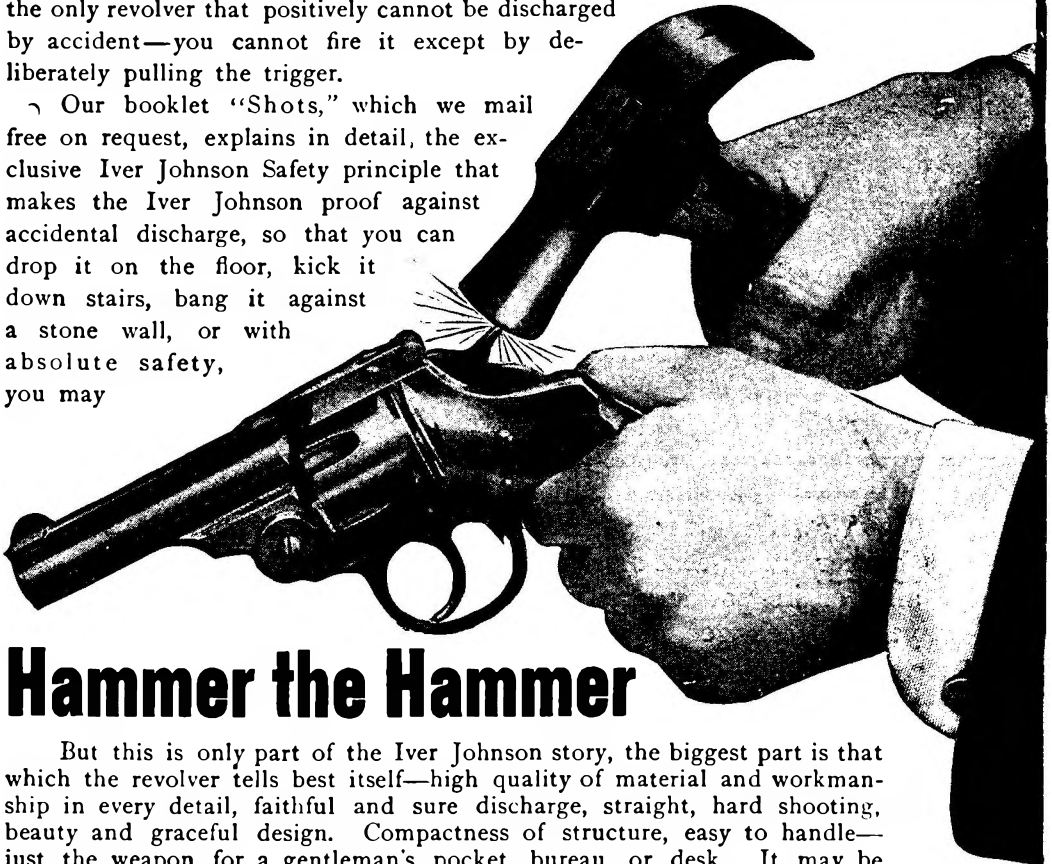
Grape=Nuts

Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

More than a Million and a Half IVER JOHNSON Safety Automatic Revolvers are now in use.

A success like this does not merely happen. It is won by exclusive features of excellence or a superior average of quality. The Iver Johnson has both. It is the only revolver that positively cannot be discharged by accident—you cannot fire it except by deliberately pulling the trigger.

Our booklet "Shots," which we mail free on request, explains in detail, the exclusive Iver Johnson Safety principle that makes the Iver Johnson proof against accidental discharge, so that you can drop it on the floor, kick it down stairs, bang it against a stone wall, or with absolute safety, you may



Hammer the Hammer

But this is only part of the Iver Johnson story, the biggest part is that which the revolver tells best itself—high quality of material and workmanship in every detail, faithful and sure discharge, straight, hard shooting, beauty and graceful design. Compactness of structure, easy to handle—just the weapon for a gentleman's pocket, bureau, or desk. It may be purchased for home use without fear—the ladies of the home find in it a real protection against intrusion and have no fear of accidental discharge with it "about the house."

Iver Johnson Safety Hammer Revolver

3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 22 rim fire cartridge, 32-38 center fire cartridge - - **\$5.50**

These revolvers can be fitted, at extra prices, as follows: Blue finish, 50 cents; two-inch barrels, no additional charge; four-inch barrel, 50 cents; five-inch barrel, \$1.00; six-inch barrel, \$1.50. Pearl stocks, 22-32 caliber, \$1.25; 38 caliber, \$1.50. Ivory stocks, 22-32 caliber, \$2.50; 38 caliber, \$3.00.

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3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 32-38 center fire cartridge - - **\$6.50**



For sale by Hardware and Sporting Goods dealers everywhere, or will be sent prepaid on receipt of price if your dealer will not supply. Look for the owl's head on the grip and our name on the barrel.

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS AND CYCLE WORKS
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NEW YORK OFFICE: 99 Chambers Street
PACIFIC COAST BRANCH: P. B. Bekeart Co., Alameda, Cal.
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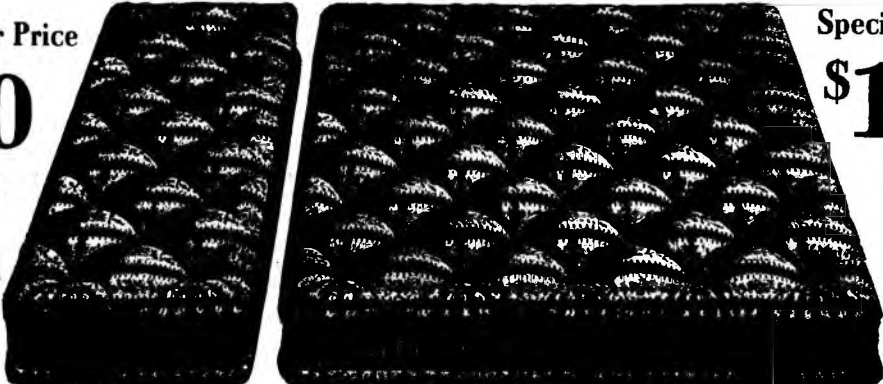
Makers of Iver Johnson Bicycles and Single-Barrel Shotguns



Annual Special Sale Ostermoor Mattress

Superfine French Edge Mattresses, *extra thickness, extra weight, exceptional softness*, weighing sixty pounds, finest grade of covering, all full size, 4 feet 6 inches wide by 6 feet 4 inches long, in one or two parts as desired.

These mattresses are in every way as great, if not greater bargains than the Special Mattresses we sold last year at the same price. If you were fortunate enough to secure one, you will fully appreciate the present sale.

<p>Regular Price</p> <p>\$30</p> <p>Each</p>		<p>Special Price</p> <p>\$18⁵⁰</p> <p>Each</p>
---	--	--

The mattresses are all full double-bed size, 4 feet 6 inches wide, 6 feet 4 inches long, in one or two parts, with round corners, five-inch inseamed borders, and French Rolled Edges, exactly like illustration.

The filling is especially selected Ostermoor sheets, all hand-laid, and closed within ticking entirely by hand sewing. Mattresses weigh 60 lbs. each, 15 lbs. more than regular, and are the very softest we can make and much more luxuriously comfortable than regular.

The coverings are of extra fine quality, beautiful Mercerized French Twills—pink, blue or yellow, both plain and figured, or high-grade, dust-proof Satin Finish Ticking, striped in linen effect; also the good old-fashioned blue and white stripe Herring-bone Ticking.

Mattresses are built in the daintiest possible manner by our most expert specialists. They represent, in the very highest degree, the celebrated OSTERMOOR merit of excellence and are a rare bargain both in price and quality.

Price, \$18.⁵⁰ Each

We pay Transportation Charges anywhere in the United States.

Offered only While they last; first come, first served. The supply is limited.

Terms of sale: Cash in advance; none sent C. O. D.

Order direct of us or through your Ostermoor dealer

Note:—Ostermoor Mattresses, regular stock, same size, two parts, cost \$15.50 each. They have four-inch border, weigh 45 lbs., and are covered with A. C. A. Ticking. These French Mattresses cost \$30.00 each, finish fully two inches thicker, weigh 15 lbs. more, have round corners—soft Rolled Edges—close diamond tufts—and beautiful high-grade fine quality coverings, and are much softer and far more resilient. Even if you do not wish a mattress now you should know all about the "Ostermoor" and its superiority to hair in health, comfort and economy. Send your name on a postal for our free descriptive book, "The Test of Time," a veritable work of art, 144 pages in two colors, profusely illustrated: it's well worth while.

OSTERMOOR & COMPANY
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Canadian Agency: The Alaska Feather and Down Co., Ltd., Montreal.

When ordering, please state first, second and even third choice of color of covering, in case all you like are already sold, as there will be no time for correspondence.



Reg. U. S. Pat. office

Wouldn't You Like to Own This 16 Shot Repeating Rifle?

Only **\$8.25**

HOPKINS & ALLEN .22 CALIBER REPEATER

The squirrels and rabbits can't get away from you when you carry this rifle. If you miss one the first time—you have 15 more shots coming almost before he can move.

It makes a ramble in the forest a pleasure—productive of full game bags—and all the excitement of quick successful shots.

DESCRIPTION: This is the finest and most reliable repeating rifle ever offered at the price. It shoots 22 long or short or 22 long rifle cartridges—16 shots for shorts and 12 for long or long rifle—and the ejector works like lightning. You can deliver 12 or 16 shots (depending on the cartridge used) almost as quick as you can pull the trigger. **THE GAME SIMPLY CANNOT GET AWAY.**

Quick take-down pattern—full length 38½ inches, length of barrel 20 inches—weight 5½ pounds. Has that excellent military bolt action—the first ever put on an American sporting rifle. HAS THE BEST SAFETY DEVICE—A SIMPLE TOUCH OF THE LEVER PREVENTS ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE. HAS THE ONLY EJECTING DEVICE THAT WILL QUICKLY EMPTY THE MAGAZINE WITHOUT FIRING A CARTRIDGE. HAS MORE UNIQUE, DESIRABLE FEATURES THAN ANY OTHER 22 CALIBER REPEATER. Has beautifully polished walnut stock, military butt plate, every part drop forged—lock work made of spring steel. AN EXCELLENT RIFLE FOR FIELD, FOREST OR GALLERY PRACTICE—SURE TO GIVE SURPRISING PLEASURE TO ITS POSSESSOR.

PRICE \$8.25—SAFE DELIVERY GUARANTEED—IF YOUR OWN DEALER CANNOT SUPPLY YOU.

We publish two delightful stories—"William Tell," the experience of an expert with his first Junior Rifle, and "My First Rifle," by the famous marksman, Capt. Jack O'Connell, which we will send free, with our illustrated catalogue of rifles, revolvers and shotguns.

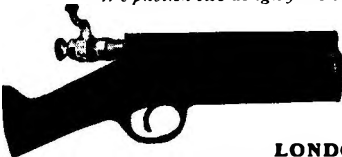
Send for our Big—Free—"Gun Guide and Catalogue" for 1907. It's the most useful and usable book ever issued by a fire-arm manufacturer—gives you more tips on firearms. Tells you how to buy, use and care for every kind of shot guns, rifles and revolvers. It's a necessity to everyone who loves a gun.

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Showing Position of Ejector in Ejecting Shell.

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WHO DRESS FOR STYLE
NEATNESS, AND COMFORT
WEAR THE IMPROVED

BOSTON GARTER

THE RECOGNIZED STANDARD

The Name is stamped on every loop—

The *Velvet Grip* CUSHION BUTTON CLASP

LIES FLAT TO THE LEG—NEVER SLIPS, TEARS NOR UNFASTENS

Sample pair, Silk 50c., Cotton 25c.
Mailed on receipt of price.

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"PAY NOW & THEN"

We will send on approval, to any honest person, diamond ring as illustrated. Diamond is guaranteed white, perfect and brilliant, set in 14 K. solid gold, ladies' or gents' mounting (any style).

Price, only..... **\$37.50**
\$7.50 down. **\$3.00** a month.

Gents' open face, 12, 16, or 18 size or Ladies' 6 size, plain or engraved, 20-year gold-filled case with latest Elgin or Waltham movement..... **\$12.50**

Same with double or hunting case..... **\$16.75**
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Real Spanish Cigarettes—Just

Pure, mellow Havana tobacco wrapped in real Spanish brown paper—nothing more.

The Spaniard is the original and natural cigarette smoker of the world.

Whoever heard of him smoking a Turkish or Egyptian cigarette?

All day long, men, women and children in Cuba roll their little paper pipes of choice Havana and Spanish brown paper.

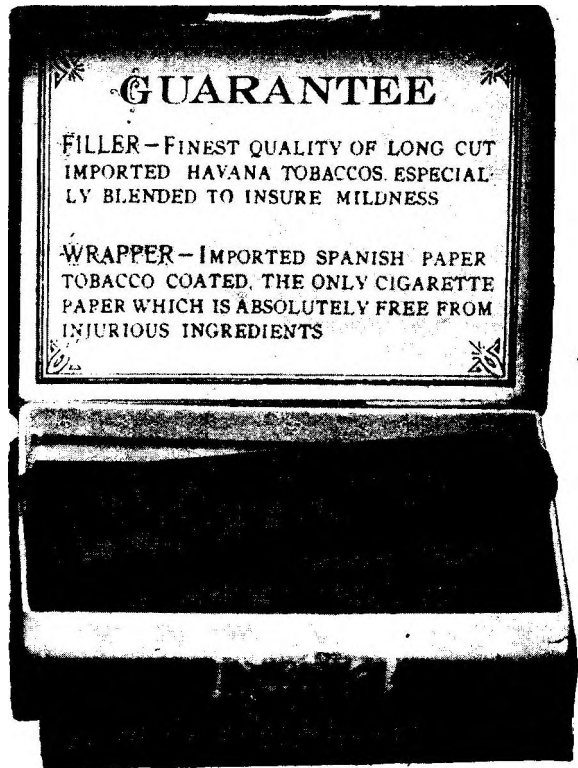
They have no cravings for narcotics or drugs; they simply smoke as a solace to the soul and a pleasure to the senses—straight Havana tobacco—good mellow, natural Havana.



La Reina is a real Spanish cigarette made of straight Havana tobacco, rich, mild and mellow, wrapped in the real Spanish brown paper. They contain absolutely no flavoring blend or doctoring of molasses, opium or drugs of any sort, just natural Havana of the most mellow sweet curing.

Write us on your letterhead and we will send you, charges prepaid, 100 La Reina Cigarettes (10 attractive boxes, each containing 10 cigarettes). If you like them send us \$1.50, but if for any reason they do not fulfill your expectations, return nine boxes, expressage collect, and no charge will be made for the package you use in testing.

Do this right away, for the trial cannot possibly cost you anything. For once at least you will smoke a real Spanish cigarette.



La Reclama Cuban Factory

1958 FIRST AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY

References: Union Exchange Bank—Dun—Bradstreets



WHEN the King of England wants to see a show they bring the show to the castle and he hears it alone in his private theatre. In this country we are all kings as far as having our own private show is concerned. We simply buy an Edison Phonograph and listen to the latest popular song, to the famous tenor opera singer, to a fine old hymn, to a rag-time dance or to a funny dialogue.

Anything that can be spoken, or sung, or played, can be reproduced in the Edison Phonograph with great naturalness.

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National Phonograph Company

35 Lakeside Ave., Orange, N. J.

Grand Opera for the Edison Phonograph



"Wilt thou recall
that day"
from
"The Flying Dutchman"

THIS is the month of grand opera in New York. A new interest in the great singers of the world has been given by the opening of Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House, and now New York City is the only city in the world where grand opera is given on a grand scale in two opera houses at the same time. This unusual interest in grand opera gives a special point to our announcement of five new grand opera records.

- B 41—"Nobil Dama" ("Noble Lady"), "Gli Ugonotti" ("The Huguenots")—Meyerbeer. By Mario Ancona, Baritone. Sung in Italian. Orchestra accompaniment.
- B 42—"Guardate pazzo son' io" ("Behold Me, I am Mad"), "Manon Lescaut"—Puccini. By Florencio Constantino, Tenor. Sung in Italian. Orchestra accompaniment.
- B 43—"Gebet (Prayer), "Allmaecht'ge Jungfrau" ("All-powerful Virgin"), "Tannhauser"—Wagner. By Mme. Rappold, Soprano. Sung in German. Orchestra accompaniment.
- B 44—"Bella siccome un angelo" ("Beautiful as an Angel"), "Don Pasquale"—Donizetti. By Antonio Scotti, Baritone. Sung in Italian. Orchestra accompaniment.
- B 45—"Willst jenes Tags" ("Wilt thou recall that day"), "Der Fliegende Hollaender" ("The Flying Dutchman")—Wagner. By Alois Burgstaller, Tenor. Sung in German. Orchestra accompaniment.

Comment on this list is almost unnecessary. Wherever music is known and loved these songs are great. Rappold, Scotti and Burgstaller have sung in grand opera all over this country. Ancona is Hammerstein's new baritone. Constantino is now singing in the South with the San Carlos Opera Company. Two selections are from Wagner, including the always popular "Flying Dutchman." Puccini is of special interest not only on account of his "Madame Butterfly" playing here, but also on account of the fact that he is now visiting in this country and conducting his own operas in New York.

If you love good music, go to the nearest Edison store and hear these grand opera records. These five make forty-five Edison Grand Opera Records. The complete list will be sent to any one on request. If you like grand opera music, write for it to-day. Ask for Grand Opera Selections, Supplement No. 5. Anyway, if you care for music, let us send you the following Edison Musical Library. Ask for it to-day, but it will not be mailed until January 28th:

Phonogram for February — Supplemental Catalogue — Complete Catalogue

35 Lakeside Avenue

National Phonograph Company

ORANGE, N. J.

Last Month I Sent Out Free —3,000 Faber Self-Filling and Cleaning Pens!



Doctor Faber, the inventor of the celebrated Faber Self-Filling Pen, which is revolutionizing the Pen Business of America.



2500 of these were paid for within ten days. This month and next I intend to do even better than that.

I will do it—because I believe in two things—my pen, and your honesty.

I wouldn't dare make this offer did I doubt either.

I give you this pen for Full Ten Days Free Trial—before you pay me a penny. It must prove all my claims within that time—it must write easier, hold more ink, fill and clean itself easier than any other pen—no matter what the price.

Then too—my pen costs less, both in first cost and last cost.

It will be a comfort and a luxury to you. It simply must please you—that is why I do what no other pen maker ever did before.

You don't obligate yourself a penny in order to get the

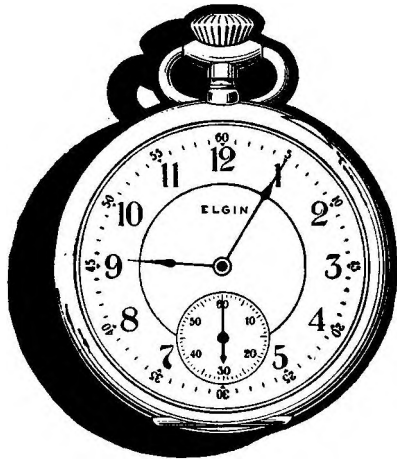
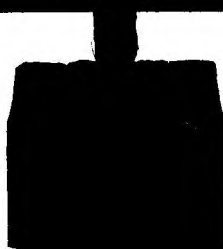
Doctor Faber Self-Filling Pen Free

—you simply send me your name, home and business address, or make yourself known to me in any other way you wish—get the pen by mail, write with it for ten days free, again and again, and again.

Then, if I've exaggerated a particle—if the pen isn't even more than I claim—I don't want you to keep it a minute, and you are not out a penny.

Now write a letter and mail it to me—personally—right away.

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THE ELGIN FOR ALL

The name ELGIN embraces many grades of watch movements—all of superior time-keeping qualities.

The grades differ in price according to the cost of construction, each grade being the best watch value for the money.

The man who wants a serviceable and accurate watch at a popular price should buy the G. M. WHEELER grade ELGIN—

"The Watch that's made for the Majority."

17 jewels; adjusted to temperature; micrometric regulator.

This ELGIN WATCH can be had in the desirable models and sizes suitable for men and boys.

The jeweler will show you the G. M. WHEELER grade ELGIN and explain its good points.

ELGIN NATIONAL WATCH CO.,
Elgin, Ill.

MAN'S FAREWELL TO LOW WAGES

GOOD-BY FOREVER TO HARD WORK—LITTLE PAY—HARD TIMES—JOB HUNTING! YOU CAN OWN AND BOSS THIS MONEY-MAKING BUSINESS! GET MONEY AS THIS MAN DID! CHANGE FROM WAGE EARNER TO WAGE PAYER—FROM SERVING OTHERS TO COMMANDING OTHERS.



As it Would be Told at Home.

You may well rejoice, my wife, over our fortune in getting a business which **made money** the very first day, and now after a few weeks the **daily profits** run **\$8.00 to \$12.00**. You counted today's receipts and seem surprised that they amount to over \$15.00, but I expect even larger returns in time. Of that \$15.00 you must take out about \$3.00 for material and the **\$12.00 is profit**. There remains many dollars worth of unfinished work upon which I can calculate about **75c profit on the \$1.00** and more coming in all the time. My trouble has not been the want of orders, but to fill orders fast enough, and so have engaged a boy to help me in the shop, including an extra solicitor.

It has kept me hustling to take care of family customers whose orders range from \$2.00 to \$10.00, but increased facilities will get business in larger quantities from hotels, restaurants, institutions, manufacturers and retail stores, there being scarcely any person who does not at all times have urgent need for my services. I never thought it possible to

START A PROSPEROUS BUSINESS

with only a few dollars, for almost every business requires several thousand dollars to begin with. We can both recall with sad regret the days of no work—no wages—debts piling up. Then my sickness—no work—laid up—laid off—almost laid away—nothing coming in—expenses going on—doctor bills and what not. Trouble, trouble, trouble, but that's the common hardship of every man who sells his time to others—**hard work—long hours—little pay**—enriching those who boss, but never himself. Verily, my good wife, we know it's mighty **inconvenient to be poor**, and now after years of hard labor—from factory hand to office clerk—teaching school or selling goods—town and city trades—now and then the farm—we find ourselves in prosperous circumstances, owning a pleasant business which promises to pay from

\$1800 TO \$2500 ANNUALLY.

Goodness knows we might still be slaving if this opportunity hadn't come as a God-send. I am happy that our days of self-denial and privations are over, that you and the children can have many things which you craved, but alas! didn't have the money to buy. **What a blessing to have money always coming in**, and how different the people treat a **successful man**.

It's really wonderful how people took to my business, just seemed that everyone had something to do—eager to have it done—a cordial welcome everywhere, and people came from miles around—

GOODS WERE GOING OUT—MONEY COMING IN—

almost a dollar cleared every time a dollar taken in. You remember my starting here at home—in one room which was soon filled with a great assortment of mer-

chandise—some gold, some silver—big and little heaps—how things glistened when the sun came through—then the change to larger quarters with profits growing. It did my heart good to receive such **generous encouragement** everywhere, for I can't forget my ups and downs—hard knocks—never a boost until this happened.

The people certainly looked kindly upon **home industry**, and because my business was conducted in their very midst confidence was **immediately** established. My work has always been well done, and I do not fear to meet the same customer twice even 10 years from now.

Yes, people do wonder at my sudden rise, but it is nothing remarkable, simply a case of supplying something which the people did not have but wanted bad—never had before—it's a **regular business** in some large cities, but just as well suited to small towns, as my success proved. My success has not been due to influence, business training, special schooling or technical knowledge, but to faithful work and earnest purpose. Had I failed to make good in this opportunity when every thing was favorable, it would have been an everlasting cause for self-criticism. It would be ingratitude if I did not give **praise to the Manufacturers** who furnished at **slight cost** everything needed to start the business, special teaching, valuable instructions, trade secrets, and did this so well that my **ignorance of the business itself was no drawback** at all. People from other sections have already written them on my recommendation, for they



Prosperity.

WILL START OTHERS

in all parts of the world, either men or women, in this business at home or travelling, all or spare time. I am

only one of thousands whom they have started, and I can't imagine a business which offers equal money making opportunities to people of limited means—something easy to do, easy to get, easy to maintain, offering almost the only chance to better their position.

Though you, my wife, regard my success as remarkable, it seems to be quite the regular order of things with their customers, as for example, one man claims **\$301.27 in two weeks**, another **\$88.18 the first three days** and hundreds of similar reports. You won't forget how skeptical I was, but I have found the business a money maker which **anyone** without leaving home and **without previous experience** can manage successfully.

I shall continue advising people out of employment or working hard for a little money to send their name on a card to

GRAY & CO., 864 MIAMI BUILDING, CINCINNATI, OHIO,

and receive **FREE**, as I did, their illustrated proposition, valuable information, testimonials and samples.

They don't offer any impossible inducements, but simply claim that those willing to hustle can expect from **\$30.00 to \$40.00 weekly** to begin, and more as business grows. I feel sure that no one will ever regret starting with **Gray & Co.**, for they are the **largest concern** of their kind in the world and backed by **\$100,000.00 capital**.



A Pleasant Business.

BUILD YOUR OWN BOAT

21,311 boats [more than the combined output of all the boat factories in the world] were built last year by inexperienced people using the Brooks System of exact sized patterns and illustrated instructions covering every step of the work. Over half of these builders have put up their second boat. Our catalog contains testimonials from many of these builders and photographs of the boats they have built.



Why not employ your leisure time profitably by building boats for other people. Many have established themselves in the boat building business and constructed 15 to 20 boats from one set of patterns. With no tool experience—you can build any kind of a boat—Canoe—Rowboat, Sailboat or Launch in your leisure time—with a little pleasurable work, at a very slight cost.

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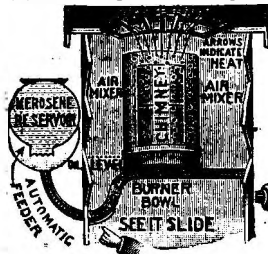
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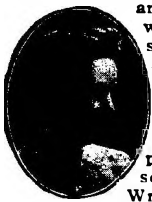
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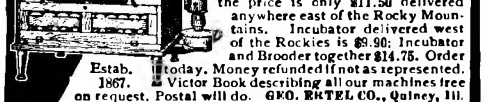
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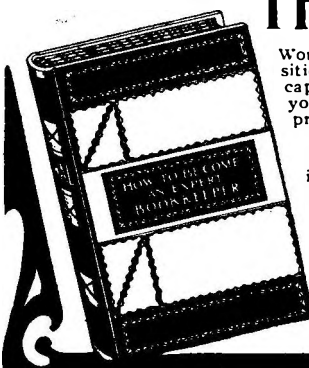
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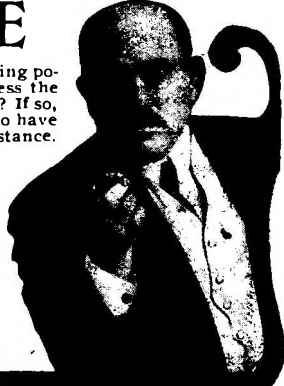


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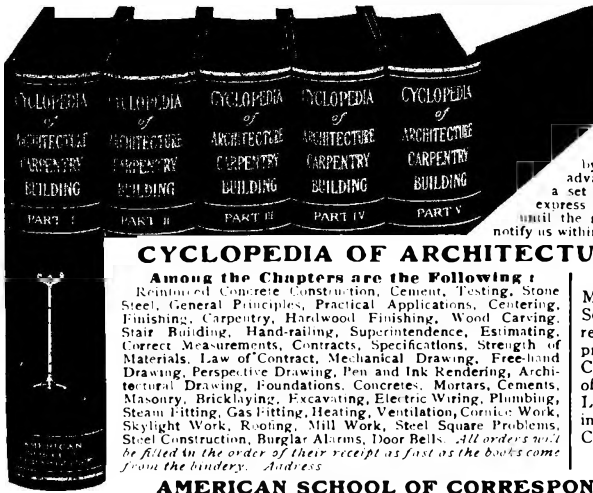
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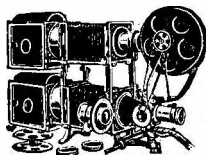
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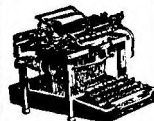
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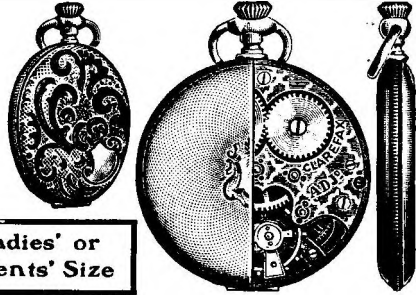
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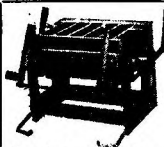
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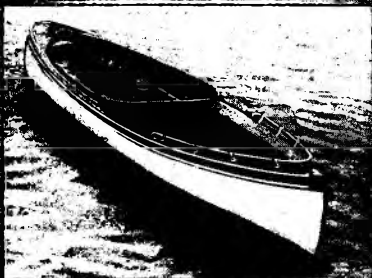
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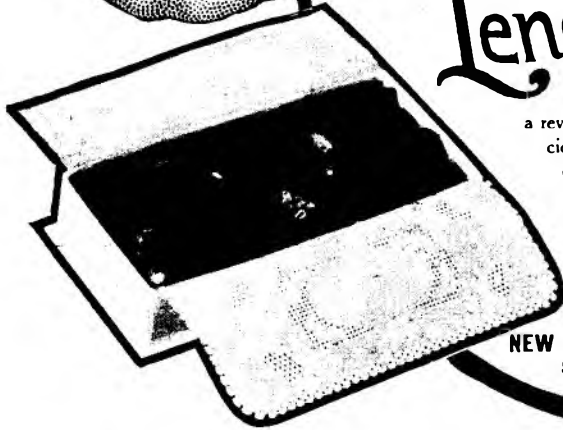
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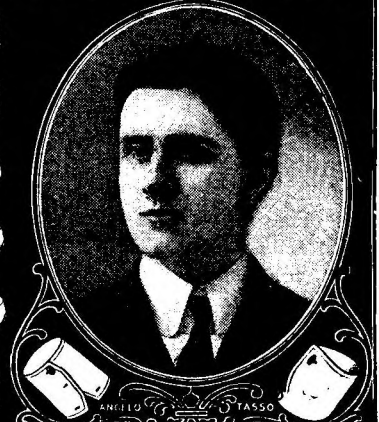
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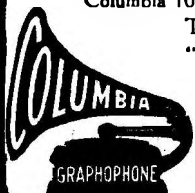
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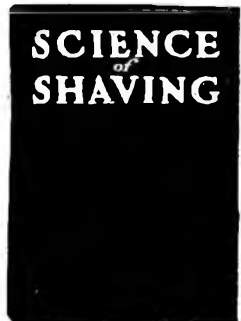
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