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THE ARGOSY

NOVEMBER

PRICE 10 CENTS

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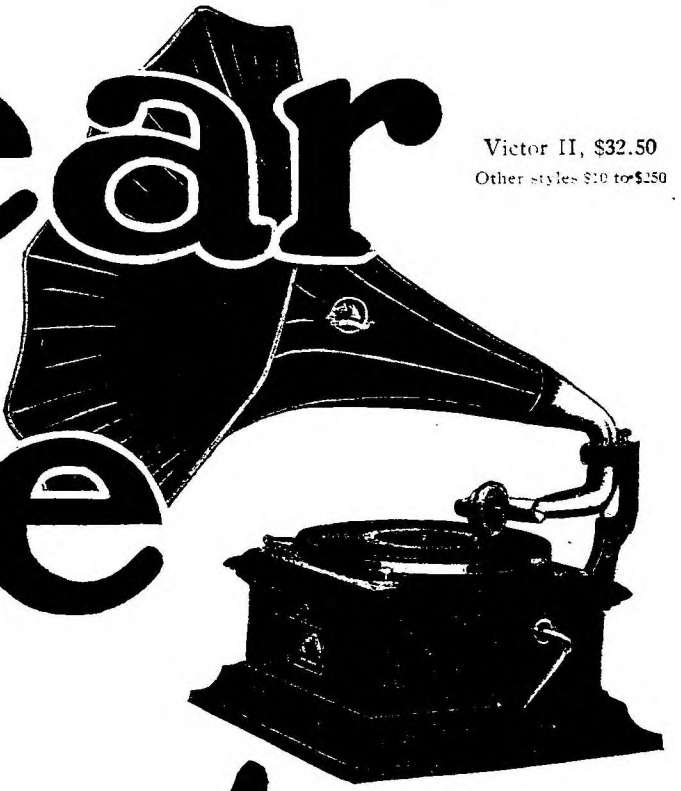

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The Argosy for November

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Six Serial Stories

Thirteen Short Stories

"His Christmas Burden"

is the name of a capital short story in the December Argosy, in which Two New Serials will start—"**In Treason's Track,**" and "**An Exhibit That Walked Away.**" Hot weather is the background for "**A Cold Deal,**" one of the two complete novels, and a swamp in Jersey furnishes the basis for the other, suggested by an actual happening. "**Blood Will Tell.**"

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

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

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December Argosy Forms Close October 24th.	$6.25	

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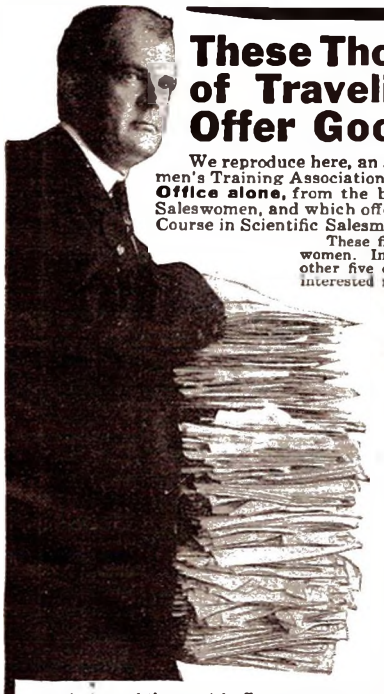

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THE ARGOSY

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THE POWDER CHASE.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS,

Author of "The Border Rider of Broken S," "A Slippery Battle in Oil," etc.

The Stirring Afternoon, Night, and Morning in the Experience of a Suburban Drug Clerk.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

THE HEADACHE POWDERS.

"IT'S a dull life being a drug clerk." Edward Clement, making liver-pills in Halton's drug-store at Landscape accompanied the sentiment with a heavy sigh.

"It wouldn't be so bad in a big city," he went on. "A fellow would see a new face once in a while. But in this dopy burg—bah!"

He slapped the blade of his palette-knife viciously down on the brown paste, and scowled at the framed diploma of the college of pharmacy hanging before him, which certified, in ponderous Latin and commonplace English, that Edward Clement, having passed the required examinations, was duly qualified to compound physicians' prescriptions.

"Ed!" called a musical voice behind him.

He turned quickly, smoothing out the frown. A pretty girl stood in the open doorway leading to the upper part of the house.

"Is that you, Fanny?"

"Well, yes. You didn't suppose it would be any one else, did you?"

"I was expecting your father—to come and relieve me."

"He'll be down soon. Busy?"

"There's always plenty to do in a drug-store."

"And plenty to see. Weren't Jessie Bailey and her sister in here a while ago?"

"Yes. They came for sodas."

"They stayed a long time."

"Did they?"

Mr. Clement said this as indifferently as he could. He recalled that he had been guilty of making the Bailey sisters giggle until they choked over their soda-water.

"It must be nice to have so many girls to talk to," remarked Fanny.

Ed Clement rolled a liver-pill savagely.

"There's only one girl I want to talk to, and you know who *she* is," he snapped.

"Jessie Bailey?"

"Good Lord, Fanny! What makes you say that? You know that you are the only—"

"Here's a motor-car stopping," she interrupted. "And a lady getting out. Guess I'll go. You'd rather see her alone, of course."

"No, I wouldn't. Here! Fanny! Stop!"

But Fanny Halton had whisked through the doorway and disappeared. She did not quite close the door. It was easy for her to stand in the dark hallway and peep through the crack.

Edward Clement might have run after her, but duty called him to the counter in front of the prescription-case. "Duty" was an attractive young woman in an automobile coat and a veiled hat.

"Can you give me something for a headache?"

The tones were soft and pathetically suggestive of suffering.

"Bromo-seltzer?" suggested Mr. Clement, with insinuative sympathy.

"I would rather have powders."

"Certainly. We have some of our own

that we can recommend. Headache proceeds from many causes, but it always means a derangement of the nervous system. Our powders act directly upon the nerves, and—"

He had been bustling about behind the counter, opening several drawers one after the other, and shutting them with a snap.

"I'm afraid I haven't any made," he confessed, at last. "But I'll prepare some in a few moments. Won't you sit down?"

He came out and placed a chair for her. As she dropped into it she smiled gratefully. The door behind the prescription-case, leading to the stairs, opened wider.

Ed Clement thought he heard a cough like Fanny's. But the motor-car, standing outside, with the chauffeur staring stonily over the steering-wheel, was chugging and spitting, and he could not be sure.

He went behind the glass screen and looked over the litter of bottles and glass jars containing the various drugs — bromids, rhubarb, capsicum, etc.—most often ordered by physicians.

Carefully, on the point of a knife, he took portions of powder from four of the jars in turn, and mixed them on a small sheet of white paper. Then he carried the paper around to the young woman in the chair.

"Let me put this on your tongue."

He was bending over her solicitously, his back turned toward the prescription-case. That is why he did not see Fanny Halton's face at the peep-hole in the ground-glass.

"Drink a little water."

"Thanks."

With a tenderness altogether unnecessary —as it seemed to Fanny—he handed her a glass of water and watched her rapturously as she sipped. At least, Fanny said he was "rapturous." He indignantly denied it afterward.

"Feel better?" he murmured.

"I think I do."

"Dying duck!" commented Fanny to herself.

"I'll give you two more powders."

He took the glass from her. Then, with a professional air, he pushed down her loose suede glove and pressed two fingers upon her wrist.

"H'm! Pulse almost normal. A trifle languid, perhaps, but—"

"Oh, doctor! You don't think it's anything serious, do you?"

In her sudden apprehension, she seized his elbow and peered eagerly into his face. He tried to look grave, but found it hard not to smile. He liked to be called "doctor."

"N-n-o!" he answered slowly. "Merely a slight cerebral disturbance. Have you been riding fast?"

"Yes, rather. I have to get back to New York before seven, and it is nearly six now. So we have been putting on speed."

Ed Clement nodded sagely and went behind the screen. Fanny was waiting for him.

"Why didn't you stop and hold her hand a little longer?" she demanded in an angry whisper.

Before he could reply Fanny had flounced away through the rear doorway. This time she closed the door.

"The deuce take a jealous woman!" growled Ed Clement.

He was mad as he mixed the other two headache powders. He drew the glass jars he wanted toward him with a snap and dug his knife into their contents as if he wanted to shovel up a spadeful instead of less than you could lay on a dime.

Also, he swore below his breath as he did his work. It was the best he could do to relieve himself. He couldn't swear at Fanny.

The two powders were ready in a few minutes. He folded them into one packet, which he sealed with one of Thomas Halton's printed labels. On the label he wrote "Headache Powders," and signed his initials, "E. C."

He did not know whether Fanny was watching him or not. She shouldn't have a chance to criticize him again, anyhow. His manner was distinctly cold as he handed the packet to his fair customer.

"Fifty cents," he said, in hard, business-like tones.

She looked at him in surprise, but merely asked:

"I'm to take one powder in twenty minutes, I think, you said, doctor?"

"Better make it half an hour."

"We shall be in New York in about three-quarters. I'll take it when I get to the theater."

She stepped gracefully into the motor-car and spoke a few words to the chauffeur, who grunted. Ed Clement looked at her curiously. So she was going to a theater! She must be an actress then.

The machine sped away, and Clement mechanically noted the number on the dusty license-plate swinging behind. It was "50082 N. Y."

"She's a peach, all right," was his inward observation, as he sauntered back to the store. "But I wouldn't trade Fanny for her—no, sir! Only I wish Fanny wasn't so all-fired

jealous. A fellow in business has *got* to be agreeable to customers. Gosh! It's for her father's benefit I do it, anyhow. This is *his* store. What do I care for girls that come in here? Whether they're New York actresses, or Jessie Bailey, or—"

He stopped suddenly. He had got back to the prescription-case and was fingering a glass jar which contained a quantity of glistening gray powder. The stopper was out, and the knife lay across the open mouth.

On the side of the jar, in large gilt letters, on a dark background, was the inscription:

ARSENIOUS OXIDE.

POISON.

The "Poison" was not as large as the other two words, but it was prominent enough to catch the eye at a glance.

It happened, however, that that side of the glass jar which bore the name of its deadly contents had been turned away from Ed Clement at first. It was not until he had casually twisted the vessel around, while musing over Fanny Halton's jealousy, that his gaze fell upon the gold-lettered label.

To his accustomed eye the legend, "arsenious oxide," told the story at once. It was the commercial name of the awful poison the general public knows as arsenic, and which is sometimes called "ratsbane."

With quickening breath, he looked over the prescription-table and saw that another glass jar, very much like that containing the arsenic, but on which were the abbreviated words, "Brom. Potass.," had been pushed back among a lot of others.

In a flash he knew what he had done. Clenching his fists in his agony, he gasped:

"Heavens! I was worrying myself about Fanny, *and I put arsenic in those headache powders!*"

CHAPTER II.

A TOUCH OF MAGIC.

MECHANICALLY Clement dipped a few grains from the arsenic jar with the point of the knife and looked at them.

There could be no doubt about it. He was familiar with appearance of the steel-gray powder, and would have known it for what it was, without any assistance from the label on the jar.

"There's no excuse for me," he sobbed, as he shook the powder back into the jar and wiped the knife on a scrap of paper. "I wasn't attending to my work when I was making them up. That's all there is to it. Besides, I'd no right to have that jar here at all. It's dead against the rules to keep a dangerous drug off its shelf a moment when it's not in use. If I'd put it back after making up that rat-poison, this couldn't have happened."

He placed the jar in a vacant space on a high shelf, and then leaned weakly against the prescription-case, trying to make up his mind what to do. Suddenly, it seemed as if a row of figures started out of the gloom and marshaled themselves before him.

"50082 N. Y."

He saw them as plainly as if they were outlined in white fire.

"The number of that motor-car!" he muttered. "Why does it come back to me like this? I wonder whether— By Jove! Perhaps she didn't take those two powders! If I can only get them back!"

He looked at the clock on the wall. The time was 6.25.

Like most persons who live in a small town, he had the local train schedule by heart. There would be an express to New York at 6.33. If he caught it, he could be at Broadway and Forty-Second Street before half-past seven.

"It's my only chance. I'll take it. She's an actress. She must be a well-known one, or she couldn't afford to have a motor-car. Some of the chauffeurs in the theater district will know its license number. Anyhow, I can describe its general appearance. I'll find her! I must! She can't be dead. It would be too horrible."

He rushed to the rear door. He would call his employer to take care of the store. Then he stopped. A thought came to him which clutched at his heart until he could hardly breathe.

"What's the use?" he moaned. "She swallowed one powder right here. I gave it to her myself."

The recollection checked him only a moment. It was the unexpected that always happened. Might it not be that she had, by sheer good fortune, found a doctor somewhere before the poison permeated her system?

Arsenic was a very active poison, but Ed Clement was in a state of mind to cling to the barest hope. Cases were recorded where immediate medical attention had saved the

patient when much more of the drug had been swallowed than in this instance.

"I'll go to New York, anyhow."

He put on his hat. Then he took out the paper on which he had written the number of the car license and studied it carefully.

"Where are you going, Edward?"

It was Fanny Halton, who had just opened the rear door. He hastily returned the paper to his pocket.

To Fanny it looked like the kind of little note a flirtatious maiden might pass to a young man. Clement did not think she had seen it at all. A girl would have known she had.

"I have to go to New York, Fanny. I have an appointment to take dinner with Jack Lisle. I'd forgotten all about it till this minute."

He uttered this lie calmly enough, because he was desperate. It was the first excuse that occurred to him.

"Mr. Lisle was in your class at college, wasn't he?"

"Yes. He has a drug business of his own up-town in New York. There's a whistle. The train's coming. Will you stay in the store till your father comes down? Good-by."

He tried to take her hand. She snatched it away. At any other time this would have worried him. Just now, tormented by the fear that he had committed manslaughter, the tantrums of a girl were of no importance.

He dashed off to the railroad station, a short half-block away. While Fanny, in the drug-store, speculated as to the contents of that bit of paper, Edward Clement caught the express and was catapulted toward the city.

It was nearly eight o'clock when he dropped off a car into the bustle of Times Square. Only a few theaters were open, but the roof-gardens were in full swing. The sidewalks were crowded, as usual at that hour, and motor-cars were hurrying along in every direction.

Ordinarily, Clement would have been bitterly contrasting life in New York with his dead-and-alive existence in Landscape. But to-night he had something else to worry about.

He was just going to speak to one of the chauffeurs by the row of motor-cars for hire in the Square when he changed his mind. The car in which the young woman of the headache powders had ridden up to his store in the afternoon stood by the curb at his very elbow.

There was no mistaking its identity. Its peculiar orange hue, set off by a red band, distinguished it from any other he ever had seen. Moreover, there was the license number, "50082, N. Y."

To cap it all, the same chauffeur whom Clement had seen looking over the wheel in Landscape, less than two hours before, was still crouched down on the seat in the same idle attitude.

"Will you tell me whose car this is?" asked Clement.

The chauffeur woke up and gazed at him with indolent insolence. Then he noted that the young man was well dressed and well set up physically, with a firm chin and steady eyes. So, contrary to his first impulse, he decided to answer civilly. It might be safer.

"It's Miss Filette Murray's car. She's playing on the roof in here."

"Thanks."

Clement knew Miss Filette Murray's name. Who didn't? She had been the hit of three Broadway musical comedies in succession. Her new songs, "Don't Squeeze Me, or I'll Cry," "I'm Only a Little Girl," and that slam-bang favorite, "Just a Bunch of Whistles," with its shrieking calliope refrain, were on all the hand-organs, and everybody was singing them.

An immense lithographed portrait of Miss Murray, in colors, hung at the portal of the Arcadia Theater, in front of which Clement stood. She was shown with her mouth distended in a laugh. But Clement could easily imagine that, with her mouth closed, the picture would represent the young woman on whose tongue he had put the headache powder.

"Is Miss Murray in the theater now?" he asked falteringly.

"Sure."

"How long has she been there?"

"About ten minutes."

"Is she in good health?"

The chauffeur looked at him scornfully out of the corner of his eye.

"Good health? Well, if you'd heard her —of course, she's in good health. Why not?"

Thank Heaven! She was still alive! He might yet be in time! The first powder must have been harmless. Evidently, he had not put arsenic into that one.

If he could only prevent her taking the others! She had told him she would take another powder on reaching the theater.

Clement rushed into the lobby and purchased a ticket for the roof-garden.

"Take the elevator," directed the man in the box-office briefly.

The orchestra was playing the overture as

Clement stepped out of the car and looked about the large, glass-enclosed area of the roof-garden. There was a fairly large audience, and more people were coming up with every trip of the two elevators.

Ed Clement made his way directly to the side of the stage, where, screened by a large artificial palm, was a door. He pulled it open, and found himself facing a large man with a forbidding face.

"What do yer want?"

"To see Miss Filette Murray."

"Oh, yer do? Well, you have a nerve," snarled the large man. "Get away from here. Miss Murray don't see no one. Beat it!"

The door banged, and Clement heard a bolt shoot into its socket.

"Durned idiot!" he ejaculated. "With life and death depending on my getting to her. What am I to do?"

The overture ended at this instant, and two uniformed boys slipped cards into gilt frames on either side of the stage, announcing "Orestes."

"Orestes" proved to be a magician of the conventional type, in black dress, with supple white hands, a good line of "patter," and the old bag of tricks. It was the sort of mild offering that usually "opens the show" at a vaudeville performance.

Clement, frowningly endeavoring to hit on some way of getting to Miss Filette Murray on the stage, stared straight at the magician without seeing him. The performer was so flattered by his seemingly absorbed attention that he addressed his talk straight at him.

"How can I get to her?" Clement was saying to himself in dreary tones. "I must—I must. It may be too late, even now."

He came to himself with a jerk. What was Orestes saying?

"In my next feat, ladies and gentlemen, I need some assistance. Will some gentleman from the audience step upon the stage and hold this hat which I have just borrowed? You see, the hat is empty. I should like to have some disinterested person come up here and hold it, to see that I do not put anything into it. I assure you—"

In three strides Edward Clement had reached the short flight of steps leading to the stage. Orestes broke off. Then he went on, speaking to Clement:

"Ah! Thank you, sir. Let me take your hand, to help you up. That's right! I'm much obliged to you. Now, ladies and gentlemen, this gentleman is an entire stranger to me. We never spoke to each other in our lives before." To Clement: "Did we, sir?"

The young man shook his head emphatically, but without looking at the magician. His gaze was fixed on several persons—some in stage costume standing in the wings on the left. Then he turned and looked to the right.

"Now, sir," went on Orestes, "if you'll kindly take this hat by the brim and hold it as high as you can, I will proceed to show you what I can take from an empty hat. You see—"

He tapped the bottom of the hat with his baton.

"Quite empty, as you can tell by the sound! Now! Pass!"

With his coat-sleeve pulled up, showing his white shirt, he reached over and, with a flourish, lifted from the hat a squirming live rabbit.

There was a moment of silence, followed by a roar of applause from the audience. Then—Edward Clement darted off the stage into the wings on the right, hat and all!

Throwing the hat away from him, he seized the bare arm of a handsome young woman, in a gorgeous spangled tunic and pink silk tights, just as she lifted to her mouth a paper containing a grayish-white powder!

CHAPTER III.

STILL IN PURSUIT.

"STOP! Don't take that!" shrieked Clement. "It's poison!"

The horror and surprise that leaped into the young woman's face blanched it through her make-up.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

He snatched the paper from her hand, and the powder sifted to the floor.

"You haven't taken the other one, have you?"

"What other one? What are you talking about? Who *are* you?"

The magician, who had been looking after Clement in indignant astonishment, bowed and smiled reassuringly to the audience. He was too old a stager to let the people in front see that he was embarrassed in any way.

Then he walked to the wings and in a fierce whisper, very different from the dulcet tones he used professionally, hissed at Clement:

"You dub! What d'yer mean by queering my act like this? Gimme that hat."

Clement hardly heard him. He was gazing hard at the young woman's terror-

stricken face, and there was mystification in his expression.

"Here's the hat, professor," said a stage-hand in white overalls, picking it up.

Orestes took it, and, returning to the stage with his professional smile, blandly explained to the audience:

"The gentleman was so scared that he ran away. He was afraid I'd bring his mother-in-law out of the hat next. Now, if another gentleman will step up to the stage, I shall be exceedingly obliged."

Orestes went on with his performance without giving any further thought to Clement. The latter let go of Miss Filette Murray's arm, and stammered:

"Those headache powders I gave you this afternoon—"

"This afternoon? Why, what— Here, Tompkins," to the stage-hand, "get this man out of here. He's dippy."

"I'm not," protested Clement indignantly. "Didn't I serve you with some headache powders at Landscape two hours ago, and wasn't that one of them in your hand just now?"

Miss Filette Murray looked him up and down scornfully.

"Headache powders nothing! I never had a headache in my life. That powder you knocked out of my hand was something I use for my voice. Where's my maid? Where's Susan Dodds?"

"Here I am."

Clement started. The voice was familiar, and as the speaker came forward from behind him he recognized the face.

It was that of the young woman who had ridden up to the drug-store in the yellow motor-car, and to whom he had so tenderly ministered. She no longer wore the voluminous automobile-coat and veiled hat. But Clement knew the features as soon as he looked upon them.

So it was Miss Filette Murray's maid, and not the celebrated musical comedy actress and singer herself, who had taken the one headache powder, and who, he trusted, still had the others about her, unopened.

"I — I — have made a mistake," said Clement.

"You bet you have," put Tompkins grimly. It's the Forty-Seventh Street station for yours, as soon as I can get a cop."

It was here that Susan Dodds came nobly to the rescue.

"No. He's all right," she declared. "He's my cousin. Don't you get so fresh, Tomp."

"Tompkins isn't fresh," put in Miss Murray. "He's doing his duty. It is his business to keep outsiders off the stage. He's assistant stage-manager. If this man is your cousin, Susan, take him away. He has no business here, and you know it."

Clement might have objected, in excuse, that he had been invited by the magician to come on the stage, or he wouldn't be there. But he was too much worried about those powders to press the point. All he wanted was to get Susan Dodds to himself and ask her what she'd done with them.

She took him by the elbow and pulled him away from the others.

"Come this way," she whispered.

He followed her to the back of the stage, where Susan asked him, in a soft voice and with a sly smile:

"Did you come down to New York just to find me?"

"Why, yes, I—"

She tittered approvingly.

"I had a feeling this afternoon that we should meet again," she admitted. "Say, there's nothing slow about you."

Edward Clement was not more conceited than the average young man, but he could not help seeing that Susan Dodds was flattered by the supposition that her personal charms had induced him, not only to follow her from Landscape to New York, but actually to force his way to the stage of the Arcadia roof-garden, to speak to her. It takes a brave man to go past a stage-door in New York without permission.

"I *had* to see you," he said simply.

He thought of Fanny Halton, and wondered for the moment what she would be likely to think, say, and do, if she knew where he was. Then he pushed Fanny into the background.

What was the use of thinking about her? She wasn't there, and Susan Dodds was undeniably an attractive young woman. Besides, he must keep in with her if he meant to get the powders back without any one finding out what a horrible blunder he had made.

"Where are those powders I gave you?"

He tried to ask this question in an off-hand way, as if it were of little consequence.

"I haven't got them. My headache got well from the one you put on my tongue, and I didn't need the others."

Clement gave vent to a full breath of relief.

"Did you throw them away?"

"No; I gave them to one of the scrub-women of the theater. She has a daughter who suffers from headache a great deal."

"The dev—I mean, where is this scrub-woman?"

"Mrs. Sullivan? Oh, she's gone home."

"Where does she live?"

Clement put this question feverishly, and Susan Dodds, carried away by his eagerness, returned a quick answer:

"It's down on the East Side somewhere—Hester Street. I don't know the number, but it isn't far from the Bowery, and there's a grocery in the basement. Mrs. Sullivan says everybody knows her around there. Do you want to see her?"

"Yes; I want to get those two powders back!"

"Why?"

It was a natural question, and Edward Clement had to think rapidly for a plausible response. Certainly he could not tell her the truth—that they contained a deadly poison.

"Well, they are a splendid medicine—but only for some people," he explained.

"You don't say!"

"Yes. I gave them to you because you were of what we doctors call, a sanguine temperament. To anybody at all anemic the powders might prove injurious."

All this sounded very learned, and Susan Dodds was correspondingly impressed.

"I hope they won't hurt Mary—Mrs. Sullivan's daughter," she said.

"Are you sure her mother will give them to her?"

"I don't know. Mrs. Sullivan left the theater nearly an hour ago. She said Mary had a bad headache when she went to the factory this morning, and it wasn't likely that running a sewing-machine all day would make it any better."

Edward Clement nervously tapped his chin with the ends of his fingers.

"Hester Street — over a grocery, you said?"

"Yes."

"I'm going there."

"Right away?"

"Yes."

"If you'll wait till about eleven o'clock, I'll go with you."

"I wish I could. But I can't. I hope you will pardon me. It would give me the greatest pleasure, only—"

"Won't you come and take me home after the show? I'm afraid to go through Broadway alone at that time of night. My chum, Gertie Vaughan, who generally goes home with me, isn't on to-night. She's in the chorus. I used to be, but I make more money working as a dresser for Filette Murray."

"I thought you always used the motor-car."

"Oh, be good! I never get a ride in that when *she* knows it. The only time I'm ever in the car is when I get Bertrand to take me for a joy-ride."

"Bertrand?"

"Filette Murray's chauffeur. He's an awful grouch. But sometimes I catch him in good humor, and then he'll take me for a little spin. That's how I came to be going through your town to-day. I borrowed her cloak and hat, too."

"I see."

Edward Clement had been edging toward the stage-door during this hurried colloquy.

"Here! How did *you* get in?" demanded a gruff voice.

The large doorkeeper who had turned him away so unceremoniously when he wanted to get in to see Miss Murray, now barred his way out.

Clement had neither time nor disposition for controversy. So he pushed past the big man without replying, and in another minute was in the elevator, going down.

Hester Street is a narrow thoroughfare of densely-populated tenements in the heart of the East side Ghetto. Push-carts and children are the principal obstructions of the roadway and sidewalks, and there is noise there always.

"By George! There's the grocery!" exclaimed Clement, as he turned into the street from the Bowery.

His eyes were fixed on the wide-open doorway of a dingy store a few steps below the street-level which he felt sure must be the one she had referred to.

"I'll ask, anyhow," he muttered.

So into the store he went, and it seemed to him that every kind of cheap eatable was on sale there.

A swarthy woman, whose face was so dirty that Clement could only guess at her age, and whose yellow ears were garnished with immense gold rings, stood behind the counter, weighing up five cents' worth of butter.

"Do you know whether Mrs. Sullivan lives in this house?" asked Ed Clement.

The swarthy woman gave him the vacant stare of one unfamiliar with the tongue in which she was addressed. But somebody else came to the rescue.

"What Mrs. Sullivan do ye be wantin'?"

The young man peered into the gloom from which the sharp query had been flung at him, and made out a buxom lady, her sleeves rolled above her red elbows, and a checked

gingham apron girded about her waist. She was regarding him curiously—not to say, belligerently.

"The Mrs. Sullivan I want is employed at the Arcadia Theater," he replied.

"Well, have ye got anythin' ag'in her?"

"Not at all. Do you know her?"

"Sure I do. Mrs. Sullivan is me own name, an' I'm not ashamed of it. I'm an honest widdy woman, an' I work at the Arcadia. Who be you?"

"I'm a friend of Miss Susan Dodds, of the Arcadia."

It occurred to Edward Clement that this might be a recommendation to Mrs. Sullivan. It was a lucky thought.

"Ye are a friend of Miss Dodds, are ye? Then, bedad, ye're acquainted with a fine young lady, so ye are. Did she send ye here?"

"Yes. I want to see your daughter."

"Me daughter? My Mamie, is it?"

"Yes. Miss Mary Sullivan. Is she at home?"

"What did ye be wantin' of her? She's a good girl, do ye mind."

Clement caught the tinge of suspicion, and he hastened to add:

"Miss Dodds tells me she suffers from headache. I make a specialty of curing headaches, and—"

"Oh, ye're a docthor? Be gob! I'm mighty glad ye've come, for Mamie do be in torment with a headache at this blessed minute. I give her a powder I got from Miss Dodds at the theayter to-night, just before I came down here for some butter."

"Has she taken the powder?" gasped Clement.

"Faith, I told her to, an' I s'pose she did."

Clement took hold of the edge of the greasy counter to steady himself.

"Will you take me up to see her?" he said, eagerly, in hollow tones.

"It's four stories, an' they ain't no illivators in the house," she warned him, with a grin. "Come on!"

She led Clement into the long, dark hall and up the bare stairs.

Flight after flight, picking their way among babies crawling up and down, squeezing against the wall to let people pass with bundles, and avoiding a gang of boys boisterously playing "I spy," they went. At last they reached the fourth floor.

"Here's my rooms," announced Mrs. Sullivan. "We'll go in this way, through the kitchen. There's a light in there. I guess Mamie's at her supper."

He stood back to let her open the door. As she entered, she uttered an inarticulate scream of alarm.

"What is it?"

His voice did not sound like his own. He almost wondered whether he or some one else had asked the eager question.

"Oh, Mamie! Mamie! Speak to me!" Mrs. Sullivan was bending over something in the middle of the room, and her tones came in a moan.

Then she broke forth, with the loud fierceness of mortal agony: "Saints help me! She's dead!"

Clement staggered in, his knees bending under him.

"Too late!" he whispered, far back in his throat.

Stretched diagonally across the sordid kitchen—with its pitifully small cook-stove and its little pine table, covered with a red cloth—was the still form of a young girl.

Flat on her back she lay, and the set face was of an awful leaden white in the dim light of the smoky coal-oil lamp.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR.

Edward Clement had never earned, or even tried for, a medical diploma, so the title of "doctor," occasionally applied to him, was one of courtesy only. His business was to sell physic, not to administer it. Still, he had the frequent "first aid" practise that falls to all druggists, and could bind up an artery or treat a simple dislocation as well as nine ambulance surgeons out of ten.

Cases of "suspended animation" had often come his way. They always interested him. Could this be such a one? He dropped to his knees by the side of the apparently dead girl, and clasped his fingers around her wrist.

"There's a pulse," he murmured, "but very feeble."

"What did ye say? Can ye save her?" cried the mother wildly. "Oh, Mamie, *alanna!* Speak to me. Give one word to your mother, darlint!"

"Keep quiet, just a moment!" admonished Clement.

He pushed back one of the half-closed eyelids. Then he put a finger between the teeth, forced the mouth open a little way, and looked at the tongue.

What he saw gave him hope, and he muttered to himself thoughtfully:

"I don't see any indication of arsenical

poisoning on the tongue or in the saliva. There is no convulsion—no toxic rigor."

Mrs. Sullivan could not contain her anxiety, although she had been trying to obey the command of silence from this self-possessed young man who was working to save her daughter.

"Oh, my girl! She isn't dead, is she, doctor?"

"Dead? Of course not! Have you any vinegar?"

"Sure! Right here, on the table."

She snatched up a saucer that had contained sliced cucumbers.

"Will this do?" she asked.

"Capitally."

He dipped a corner of his handkerchief into the vinegar, and, with the coolness of a man who feels sure of results, pressed it to her nostrils.

"Yer usin' the vinegar for smellin'-salts. Is it only one o' them fainting spells?"

"That's all. Is she subject to them?"

"Do ye mean does she often be takin' them?"

Clement nodded as he sopped up more vinegar from the saucer and bathed the girl's forehead.

"She's took 'em four or five times already," said Mrs. Sullivan. "It's the hard work at the factory. She makes shirt-waists. There was a strike a while ago, and in all the *big* shops the girls have it much better than they used. But Velusky, Mamie's boss, he has a small place on Broome Street, and there's only one window to it, and the ceilin's low' and he keeps the girls at them sewin'-machine till they's fit to drop. He don't pay good wages, neither."

"Why does she stay there?"

"*Arrah!* What does any one work hard for small pay for? Just because they can't get anythin' better—that is, nothin' that's honest. That's why she works for Velusky. Glory be! She's openin' her eyes."

"Bring me some water," directed Clement briefly.

He placed one of his patient's nerveless hands in the bowl the mother quickly set before him, and the cool water helped the work of revival begun by the vinegar.

He was satisfied now that she had not swallowed one of the fatal powders, and the operation of bringing her out of the swoon was a small undertaking for Edward Clement.

In a few moments he had carried her to the bed in the adjoining room, where she and her mother slept. The girl wanted to walk, but Clement knew better than she how weak she was, and he insisted on carrying her.

"She'll be all right now, Mrs. Sullivan," he said. "Sit by her and fan her for a while. I'll wait in the kitchen. I should like to speak to her when she is better."

"Indade, then, doctor, no one has a better right than yerself to talk with her. I don't believe she'd be livin' this blessed minute if ye hadn't come just when ye did."

Edward Clement waved the grateful mother aside, smiling as he passed into the kitchen.

"Oh, yes, she would. She'd have come around soon even if no one had touched her. It was merely a temporary collapse. Steady work in a badly ventilated room would cause it with anybody. Go and cheer her up while you use the fan. That's all that's necessary. Take the lamp with you."

"I'll not be needin' a light in there. Besides, I'd be leavin' you in the dark."

"That's nothing. I—"

"I've only the one lamp, do ye mind? It's enough for Mamie and me. But when a gentleman like yourself comes visitin' I'm rather put about to keep a light in the two rooms at the same time."

Clement was anxious to help her out of her dilemma without hurting her pride.

"Well," he said, "the light might be painful to her just now, in her weakened condition. You'd better leave the lamp in here."

She went into the room to Mamie. But in less than two minutes—during which, as Clement sat staring at the red table-cloth and huddle of soiled dishes, his thoughts wandered to Fanny Halton—Mrs. Sullivan called to him:

"Mamie is all right now, doctor. Shall I let her get up?"

"No; she'd better stay where she is for the present. It will be easier on her heart."

"She wants to speak to you."

"Very well."

Mrs. Sullivan came out to the kitchen, and, placing a grateful hand on Clement's shoulder, while a tear showed itself on her cheek, she said in a broken voice:

"Heaven send ye peace an' all blessin's. It's a smart doctor ye are, an' a good man besides."

"Do you think so?" he answered, with an embarrassed laugh.

"I do that. So does my Mamie. She'll tell ye so herself."

Clement went into the other apartment—which was sitting-room and bedchamber combined—and took the chair just vacated by Mrs. Sullivan.

"It was awfully good of you, doctor, to do what you have for me," were the girl's first words.

"I didn't do anything. It was nature doing its regular work. I only helped a little. How did you come to faint?"

"I don't remember anything after sitting down to supper. I must have fallen out of my chair as soon as I sat down."

"Played out by your day's work. That's the explanation. You had not been taking anything—any medicine—for—for—a headache?"

"Nothing at all. My head was not bad when I got home to-night. That reminds me. Mother's been telling me that you know a Miss Dodds, who is at the Arcadia."

"Yes. She sent me here."

"She's a splendid girl," declared Mamie fervently.

Edward Clement made no comment on this. He had no reason to doubt the accuracy of Mary Sullivan's estimate of Susan Dodds. But, on the other hand, he knew too little about the lady to give it an unreserved indorsement.

"I was on the stage for a week last winter," continued Mamie. "Miss Dodds got me on as a chorus-girl."

"You are a singer, then?"

She laughed merrily.

"No; I can't sing at all. But you don't have to sing to be a chorus-girl in the musical shows they put on now."

"Don't you? I thought—"

"Oh, no. But you must be able to learn fancy dances and marching drills, and be willing to wear all kinds of costumes. That's why I stayed only a week."

"I understand," said Clement gravely.

"Yes. I couldn't do it, somehow. It was all right the first week. I was a shepherdess, a maid of honor, and a Quakeress. All those dresses were long, and I liked them. But then the stage-manager told me I'd have to be in a new dance-number he was putting on. He called it 'Cupid's Revels.' I would have had to be fixed up as *Cupid*. The costume he showed me was almost as bad as some of those bathing-suits you see in the Sunday papers, and I just *had* to quit."

"And go to work in the factory?"

"Yes. I'd done that before, and I didn't like to go back to it. But I couldn't wear that *Cupid* dress, so I had to make the best of the sewing-machine."

"I'm inclined to think you'll have to find some easier employment if you're going to keep your health."

"Well, making shirt-waists isn't so bad, if you have a decent place to work. Girls in big factories make good money, and they are in large, airy lofts with lots of windows. But when business gets slack a lot of them is laid off. I couldn't afford that."

"Doesn't Velusky lay his people off, too?"

"No. You see, he cuts prices to the jobbers, and they give him work all the time. I've been with him steady for two years, except the six weeks I was on the stage."

"I thought it was only one week."

"I only *played* one week. But there were five weeks of rehearsal."

"Oh, I'd forgotten the rehearsals. You weren't paid for them, I suppose?"

"Of course not. It's only once in a great while that a manager pays his people for rehearsing. If there had been a salary for those five weeks I might have tried for another theatrical engagement—in a company where I wouldn't have to wear fancy costumes. But I didn't dare take chances. I had to have money. Jerry came around, and—"

She stopped, and, though in the dark room, the deep gloom of which was relieved only by the lamp in the kitchen, Clement could not note the expression of her face, her trembling voice, as she broke off abruptly, told him that she had inadvertently said more than she intended.

"Well, I'll have to go," said Clement briskly, to relieve the tension. "I promised Miss Dodds I'd see her home from the theater."

"Did you? Well, will you tell her I'm in good health, and that I'll try to see her soon?"

"If I let her know how I found you when I came, she'll hardly credit that statement about your health."

"Oh, that was nothing—that faint. I've had plenty of them."

"You wouldn't be troubled with them if you didn't work so hard," returned Clement. Then, as if it had just occurred to him: "Have you got those powders Miss Dodds sent you for your headache?"

"Yes. I didn't take them. Mother told me to, but my head didn't ache much then, and I put them away just as they were. I didn't know there was more than one."

"There were two in the packet."

"Well, I didn't take either of them."

Clement was about to remark that he knew very well she hadn't taken any. But he restrained himself, merely saying:

"It happens that I made up those powders for Miss Dodds. I told her that they were good only for some patients. Now that I

have seen you, I'm sure it wouldn't be wise for *you* to take them."

"Then I'll give them back to you."

"Yes; I think perhaps you'd better," he replied with assumed carelessness.

Mamie was much stronger now. Clement saw that plainly enough as she moved to a sitting posture on the bed and swung her feet to the floor.

"I have them in a drawer in that bureau."

She walked across the room to the bureau and pulled open the top drawer. Then, without turning her head, she said haltingly:

"You know, Jerry is my brother. He's older than me."

"Yes?"

Clement uttered this monosyllable with decided indifference. What did he care about Mamie's brother Jerry? He was thinking about the headache powders.

"Jerry is a truck-driver."

"Ah!"

"He makes pretty good money—when he works."

"I see."

"But he—he—gets with the gang sometimes, and they play cards and drink. Then he doesn't work."

"H-m!"

"But he has to have money to come across for his share of the booze—*he* calls it—and mother and me—"

"You have to give it to him, eh?" filled in Clement, as she hesitated. "He pays you back afterward, doesn't he?"

"He *will*," replied Mamie eagerly. "As soon as he gets in three weeks' full work."

"Can't he get three weeks' employment?"

"Yes, I guess he can. But, you know, Jerry is awfully popular with the gang, and he hasn't never made more than ten days at one time hand-running since last summer. Here's the powders."

She came away from the bureau with the paper packet in her hand. As she gave it to Clement, he felt that it was still sealed.

"Just as it left my hands, by Jove!" was his joyful mental observation, as he thrust the packet into an inside pocket.

CHAPTER V.

AGAIN IN THE SHADOW.

"I WISH I had some powders that *would* do my headaches good," said Mamie.

"I'll prepare you some if you like," Clement volunteered.

"Will you? That's very kind. If you'll give them to Miss Dodds, she'll bring them to me."

"I'll bring them to you myself."

Edward Clement was so relieved over getting back those wretched powders that he felt grateful to this girl. Why shouldn't he put himself to some trouble on her account?

"Do you live far from here?" she asked.

"Not very. Anyhow, that has nothing to do with it. Before the end of the week you shall have some powders that will drive away a headache effectually. At the same time, I must repeat, what I've already told you, that you cannot hope to be well altogether unless you get easier work."

"That's what I do be always tellin' her," put in Mrs. Sullivan. "If my boy Jerry would keep steady, we'd have no trouble. I'm hopin' he's all right now. He hasn't been here for nigh a week, an' I hear he do be workin' every day."

"He doesn't live with you, does he?" asked Clement, feeling that he ought to say something.

"No. The stable of the contractor he drives for is up-town, by the big gas-house, and Jerry boards handy to it."

"Well, I'll say good night," and Clement held out his hand to Mamie. "I'll give your message to Miss Dodds. Good night, Mrs. Sullivan."

Mother and daughter shook his hand heartily, and, as he left them with a smile, both followed him to the head of the stairs.

There was a small gas-jet in a wire cage, high on the wall, on each landing, so that he had no difficulty in finding his way down.

Customers were still being served in the dingy general-store in the basement as he passed. Retail establishments in tenement neighborhoods in New York never close until everybody has gone to bed. This means that —in the summer particularly—they are open nearly all night.

It was a little after ten when Edward Clement reached the outside of the Arcadia Theater again. The roof-garden show was in full swing. Susan Dodds would not be out till eleven—perhaps later.

Filette Murray's "turn" was near the end of the performance, for she was a "headliner." In the advertisements it was announced that she would positively appear every night at nine forty-five—the second "act" after the intermission. Vaudeville people regard that as the very best place on the bill.

As the audience, with tireless encores, generally kept the vivacious Miss Murray on for

three-quarters of an hour at least, she seldom made her final bow till after half past ten. Then Susan Dodds had to help her out of her stage clothes and into those of private life. Half an hour was little enough for this transformation.

"She must be on now," thought Clement, as he stood in front of the garish entrance and looked at his watch. "Well, I'll have to wait. One thing is sure—I can't go back to Landscape to-night. I'll have to put up at some hotel. This blunder of mine is going to be expensive. However, it will be cheaper to pay a few dollars for a bed and a couple of meals than to find myself on trial for manslaughter."

He pinched the outside of his pocket to feel the packet of powders, and a shudder ran through him as he thought of his narrow escape. Two persons had been on the point of swallowing the arsenic, and in each case only the merest chance had intervened to save them. Either might have died a horrible death.

"Let's see. What hotel shall I go to?" he reflected. "I guess one will do as well as another. I hate to spend the money for a bed in New York when I have one of my own in Landscape."

Suddenly an idea came to him that made him utter a self-rebuking chuckle.

"What kind of a jackass am I, anyhow? Jack Lisle will give me a place to sleep, of course. Why didn't I think of that before? I'll go over and see him while I'm waiting for the show to finish. I told Fanny I was going to see him to-night, and I'll save myself from being a liar. I'll have something to eat at his place. Then I can say truthfully that I did dine with him."

Jack Lisle's drug-store was in one of the cross-streets on the West Side, and a brisk ten minutes' walk brought Edward Clement to the place.

"Why, Hallo, Ed! What brings you to New York?" was Jack Lisle's greeting, as he seized his old college mate's hand.

"I had to come down, Jack, and I can't get back to-night. Will you find space for me in your boudoir to sleep?"

"Will I? Well, won't I? You can have my bed, and I'll stretch my old bones on the lounge. Come back to the room behind the store and have a bottle of something off the ice."

"Not now, Jack. I have to go to the Arcadia Theater first."

"The Arcadia? Whew! Got something on?"

"I must meet somebody after the show."

"Gee! Er—a—a lady?"

"Yes. But she's nothing to me," replied Clement quickly. "It's just a matter of courtesy. I met her by accident. The—the person she generally has with her is not around to-night, and she doesn't like to walk alone in the streets so late."

"I see. Afraid to go home in the dark."

"She is a modest girl," explained Clement in a rather severe tone. "I never met her before to-day, and don't expect ever to see her again. I have been drawn into the thing in an unexpected and—and—a peculiar way."

"That's usually the case," observed Jack Lisle dryly.

Clement was annoyed. Lisle was a volatile sort of chap, and could not take any but a light view of such an adventure as had befallen his friend. There would be no use trying to explain. Besides, Clement hadn't time for that just then.

"I'll tell you all about it when I come back. I'll have to hurry away now."

"Yes, don't keep her waiting," grinned Lisle.

"Oh, rot!" snapped Clement.

"What time will you be back?"

"Hardly before half past eleven. I'd apologize for keeping you up, only I know you never go to bed till midnight."

"Later than that, as a rule. Don't worry about me, Ed. I'd hate you to cut the tender interview short on my account. I'll be waiting for you if it's two o'clock in the morning. The store will be closed, but you can touch the bell."

"Thanks. I sha'n't inconvenience you too much, shall I?"

"Get out or I'll chuck a stool at you!" shouted Lisle.

He pretended to pick up a stool at the soda-fountain counter, and Ed Clement made a hasty and laughing exit.

It was not far from eleven o'clock when he got back to the Arcadia. Above the hum of night life in Broadway, with its honking motors and clanging street-cars, he could hear a roar of bellowing approval, with a riot of hand-clapping from the top of the theater.

"Somebody on the roof has them going," he muttered. "I hope it isn't Filette Murray. She ought to be in her dressing-room by this time. I don't want to wait longer than I can help."

But it *was* Miss Murray who had drawn forth this stormy applause. The noise Clement heard was in acknowledgment of a hand-

ful of kisses blown to the audience by the gay *chanteuse* as she bowed herself into the wings for positively the last time after a dozen encores. She had been in unusually good form that night and her frenzied admirers simply would *not* let her go.

For an hour all but five minutes had La Belle Filette—as she was sometimes called—sung, danced, and ogled. While Clement stared disgustedly up at the roof-garden, Susan Dodds was only just beginning work with Miss Murray in her dressing-room.

Ed Clement strolled up and down in front of the theater impatiently. Filette Murray's yellow motor-car was around the corner, and Bertrand, the saturnine chauffeur, sat in his favorite attitude, snoozing behind the steering-wheel. Like most chauffeurs, he had an infinite capacity for waiting.

"I wish she'd hurry," grumbled Clement, as he stopped in his march to look idly into the lobby of the Arcadia. "Thunder and lightning!" he added gaspingly.

One of the elevators from the roof-garden had just come down. Among those who emerged was a young man in a suit of tweed "hand-me-downs" of a *fortissimo* pattern and a near-Panama hat. He had a blue satin necktie, and "cuffs" at the bottom of his "pants."

His face was flushed from recent laughter. Indeed, it still wore a retrospective grin.

As this gentleman came out of the elevator he exclaimed boisterously:

"Cracky! If there ain't Ed Clement! Howdy, Ed?"

He thrust out a red paw. Clement took it and tried to force a friendly smile.

"How do you do?"

"Say, don't you know me?" persisted the stranger. "I'm Cash Bailey, from Landscape. Haw, haw, haw! I ain't in your drug-store often, but my sisters often goes there. They like ice-cream sodas more than men do. But I know you, all right. What are you doing in New York?"

"I had to come down on business."

"That's so. You have to buy things for the store, don't you? Well, I don't have nothing like that to do when I come. I've been up in the roof-garden. I'd heard so much about this Filette Murray that I just nat'rally sneaked down to see her. An' say! She's all right. I just heard her sing 'Don't Squeeze Me, or I'll Cry.' I tell you, it's a lulu. I'm going to get that song and give it to Jessie—my sister. *You* know Jessie. She's some class on the sing herself, and she don't do a thing to the py-anner."

This sort of thing kept up minute after minute, until Edward Clement was nearly distracted.

Cash Bailey was regarded among his pool-room intimates in Landscape as "a swell talker." He could talk all day and all night. He did it, too, whenever he could get an audience. The fact that he had few ideas, and that what he had were exceedingly bald, was no bridle on his tongue.

He told Edward Clement all about Filette Murray's performance in detail, with numerous imitations of her work that were nothing at all like it. From one song to another he leaped. His method of vocalism was to strain the melody through his nose, with his mouth stretched in a vacuous grin, while he beat time with a long red forefinger.

Clement endeavored repeatedly to shut him off, but Mr. Bailey was not to be stopped easily when he had got fairly into his stride.

"Great Heavens! That young woman will be here soon," thought Clement. "And this blithering imbecile will see her speak to me. Then he'll go back to Landscape and talk, and Fanny will hear about it, and—"

"Good evening, Mr. Clement. Did you think I was never coming?"

Edward Clement groaned. The worst had happened. Susan Dodds had whisked around the corner from the stage entrance of the Arcadia, which communicated with the roof-garden stage by a private elevator, and was speaking to him.

Cash Bailey's goggle eyes opened wider than ever as the dashing Susan stepped up to Clement. Here was something even more interesting than Filette Murray's songs!

What was this handsome young woman to Ed Clement? Had he come to New York expressly to see her? Gosh! Who'd have thought it?"

"I shall have to say good night, Mr. Bailey," said Clement abruptly.

"Sure! Good night! I'll have to hustle to get that last train to Landscape. I'm going out on the 'Owl.' So-long!"

Cash Bailey walked swiftly away, but three times he turned to look at Ed Clement and Susan Dodds before he was lost in the surging after-theater throng that finally swept him out of sight.

If Susan Dodds expected Mr. Clement to occupy the time of walking to her boarding-house in West Thirty-Eighth Street in personal compliments, she was disappointed. His aim seemed to be to get her there as quickly as possible and leave her.

He was sorry he had not thought of the

"Owl" train himself. It might have saved his staying in New York all night. But it was too late now.

He told Susan Dodds that Mary Sullivan had sent word that she was much better, and hoped to see her soon. But he said never a word about the headache powders until Miss Dodds asked him whether Mamie had taken them.

"No. I'm going to mix some others that will be better for her," answered Clement. "Now that I have seen her I can prescribe for her understandingly, you know."

"It is good of you to do that," said Susan. "I am very fond of Mamie. I wish the poor girl could get something to do that wouldn't be so hard on her. That Velusky is a brute."

"I gathered that from what Miss Sullivan told me."

"If that brother Jerry of hers were any good, she'd have a different life. However, it's no use talking about it. We all have our own troubles. I dare say you have yours, although I hope they are not very serious."

"They are not, I'm happy to say," returned Clement, thinking of his lucky recovery of the headache powders.

"Well, here's my boarding-house. We don't have matinées on the roof, and I'm generally at home in the afternoon. Won't you drop in and see me some time?"

"With pleasure."

Ordinary politeness required Clement to say this. At least, he felt that it did. But even as he spoke he made an inward resolve not to have anything more to do with the Arcadia or any one connected with it, provided he was able to explain things satisfactorily to Fanny Halton.

He knew, as well as that there was an arc-light flooding West Thirty-Eighth Street with a white glow at that instant, that Cash Bailey would have a sensational story to tell in Landscape early the next morning.

He waited while Susan Dodds ascended the long flight of stone steps to the front door of the theatrical boarding-house which was her only home in New York. Then he waved a farewell and hurried away to Jack Lisle's drug-store.

It was not necessary for him to push the bell-button. Jack was standing at the door.

"Well, Ed, did you have a pleasant walk?" he asked cheerily.

Clement's only response was a noncommittal shake of the head. He was wishing Cash Bailey had not seen Susan Dodds speak to him. The more he thought of it the more he feared the consequences of Mr. Bailey's tongue. At last Fanny Halton would believe she really had cause to be jealous.

Jack Lisle saw that his friend was not in a humor for badinage. So he led the way in silence into the sitting-room behind the store, where he had already set forth a display of canned provisions, bread and butter, and glasses which suggested cold drinks, all of which appealed favorably to Clement. Jack kept "bachelor's hall," and his ice-box was always well furnished.

The two young men fell to, with very little conversation. Clement was trying to make up his mind whether or not he should tell Lisle of his encounter with Cash Bailey, and the trouble it was likely to stir up for him with his *fiancée*. He wanted advice—or, at least, encouragement.

And yet he hesitated. But only for a while. As they finished their meal he decided he would confide in his friend.

He judged it best to begin at his meeting with Susan Dodds in the drug-store in Landscape. While he was about it, he would make a clean breast of the whole affair.

So he told of his finding out what a terrible mistake he had made in putting up the headache powders. Then of how he had come to New York to try to get them back, and how at last he had found them in the possession of Mary Sullivan, with the seal unbroken.

"That was a lucky thing," interrupted Jack Lisle. "Your good angel must have been working overtime. Where are the powders now?"

"In my pocket. Here they are."

Clement took out the packet given to him by Mary Sullivan in the dark bedroom of the Hester Street tenement, and held it forth under the bright electric light.

Instantly a great horror overspread his face as he almost screamed:

"Jack! There's something wrong! *This is not my packet!*"

"What?"

"No! Look! It is labeled 'Seidlitz powder.'"

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT JERRY DID.

JACK LISLE took the packet and read the label thoughtfully.

"It says 'seidlitz powder,' sure enough. But is it? Labels sometimes lie."

"Not that one," rejoined Clement miser-

ably. "Don't you see the printed druggist's name is 'Schwartzwelder'? 'Halton's Pharmacy' is on the sticker I used. Besides, I wrote 'headache powder,' not 'seidlitz,' and I put my initials on, 'E. C.' There's no use talking about it, Jack. That girl gave me the wrong packet."

"Didn't you look at it when you got it?"

"No. The room was dark. The packet felt like my own, and I never thought of her having another."

"You never can tell, Ed."

"Oh, I know I was careless. I've been making blunders right along over this thing. I meant to look at it as soon as I got into the light. But it wasn't convenient, and I was so sure it was all right that I let it go."

"So it *will* be all right," said Lisle in a comforting tone. "You'll get your own powder if you go after it."

"I don't know about that."

"Why, certainly. It's as clear as mud. The girl made a mistake in the dark. But I'll bet your own powders are still in her bureau drawer."

"I wish I *knew* that. Arsenic isn't a thing to fool with."

"Of course it isn't. But all you can do now is to go to bed. Early in the morning jump a car down to Hester Street, give her back the seidlitz, and get your own. Why, it's the simplest proposition I ever saw."

Jack Lisle's cheerful manner infected Clement.

"I guess you're right about what I must do, Jack," he said. "But I doubt whether I can sleep a wink."

"Well, go to bed and try."

Ed Clement went to bed, and, without trying, dropped off and slept soundly until eight o'clock. He had a perfect digestion, and that outweighed the burden on his mind.

He got up in a hurry as soon as he awoke. He found that Jack Lisle had had his store open for an hour.

"This is an early neighborhood, Ed," explained Jack. "I've had half a dozen customers already."

"Well, I'm going to hustle right down to Hester Street."

"Not till after breakfast, if I know myself. You'll go around to my regular restaurant and take breakfast with me. My boy has just strolled in. I was waiting for him to come and mind the store."

Clement was inclined to go down to see Mamie Sullivan at once. But Lisle wouldn't hear of it, and it was nearly nine when he at last found himself on a down-town car.

The Sullivan domicile was locked up when he reached there. He rapped on the door. There was no response. Then a little girl came out of another apartment and informed him that Mrs. Sullivan and her daughter had gone out together a short time before.

"Mamie said she wasn't going to work today," volunteered the young lady.

"Where has she gone? Do you know?"

"I think she went to the theayter. Jerry was here last night. He was soused, and he started a 'rough-house.' He often does."

"What was the trouble?"

"He wanted some coin, and when Mrs. Sullivan and Mame wouldn't give him none he frisked the joint."

Clement understood this to mean that the estimable Jerry had robbed his mother's home.

"Then, did he go away?" he asked.

"Yes. But he come back after he'd loaded up with a lot more drinks, and he slept on their bed till morning. Then he beat it again, and soon after Mrs. Sullivan and Mame they went out."

"They've gone to the Arcadia Theater, have they?"

"Well, Mrs. Sullivan has, and Mame was with her."

"Thank you."

Clement gave the little girl a dime, and in another five minutes he was again on his way up-town.

At the Arcadia Theater he found only one person—a colored porter, who was deliberately polishing the brass railing in front of the box-office. The porter was very black, and his speech suggested that most of his life had been spent in the South.

"Mis' Sullivan?" he said, in response to Edward Clement's question. "Nossah! Mis' Sullivan ain' done come yit."

"What time will she be here?"

"Well, sah, Ah ain' gwine tuh stultify mahself by namin' 'zackly de minute dat lady will done 'rive. But Ah sh'd spekilate she'll sho'ly be heah at eleben—or mebbe twelve—or mebbe later dan dat. Mis' Sullivan am mighty onsartin. She sho'ly is."

Clement decided that the porter didn't know anything about it. So he left the colored philosopher to his polishing and went over to West Thirty-Eighth Street. It struck him that if Mrs. Sullivan and Mamie were in trouble over Jerry—as doubtless they were—they would go to Susan Dodds for sympathy and advice.

"Is Miss Dodds at home?"

"No, sir. Mrs. Sullivan, from the Ar-

cadia, came for her about an hour ago, and they all went away together."

It was the mistress of the boarding-house speaking. She was a stout, comfortable-looking personage, who had been a third-rate actress in her younger days.

"Was any one with Mrs. Sullivan?" inquired Clement.

"Yes, her daughter. Mamie used to be in 'business.' That's how I came to know her. She's a good—"

But Clement cut her off with a hasty word of thanks for her information, and hurried down the street. He wanted to get to Jack Lisle and take counsel with him. It began to look as if somebody might swallow those poisoned powders yet before he could get hold of them.

He found Jack busy behind his prescription-case, but not too occupied to listen to his friend's tale of disappointment and anxiety.

"Still, I don't see that you have much to worry about," said Jack, as Clement finished. "You've only to wait till Mrs. Sullivan turns up at the theater. Mamie will be with her, and you'll find that the powders are all right. Brace up, old man! You've let your nerves run away with you, that's all."

"But, don't you see, even if the powders are all right, the longer I stay down here in New York, the harder it will be to square myself with Fanny."

"Pshaw! How do you know you'll have to square yourself?"

"That fellow, Cash Bailey—"

"He may never say a word. And even if he does, he can't hurt you with Miss Halton. She's too sensible a girl. I met her once, you remember. I'd bet a seidlitz against one of your headache—'

"Don't, Jack! Don't talk about the cursed things."

"I was only going to say that Fanny Halton would listen to what you have to say before believing any yarn that chump Bailey might tell her."

"The worst of it is, he would be telling the truth. He would say he saw me keeping an appointment with this Susan Dodds, and that's just what I did."

"Well, if you did, it was innocent, wasn't it?"

"Of course it was. She helped me to trace those powders, and I could not refuse her request to escort her home. But that ended it. I shall never see her again."

It was at this instant that footsteps and a swish of skirts behind him made Clement turn around.

Susan Dodds, with Mrs. Sullivan and Mamie, had just entered the store.

Mr. Clement, I'm glad we've found you," broke out Susan Dodds, exuberantly. "We heard at the theater you were looking for Mrs. Sullivan, and I guessed you might come over to my boarding-house to see if I knew where she was. So we all went there. Mrs. Parr, the landlady, said you'd just left. We saw you hurrying along. So we followed you."

Clement turned anxiously to Mamie.

"Do you know what was in that paper you gave me last night?" he asked.

"Yes; I gave you the headache powders I got from Miss Dodds."

"No, you didn't."

He took the seidlitz powder from his pocket and showed it to her. One glance at the label was enough for her.

"Why, that's the seidlitz mother got for Jerry a week ago. He wouldn't take it, and I put it in my drawer. In the dark, I gave it to you, thinking it was the other. Oh, I'm so sorry."

"Where is the other powder?"

"Jerry has it."

"Jerry?"

"Yes. He was at the top of the stairs last night. He saw you talking to me in the bedroom, and—"

"Well?" urged Clement, as she paused in obvious embarrassment.

"He was drunk, and he hid till you'd gone. Then he came in and talked awful. He wanted money. Mother and me hadn't any to give him, and he—he—got excited, the way he always does. He threatened to lick us both if we didn't dig up. He said my friend ought to be good for a ten-spot."

"Meanin' yerself, Mr. Clement," put in Mrs. Sullivan. "The blayguard! An' Mamie as dacent a girl as ye'll find in the whole parish!"

"I am quite sure of that, Mrs. Sullivan," said Clement heartily.

"He got so mad that mother and me had to give him all we had," resumed Mamie. "It wasn't much. But he took it. About twelve o'clock he came back and went to sleep on our bed. Mother and me, we laid down on the floor."

"The brute!"

"Early this morning, while we were still asleep, he got up and went away. As soon as I woke I looked in the bureau-drawer. There ain't any lock on it, and I was suspicious of Jerry."

"Ye had good rayson," moaned Mrs. Sullivan.

"Yes. I found he'd took mother's wedding-ring and a breast-pin father gave me a little before he died. There was my silver bracelet, too."

"And the powders?"

"I guess so. I'd wrapped them up with the ring and pin and bracelet. Jerry had grabbed the paper just as it was, for it was gone. Of course, he must have got the powders with the other things."

"What do you think he did with the jewelry—pawned it?"

"No. Mother and me asked some neighbors whether they'd seen Jerry this morning. We found a man who seen him going into 'Kid' Dennis's saloon, in Third Avenue. Then we knew he'd put the things up for drinks. He's done that before."

"Did you go to see?"

"No. 'Kid' wouldn't tell us if we did. Jerry would be sure to tell him to say nothing to us. So we came up to ask Miss Dodds what we'd better do about it. We *must* get back mother's ring, even if not the others."

"Do you suppose this saloonkeeper has the powders, too?"

"He has if he'd give Jerry anything for 'em," replied Mrs. Sullivan, promptly.

Susan Dodds caught Clement's eye and beckoned him to one side, near the soda-fountain. Each took a stool.

"You see, Mr. Clement," whispered Susan Dodds, bending close to him, "that this Jerry—"

That was as far as she got. The door of the store opened, and in walked Miss Fanny Halton!

CHAPTER VII.

ON A HOT SCENT.

For a few moments nobody spoke. Edward Clement stared blankly at his *fiancée* in utter astonishment and dismay. Her expression was one of righteous scorn. At last, Clement, forcing a ghastly smile, blurted out:

"Why, Fanny, this *is* a pleasant surprise indeed."

"Is it?"

There was no more encouragement in her tone than in her face. In one swift glance at Susan Dodds she had recognized the young woman of the automobile, whose headache had been so sympathetically ministered to by Clement in the drug-store at Landscape.

"I hope your father isn't mad at my staying away all night," ventured Clement.

"I don't know. He asked me if I knew where you'd gone. I told him you said you had an appointment to dine with Mr. Lisle."

Here Jack Lisle broke in, with rather overdone effusiveness:

"Don't you remember me, Miss Halton? Ed introduced me to you when I called on him in Landscape, two months ago."

She offered him a well-gloved little hand with about as much warmth as she would show in tendering her fare to a street-car conductor. He took it and held it as if he didn't know how to let go.

"I remember you perfectly, Mr. Lisle," she said, and calmly pulled her hand away.

"This is Mrs. Sullivan, and Miss Sullivan," stammered Clement. "And Miss—er—Miss Dodds."

Fanny Halton vouchsafed a stately bow to each as they were mentioned. Mrs. Sullivan and Mamie bowed in return. As Susan Dodds bent her head, she read hostility in Fanny's eyes, and flashed back defiance.

"I don't think I'll stay any longer, Mr. Clement," said Susan. "We can talk over that matter another time."

Fanny Halton's lips tightened and her eyes narrowed. Susan Dodds knew the shot had struck home.

Miss Dodds was not in love with Edward Clement. But to make his sweetheart believe she had some secret with him was a bit of truly feminine sport that she could not miss.

Clement saw it all, and for an instant he could have given a headache powder to Susan Dodds without compunction. He turned to Fanny.

"What brought you to New York today?"

"I am shopping with mother. When you did not come home this morning, father asked me to come up to Mr. Lisle's, as I should be in New York, and make inquiries. I didn't want to drag mother along. So I left her in a store in Twenty-Third Street while I took a taxi up here."

"I missed the train last night," explained Clement. "But I shall be home this afternoon—probably. I dare say I shall see Mr. Halton before you get there."

"Then I'll bid you good morning," answered Fanny demurely, moving toward the door.

Clement ran to open it for her. As she passed out he whispered, pleadingly:

"Fanny, won't you—"

"Don't you ever dare to speak to me again."

Before he could recover himself she had entered the taxicab, unaided, with the single word "Back!" to the driver. As the cab spurted away, Clement turned at the sound of a footstep behind him, and looked into the pitying face of Mamie Sullivan.

"I hope it ain't my fault," she said anxiously.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that's your best girl just gone, I know. And I heard what she said. She's give you the shake, and maybe it's because she found me with you. She may have got on to you coming to see me last night."

"No, no; that isn't it," Clement assured her with a smile. "You are quite mistaken. For one thing, how could she know I was at your house?"

Mamie shook her head wisely.

"I don't see how she could, for a fact. But she might. There's always somebody to give a person away. The way she looked at me just now was something fierce."

"That must have been your imagination."

"No. Mother saw it, as well as me. I wish I could get your girl by herself and tell her she's wrong."

Without replying, Edward Clement motioned to Mamie to reenter the store, and followed her in. Then, as if there had been no interruption, he turned to Mrs. Sullivan and said coolly:

"Somebody must go to this 'Kid' Dennis and get back the things your son Jerry gave him for drinks."

"That's what Miss Dodds thinks ought to be done," answered Mrs. Sullivan.

"Well, I'll do it," announced Clement.

"Ye will? Faith, ye're a foine man, an'—"

"I think you're the person to do it," was Miss Dodds's quick acquiescence. She added, in a low tone: "You'll stand a chance of getting back those powders. They seem to be very important to you."

Clement started. There was something peculiar in her tone. He felt that she had guessed his secret.

Well, it didn't matter much. The whole world would probably know before long—while he sat in a prison cell.

"They *are* important," he answered shortly.

"But not enough to make Mr. Clement go down to that saloon if he didn't want to recover that wedding-ring and bracelet," put in Lisle, loyal to his friend.

"I should never have asked you to do it, Mr. Clement," declared Mamie earnestly. "But, if you will, I'd better go and show you just where the place is."

"Very well."

"Shall I go with you, Ed?" asked Jack Lisle.

"No. Why?"

"You might need help to induce 'Kid' Dennis to give up."

"Oh, I think I can persuade him," answered Clement. "I'll try by myself first, anyhow. Then, if he's obstinate, I may be glad of your assistance."

"It's past eleven. I ought to be gittin' 'round to the theater," observed Mrs. Sullivan. "I'm late now."

"That's right, mother," assented Mamie. "I'll come back to you there when Mr. Clement has seen Dennis. Everything will be all right now, I know."

Susan Dodds remembered that she wanted to look over some articles of Filette Murray's wardrobe in the dressing-room. So she went to the Arcadia with Mrs. Sullivan, while Edward Clement and Mamie took a cross-town car. From that one they would transfer to another which would put them down almost in front of "Kid" Dennis's saloon.

"Kid" had been a professional pugilist in his day—a "welter-weight." In the course of his ring career he'd had most of his ribs "bent," as he expressed it; his nose was "dished," he sported a "cauliflower ear," and the knuckles of both hands were lumpy masses of splintered bone.

As compensation for all these physical inconveniences, he had made enough money to buy out a saloon. Connected with it was a gymnasium, in which "Kid" taught boxing to those who chose to pay for it. He had several wealthy men among his patrons.

Moreover his place was the resort of professional athletes, as well as amateurs, to say nothing of the queer company of hangers-on which is always to be found at a sporting saloon.

Mamie pointed out the place to Clement and walked away to wait for him.

"I'll just meander up and down these two blocks," she told him. "I hope you won't have any trouble. 'Kid' will be sure to put up a bluff that he ain't got those things. But if you 'call' him hard enough, you'll get 'em."

Clement smiled at this suggestion. Privately he acknowledged it was sound advice.

"Kid" Dennis was behind the bar when Clement entered. To the young man's request for a glass of vichy, he responded with

a suspicious grunt as he produced a siphon. Not many of his customers ever called for "soft" drinks.

"Do you know Jerry Sullivan?" asked Clement suddenly.

"I've heard of him," was the cautious answer. "Why?"

"Does he owe you anything?"

"He sure does. For eight drinks—eighty cents. Do you want to pay it?"

"Kid" Dennis showed a row of jagged teeth in a grin. He felt that he had said a good thing. Among his intimates he had some reputation as a humorist.

"I'll pay the eighty cents if you'll give me the things he left as security," offered Clement.

"Who says he left any security?" snarled "Kid." "Did *he?*"

"Yes."

"He's a liar!"

It was clear that Dennis did not intend to give up the ring, pin, and bracelet, if he could help it. But Edward Clement had had dealings with such characters before. Therefore he took a short cut to end the controversy.

"You say Jerry owed you eighty cents?" he asked, in a businesslike tone.

"I said a dollar-eighty."

"I thought it was eighty cents—for eight drinks?"

"Kid" Dennis rested his two gnarled fists on the bar and looked at Clement as he said, impressively

"Now, look here, friend, I don't know you. You may be all right. Also, you may be just the opposite. Anyhow, I don't allow no one to come into my place and tell me how to run my business. This here Jerry owes me one dollar and eighty cents. If you want to pay it, all right. If you don't, why, get out!"

"What about the ring, pin, and bracelet?"

"I'll give them to you if you pay the money."

"Kid" seemed to have forgotten that he had just denied any knowledge of them. Clement took a few dollar bills from his waistcoat-pocket. He had not very much money with him.

"Give me the things," he said.

"There's twenty cents for interest. That'll make two dollars," growled Dennis.

"Very well," assented Clement. "Bring out the property."

"Kid" Dennis produced a piece of dirty newspaper from beneath the bar and spread it open. It contained a wedding-ring, a cheap, showy breastpin, and a silver bracelet.

Clement gave two dollars to the rapacious "Kid," and gathered up the paper with its contents. Then he said casually—for it would never do to let "Kid" Dennis see that he was anxious:

"There was a headache powder in this paper. Have you got it?"

The saloon-keeper was taken completely off his guard, and replied, without equivocation or evasion this time:

"I gave that powder to Al Vanderden this morning. He'd been out late last night and had a big head on him. You know Al, I s'pose."

"The millionaire artist?"

"And sport. Yes, that's him."

"Did—did—he take the powder here?"

"No. Put it in his pocket and said he'd down it when he got to his studio, up there on Seventh Avenue, near Fifty-Seventh Street."

"I know where it is," said Clement. "Good morning."

He was out of the saloon and walking rapidly toward Mamie Sullivan while "Kid" Dennis was still wondering what had made his visitor depart so abruptly.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISSED BY A MINUTE.

It was worth something to Edward Clement to see the joy in Mamie Sullivan's eyes, as he gave her the fragment of dirty newspaper containing her mother's wedding-ring and her own paltry bits of jewelry.

"I was afraid you wouldn't be able to get it," she said between laughing and crying. "I know 'Kid' Dennis wouldn't have let me have it. He's down on me and mother because we want to keep Jerry away from him. Jerry spends most all he makes with Dennis. Did you get that powder?"

"No."

"Why, that's funny. It was in the paper, for Jerry didn't leave it behind him in the drawer."

"Yes, and he gave it to Dennis. But Dennis says he passed it on to some one else."

"Who?"

"A man I know, named Albert Vanderden. I'm going after it. You'd better be getting up to the Arcadia to tell your mother you have her ring, don't you think?"

"I guess that's so. Mother will be glad to get it back, I can tell you. But I wish you had that powder. You seem to want it so much."

"I do want it, and I'll get it," replied Clement doggedly. "Here's a car coming. Let me help you aboard."

He put Mamie on the car, which he knew would take her up to the theater. He was glad to get rid of her. He wanted to be alone to think out his next move in the hunt for that little packet of deadly poison.

As Clement had said, he knew Albert Vanderden, but only as most other people in New York knew him—by reputation. He had figured in the papers again and again.

A member of a wealthy and exclusive old family, Albert—generally spoken of as "Al" —was the wild one. It was his decided gift for painting that first led him away. He had an apartment of his own in the Seventh Avenue artist colony, and there he spent much of his time. He abhorred Society with a capital "S."

Among his accomplishments, aside from those with pencil and brush, was that of handling his fists with scientific precision. He also "had the punch." Good judges called him the cleverest amateur boxer in New York.

Mr. Vanderden's taste for this sort of exercise made him a frequent visitor at "Kid" Dennis's place in Third Avenue. Indeed, he often put on the gloves with that distinguished welter-weight himself. What was more, he could always hold his own with the "Kid."

Clement was thinking about the millionaire artist's pugilistic prowess as he was swept up-town on a Subway train.

"If he ever swallows one of those powders, he'll find it more serious than the hardest blow he ever got with a boxing-glove," he muttered.

Edward Clement had lived long in New York before going to Landscape, and he knew well the studio building where Albert Vanderden had a suite of apartments. It was a large, solemn red-brick edifice, with many separate sets of rooms, each guarded by a funereal oaken outer door.

"Number twenty-seven," read Clement on the directory-board in the lobby. "That must be on the second floor."

Without troubling the elevator, he ran up the wide stairway. Following the numbers along the corridor, he found "twenty-seven" at the very end, in a gloomy corner. He pushed the electric bell-button.

The person who answered his ring was a grave individual in black, set off by a formal white necktie. His ruddy countenance had that look of having just been shaved with a dull razor, which is peculiar to the English man-servant.

He replied to Clement's queries with noncommittal civility. Clement might be a particular friend of his employer's, or he might be nobody of consequence. In either case, there could be no fault found with the demeanor of the valet.

"No, sir, Mr. Vanderden is not hin."

"When do you expect him?"

"I cawn't say, sir. 'E felt poorly this morning, and 'e took a cab for a little hair."

"Where does he generally go to take this—ah—'hair'?" asked Clement, rather sharply.

"Hordinarily in Central Park, sir. But 'e mentioned before 'e went hout that 'e was going to a chemist-shop to get something for 'is 'ead."

"His head?"

"Yes, sir. 'E suffers very much from 'eadaches."

"Do you know what druggist — I mean, chemist-shop—he patronizes for things of that kind?"

"Well, sir, 'e 'as a preference for a place kept by a Mr. Lisle—"

"What?" interrupted Clement excitedly.

"Lisle," repeated the man. "That's the nyme. It's hover by Heighth Avenue."

"Aren't there any good drug-stores nearer than that?"

"Yes. But Mr. Vanderden likes that one. I believe 'im and Mr. Lisle used to belong to the syme hathletic club."

"You think he went to Lisle's drug-store for something to cure his headache before going to the park?"

"I think it 'ighly probable, sir."

"If he is subject to headaches, I should think he would have some medicine always on hand at home," suggested Clement.

"'E ain't what you'd call *subject* to 'em, sir. Honly when 'e's been kept hout late 'e 'as 'em. But it 'appens that 'e *did* 'ave some powders in 'is pocket this morning."

"Powders?"

"Yes, sir. 'E didn't take 'em, 'owever. 'E said 'e'd go and see 'is friend Lisle instead."

"You think he went directly there when he went out?" asked Clement as he turned to go.

"Yes, sir. I 'eard 'im tell the cab-driver. What nyme shall I tell Mr. Vanderden if 'e comes back?"

But Clement did not reply. He was already half-way down the stairs.

A rapid walk of ten minutes brought him to Jack Lisle's establishment.

"Jack," he cried as he burst in, "I heard Al Vanderden was here. I want him. Did he come?"

"Yes. He was here. He went away about a minute ago in a taxicab," answered Lisle.

CHAPTER IX.

A DEMAND ON DIPLOMACY.

"I WISH you'd held him, Jack," said Clement in a bitterly disappointed tone. "He's got those powders of mine."

"Jupiter! No?"

"He has—right with him, in his pocket."

"Well, who'd have thought that? I know Al very well. He's a democratic chap and a good fellow, in spite of the fact that he's rotten with money. Why, I had no idea *he* was mixed up in this affair of yours."

"Neither had I till this morning. But he is, and I've got to find him. What did he do in here? Have some medicine?"

"Yes. He had a splitting headache. Said he'd been at a boxing blow-out at 'Kid' Dennis's place last night. So I gave him a bromide. Then he went away for a ride in the park."

"In a taxi."

"Yes. He said he might drop in again before he went home. But he isn't quite sober—got a 'hang-over' from last night—and I don't take much stock in anything he says. He—"

The telephone-bell rang, and Jack Lisle broke off to answer it:

"Hallo!"

He listened for a moment. Then he clapped his hand over the receiver and said to Clement in a surprised tone:

"It's Miss Halton!"

"What? Fanny? What does she want?"

"You," replied Lisle.

"Did she say so?"

"She asked if you'd gone back to Landscape. That means she wants you, of course. Now's your time to square yourself."

"Did you tell her I was here?"

"No. I asked her to wait a minute."

Edward Clement took the receiver from his friend and feverishly spoke into the telephone:

"Hallo, Fanny! This is Ed. I haven't gone home yet, but I soon will. I wish I could go with you. What train are you going on?"

"Gee! Did you give her all that without waiting for an answer?" observed Jack Lisle in a low voice.

"Shut up!" Then, quickly, into the transmitter: "No, Fanny! I didn't say that to you, of course. Lisle is here, bothering me. I wish I could see you before you go back to Landscape. I am in great trouble."

There was a pause, during which Edward Clement's face showed many expressions and changes of color, as he listened to what Miss Halton was saying at the other end of the wire. She seemed to have a great deal to say, too, for it was at least two minutes before he got a chance to reply. Then he said earnestly:

"I could explain *everything* in five minutes. But I can't do it over the phone. I knew Cash Bailey would tell you a story that would put me in a false light. But I had a very good reason for coming to New York and staying so long."

There was a pause as Fanny replied, and Clement went on:

"Yes, indeed, I *am* in trouble—*dreadful* trouble."

"That's the stuff," murmured Lisle. "Get her sympathy, and you're all right."

Clement shook his fist at the grinning Jack. Then he smiled, as he cried joyfully, in reply to Fanny Halton:

"Do you really mean that you'll let your mother go home by herself and you'll come up here? And your mother is willing to do it? That's fine! Be sure and tell her how grateful I am, won't you? She doesn't know how much it means to me."

There was another pause as he listened to something more Fanny said. When he did speak it was to say eagerly:

"Very well, I'll be on the lookout for you, dear. It won't take the taxi long to run up here. Good-by! Oh, I can hardly realize—"

But his ear told him she had hung up the receiver, and he did the same, without finishing the sentence.

"So she's coming here to see you, is she?" said Jack Lisle. "Say, Ed, that girl's the real goods. I congratulate you, old boy."

"That's what she is. I'm going to tell her all about those powders. I ought to have done it at first. She's as smart as chain-lightning, and I'll bet she'd have found some way to get them back long before this."

"That's very likely. I'm a great believer in woman's intuition myself," declared Lisle, with an air of saying an entirely original thing. "Still, I don't think you need much help now. All you have to do, you know, is to ask Al Vanderden for the powders the first time you see him."

"I sha'n't feel safe until I actually have them. Then I shall *know* they can't do any harm."

"Well, I don't blame you for having that feeling," said Lisle, patting his shoulder. "I'd be the same way, I know."

"There's a taxi stopping," interrupted Clement. "Fanny's here already. I knew it wouldn't take her long. But I didn't expect her quite so soon."

He had the door open and was on the sidewalk in a jiffy. But the taxicab's passenger was not Fanny Halton. It was a well-built man of about twenty-eight—his bleary eyes and rolling gait advertising the "hang-over" to which Jack Lisle had referred. He now see-sawed over the pavement to the door of the store.

"Back again, Al?" called out Lisle from the door.

"Sure I'm back, Jack. *(Hic!)* The bally park doesn't do me any good. My head's whizzing like a *(Hic!)* motor engine, and—I—I—beg your pardon."

He had lurched against Clement, and he stopped to apologize with drunken impressiveness.

"Don't mention it, Mr. Vanderden."

Al Vanderden slowly raised his eyes to Clement's face. Then he extended a shaky, clammy hand.

"You know me, eh? I don't think I *(Hic!)* recall you. But it's all ri'. Ev'rybody knows me. I'm as pop'lar as *(Hic!)* the town pump. Eh, Jack *(Hic!)*, old top?"

"This is Mr. Clement—Mr. Vanderden," said Lisle.

Vanderden waggled Clement's hand feebly, and the three entered the store. Vanderden seated himself on a stool, his feet outstretched.

"You know," he hiccuped, "I was at 'Kid' Dennis's last night. The 'Kid' had a new scrapper there—*(Hic!)*—a heavyweight. I put on the gloves with him and sent one over that *(Hic!)* knocked him out. Then the drinks were on me. *(Hic!)* They're always on me at Dennis's. This head to-day is the result."

He was fumbling in his pockets while speaking. Suddenly he pulled out something that made Edward Clement dart forward with a stifled cry.

"What's that, Mr. Vanderden?"

Al Vanderden looked at him with much dignity for a few seconds ere he replied:

"Nothing particular *(Hic!)*, Jack; will you 'blige me with a little plain soda out of the *(Hic!)* fountain?"

Lisle went behind the marble-top counter and half filled a glass with soda-water. Vanderden drew the glass toward him. Then he began, very deliberately, to tear open a small paper packet. It was the "something" he had taken from his waistcoat pocket.

"Mr. Vanderden!" shouted Clement, as he tried to snatch the packet away. "Don't take that. *It's poison!*"

Jack Lisle turned pale.

The half-drunken millionaire continued to tear away the paper covering of his packet, at the same time grinning boozily at Clement, who was pale and trembling.

It was here that Jack Lisle realized the necessity of diplomacy in dealing with such a marked case of alcoholic obstinacy.

"Look here, Al," he said, insinuatingly. "Let me fix up something for you. Don't take that powder. It would make your headache worse."

"How do you know?" demanded Vanderden, with a cunning leer. "You haven't examined these powders. *(Hic!)* And, what's more, you're not going to. Here goes!"

He threw the last of the paper wrapper to the floor, and opened one of the inner papers, in which was a gray powder.

"Don't! You crazy idiot!" screamed Clement.

He flung himself on Vanderden and grasped his wrist, to prevent his putting the powder to his mouth. But the millionaire athlete, drunk as he was, still possessed tremendous power in his arms.

With a contemptuous laugh at the efforts of Clement, he tore himself loose. The next instant the gray powder lay on his tongue, as he reached for the half-glass of soda-water to wash it down!

CHAPTER X.

THE CAGING OF THE IMP.

"DON'T let him have that soda, Jack!"

Clement and Vanderden seized the glass together. The latter put forth all his strength to get it to his mouth, while Clement struggled as hard to keep it away.

"Let go!" panted Clement.

"Let go yourself. *(Hic!)* Or I'll break your neck."

In sheer desperation, Clement caught the other by the throat. Smash went the glass upon the tiled floor, as, with his disengaged hand, he brushed some of the powder from Vanderden's tongue.

Not all of it, however. The millionaire,

seemingly resolved in his drunken frenzy, to swallow the deadly stuff, closed his mouth. Then, pushing Clement away and holding him at arm's length, *he emptied the second powder upon his tongue and gulped it down.*

"Quick, Jack!" shrieked Clement. "Get something! We *may* save him! There's milk and raw eggs back there. They'll do."

Jack Lisle passed over a bottle of milk from behind the counter, while Clement snatched an egg from a large bowl and broke it into a tumbler. Fortunately, those antidotes for arsenical poisoning were handy, being used in the composition of certain drinks sold at most soda-fountains.

But the getting of the remedies ready was one thing; making the patient take them was another. He snorted in disdain as he saw the two young men bustling about the counter. Then he staggered to the rear of the store.

A comfortable armchair in which customers waiting for prescriptions were accustomed to seat themselves appealed to Vanderden. He dropped into it. Immediately he appeared to collapse. His head hung forward and his eyes closed. His feet were extended and his arms dangled limply at his sides.

"Jack!" whispered Clement, in a low, strained voice.

"Well?"

"You saw that I did all I could to prevent his taking the powder, didn't you?"

Clement was trying to make Vanderden open his mouth, so that some milk could be got in. But the teeth were so tightly clenched that not a drop had been forced through so far.

"Keep at it, Ed! Of course you tried to prevent it. I can swear to that, if it should be necessary."

"They can't lay the blame on me, can they? It wasn't my fault, was it?"

"No, old chap. But get that milk down him. If that doesn't do, I'll get some sweet oil, and a stomach-pump! We'll bring him around. He didn't take very much of the stuff, you know."

"Enough to kill him if it gets thoroughly into his system. But surely this quick treatment ought to save him. The drunken fool! If he'd been in his senses it never would have happened."

Again he fought to force the edge of the tumbler between the locked teeth. They would not yield a hair's breadth. Vanderden was breathing heavily. He seemed to be entirely unconscious.

"We'll have to pry open his teeth," said Jack. "We must get something down his throat. Hallo! His mouth is opening."

Indeed, the lower jaw of the crumpled-up man in the chair had fallen, as his head rolled to one side.

"Jack!" whispered Clement, in an agony of terror. "He's dying!"

"No, he isn't," rejoined Jack Lisle sharply. "*You* know better than that. Don't you see he's breathing? It's a little stertorious, but that's from the way he's doubled up in the chair. Help me lift him."

They raised their patient so that his head lay naturally against the high cushioned back. Clement looked anxiously into his face. The bloodshot eyes opened, but closed again.

"I'll make him take some of this milk now," muttered Clement. "He's *got* to take it."

He poured a little milk into Vanderden's mouth. He dared not give too much. Unless the man were able to control the action of his epiglottis, he might choke.

"It doesn't go down his throat, you see," said Jack Lisle.

There was a catch in his voice as he said this. It could not be doubted that Al Vanderden was in mortal peril.

Lisle wiped the dribbling lips with his handkerchief. Clement gave the patient a shake, without any result.

"Can we use the stomach-pump, Jack?"

"I'll see. It's in the cellar."

He ran hurriedly behind the prescription case, opened a trap-door in the floor, and went down a steep ladder to the basement.

Edward Clement continued to shake the limp form in the chair, trying to bring it back to life. He was so absorbed in his efforts that he did not look around when he heard some one enter from the street.

"A customer, I suppose," he thought. "It's a wonder there's been nobody in before this." Then he said, aloud, still without turning—his back was toward the door: "Mr. Lisle will be here directly."

"I don't want Mr. Lisle."

Clement started at the voice and swung around.

"Fanny!"

He ran to her and took her hand. She let him hold it long enough to convince him he was forgiven if he could make a staisfactory explanation. Then she looked at Al Vanderden's mottled face, as he lay back in the big chair.

"What's the matter with him?" she asked, pityingly.

"He accidentally swallowed some poison. Jack and I are trying to revive him."

"Oh, how dreadful. How did he come to take it?"

"It was in some headache powders. And that's my trouble I mentioned over the phone. *I made up the powders.*"

"You?"

"Yes, in our store in Landscape. They were brought to New York, and fell into his hands. It was that awful blunder of mine that kept me in New York, and not what Cash Bailey has led you to believe."

"Why didn't you tell me about these powders before you left Landscape? It would have been much better."

"I was afraid to tell anybody. Besides, I hoped to get hold of them before they could do any harm."

"But how did this person get them? He didn't buy them from you in Landscape, I know."

"It's a long story. I shall have to tell you later. They passed through the hands of three or four people before he got them. But I managed to trace them to him."

"Look! He's getting up!" interrupted Fanny, retreating toward the door.

Sure enough, Al Vanderden was on his feet, glaring at Clement with drunken ferocity and shaking his fist.

"What's all this (*Hic!*) about?" he howled. "Are you tryin' to make a (*Hic!*) fool of me? Why don't you let me sleep?"

He flung himself on Clement and the two went down together. Fanny screamed. Lisle came running up the ladder, a stomach-pump in his hand. As the two men writhed on the floor, Vanderden saw the stomach-pump, and he bellowed:

"Put that (*Hic!*) gun down! Give me some kind of show, won't you?"

The powerful frame of the gigantic Vanderden, with his skill in wrestling, might have prevailed if it had not been weakened by alcohol, to say nothing of the powders. As it was, Clement managed to roll him over on his back and plant a knee upon his chest, while he held down the clawing hands.

"Hold him, Ed!" shouted Lisle.

He went to his chum's aid, and the two were able to keep the struggling madman still.

"I never knew arsenic to work this way before," panted Clement. "He's absolutely out of his mind. What shall we do?"

"Has he taken any milk?"

"No. I couldn't get a drop down him."

"Well, we'll use the pump."

Lisle was in the act of pushing the nozzle of the stomach-pump between Vanderden's lips and slamming it against that gentleman's teeth, when there was a disturbance entirely unconnected with his own operations.

Some one had pushed the door open violently and bounced into the store. It was Mamie Sullivan.

"Mr. Clement! Mr. Clement! Oh, Mr. Clement! I've got it!" she cried exultantly.

"What?" snapped Clement. He wished Miss Sullivan hadn't chosen just that awkward moment to come in.

"The thing you want so bad," she returned. "Look!"

Mamie held up a small paper packet. Clement leaped to his feet and snatched it from her. One quick look at the label, and then, with a great sob of joy, there burst from him:

"*It's my headache powders, and the seal has never been broken!*"

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE THE KINK WAS.

"It was all dead easy," said Mamie, replying to Clement's expression of joyful bewilderment, as he turned the packet over and over in his hand. "I'll tell you how it was. When Jerry sneaked mother's wedding-ring and them other things from my bureau drawer, he done it in the dark. He must have dropped the paper of powders without knowing it. I found it on the floor, just under the bureau, when I went to put away the ring and pin and bracelet you got for me from 'Kid' Dennis."

"But—Jerry gave some headache powders to Dennis. The 'Kid' told me so himself," interrupted Clement.

"So he did. But they wasn't your'n. Jerry had a bad head on him. So he went to Schwartzwelder's drug-store, where they know us, and got Schwartz to give him a dime's worth of powders which he was to charge to mother. When Jerry got to Dennis's, he thought he wanted an extra drink more than medicine, and the 'Kid' got the powders."

"I see. Then, these powders—"

Clement stooped suddenly and picked up the fragments of paper that had wrapped the powders taken by Vanderden and put the scraps together on the counter. They showed the printed name of "Schwartzwelder, Bowery."

"Then, this fellow didn't take my powders,

after all," he said. "What's the matter with him, anyhow?"

Al Vanderden was now snoring peacefully on the floor.

"Whisky," answered Jack Lisle sententiously.

And so it turned out. It was that "hang-over," plus a few more drinks taken on the way to and from the park, which had reduced Mr. Vanderden almost to a state of coma, and caused the two young men to believe he was poisoned.

"There is one thing," said Clement earnestly. "This experience will make me more careful than ever in handling dangerous drugs. How about you, Jack?"

"I'm always careful with them, especially with arsenic. That stuff is a raging devil if you let it get away from you."

"A devil in steel gray," smiled Edward Clement.

Fanny Halton forgave Clement. Girls always do—especially when their sweethearts haven't done anything.

"But what about that note I saw you hiding in your pocket, just before you left the store to go to New York?" she asked suddenly, when Clement thought everything had been settled.

"It was only the number of that motor-car. See!"

He showed it to her, and she seemed satisfied, until she thought of something else—this wise daughter of Eve.

"And you're sure you won't see that Susan Dodds again?"

"Quite sure."

"But suppose she comes to Landscape after you?"

"I'll hide in the cellar and let you talk to her," replied Clement promptly, only too glad to reassure his sweetheart.

Then Fanny Halton *was* satisfied—or seemed to be.

THE END.

A Jersey Knight Errant.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

The Applause that Came Not After a Clever Ruse in Connection with the Chase After a Stray Peacock.

"WILL you go on a knight-errant quest for me?" asked the one girl.

drew myself up and tried to look as much as possible like a paladin of old. (This is no light task when one weighs two hundred pounds, has scarlet hair, and is only five feet three. Yet I made shift to appear as knightly as might be.)

"Command me, lady fair," I entreated. "Shall I singe the beardless King of Spain's beard? Or hold Brooklyn Bridge in right heroic fashion against all Long Island? Or do you want me to be utterly daredevilish and tell some girl her hat is unbecoming?"

"Don't be absurd!" exhorted the one girl. "I said a 'quest'; not 'suicide.' Will you do something for me?"

"*Something?* Anything! Speak on! Your word is law."

The one girl let her big eyes rove from my rotund figure, over the velvety stretch of lawn and at the fire-blue lake beyond.

"It is *very* beautiful," she murmured.

"If my quest leads me to search for a lovelier," I returned, gazing solemnly at her, "I decline it as hopeless. There's not another face—"

"I was speaking of the landscape," she reproved. "It is *so* lovely! And the one thing needed to make it perfect was—"

"I came by the first train after I got your mother's invitation," I pleaded.

"Was a peacock," she ended.

Vanity slumped six points. I repeated dully.

"A peacock?"

"Yes," she went on. "In all the pictures of English country-seats there is always a magnificent peacock in the middle distance. I've wanted one for so long. Think how he would add to the picturesqueness of—"

"Say," I broke in, "I don't know whether they carry a line of peacocks down at the village general store, or whether I'll have to chase to the city for one. But if *that's* my 'quest,' I'll engage to have a husky specimen of the bird of vanity here inside of three days. When is the next train for town?"

"You're an *awfully* good fellow, Bobbie," said the one girl. "I honestly believe you'd

give up your week-end here and go back to the city this broiling Saturday afternoon to find one for me. I—"

"Of course I would. And I *will*. Isn't that the quest?"

"Not entirely. Listen: Ever since father bought this place I've teased him to get me a peacock. And last week he consented. The bird came yesterday by express."

"Oh!" I growled in dire disappointment.

"He is gorgeous!" she declared in ecstasy. "A mass of blue-and-gold gorgeousness. I've named him Rhadamés. After the hero of 'Aïda,' you know. Father wanted to call him Simon Peter, to take down his vanity. We had quite a family quarrel over it. We compromised at last on—Rhadamés."

I had an experience with such "compromises" on the part of the one girl. And I nodded sympathetic assent.

"He came yesterday," she continued. "The coachman locked him in the disused chicken-house until the bird could get used to the place and wouldn't run away. Just before you came, half an hour ago, I went to the chicken-house to look at him. A panel of the rickety paling was gone. And so was Rhadamés."

"Flew the coop?"

"Exactly. I've looked all over the grounds for him, but I can't find him anywhere."

"And you want me to scour the neighborhood and bring him back to you?" I hazarded.

"Oh, if only you *would!*" she cried. "I know it's horrid of me to send you out in the heat when you're all tired from your train journey; but the coachman's driven to the village, and father isn't back from town yet. And Rhadamés is so beautiful and—and valuable—I'm afraid some one will steal him. For instance, there's old Homer Griswold, the man with the farm just over the hill. He grabs everything that strays onto his land and—"

"Say no more," I declaimed, jamming on my straw hat and striding off the veranda into the sunshine. "Your knight errant herewith departs on his quest. Prythee, lady fair, hie thee to the window of thy bower on the castle battlements, and there make ready to weave a rosy wreath to reward me on my triumphant return. Fare thee well! What ho, minions! My snow-white palfrey and my Sunday armor!"

II.

I DEFY the most ardent nature-lover to cull one atom of joy from tramping dusty roads and sneaking through barbed-wire fences to peer into equally dusty and more breathless bits of woodland, in search of a wandering peacock, the while the midsummer sun is rolling up a thermometric record of ninety in the shade.

That is what I did for the two solid, torrid hours. I did not enjoy it. Far fainer would I have set ashen lance in rest and braved mere death in the lists against some doughty knight.

I have seldom seen, or even imagined, so few peacocks in so large a space of territory. Not a sight nor sound of any such elusive fowl did I secure.

Once I heard something rustling through a copse. I chased it for a full half mile of tangled undergrowth; falling over logs, tripped by briers, rent by brambles—only to find I had been pursuing a mongrel dog.

Again, I ran after a large, half-seen fowl, across a field of waist-high waving wheat—and discovered my quarry was a stray rooster.

The sun was nearing the horizon. Dusty, parched of throat, perspiring of face, my collar wilted, my clothes torn, I halted in my quest. Pompford had always seemed to me one of New Jersey's fairest spots. Now I *loathed* it.

Even the thought of the one girl could spur me to no further futile efforts. I turned miserably toward her home—a failure!

A quarter mile or so from my destination I passed a ramshackle farmstead. It was the abode of one Homer Griswold, the local "meanest man in this 'ere place." There is one in every rural community, you know.

And as I plodded by the unpainted house and toward the rickety cluster of barns, ricks, etc., I recalled what the one girl had said about the worthy Griswold:

"*He grabs everything that strays onto his land.*"

What more possible than that he might have annexed the erring Simon Peter Rhadamés? As the thought struck me, a loud, raucous screech shattered the country stillness.

It was like the blare of a cracked army-trumpet. And it came from somewhere in that bunch of unpainted farm buildings.

Now, I know little enough about peacocks. But nobody who has ever heard one of them screech needs to be taught again the nature of the cry.

My quest was to be rewarded. My Sherlockian instincts were correct. Yonder, in the barn or farmyard in front of us, the stolen Rhadamés was incarcerated.

At a bound I had cleared the crazy fence and the intervening space of grass, and was plunging through the half open door of the barn.

On the instant the screech was repeated, just ahead of me. Through the barn I dashed, and out into the farmyard behind it.

There, preening his gaudy plumage on a fence, looking down with aristocratic scorn at the humbler fowls below—there stood the most magnificent peacock my eyes had ever beheld.

His neck and chest shone with burnished blue-green. The crest on his absurdly small head gleamed like a crown. His wonderful tail was spread like a Chinese emperor's fan, all aglow with a thousand shimmering hues.

I crossed the barn-yard in two jumps, scattering an indignant colony of chickens to right and left. With outstretched arms I hurled myself at the peacock.

In stately dignity he eluded me and hopped to the top of a corn-crib. I stood below, and called coaxingly:

"Rhadamés! Here, Rhadamés, Rhadamés, *Rhadamés!* Come down before I insult you by calling you 'Simon Peter'!"

He replied with a trumpet note. I climbed cautiously up the side of the rickety crib. As I reached out a tentative hand, the bird flapped his clipped wings and flew.

Quick as he was, I was quicker. I grabbed for him as he rose in the air.

My hand closed about a mass of feathers. The bird was caught; or, rather, part of him was caught. For, with a truly demoniac yell he fluttered to the roof of the barn, leaving in my clutch a great handful of gorgeous yard-long tail-feathers.

Tailless, yet free, he reached the barn roof-tree. Aghast, I sat on the corn-crib, gazing at the mass of marvelous feathers I held.

"I'm afraid I haven't caught quite enough of him," I sighed.

And, carefully pocketing the tail-feathers, I began to climb laboriously from the corn-crib's summit, up the slippery, sagging roof of the barn.

From the roof-tree Simon Peter Rhadamés watched my approach, with his head on one side, his golden eyes glaring down at my sprawling, wriggling two hundred pounds of abbreviated bulk.

He had lost much of his grandeur, and the absence of three feet of tail gave him a curiously lopsided appearance. Vaguely, I felt he would no longer seem quite so beautiful to the one girl.

Yet, even though I must restore him to her in two sections, I was all the more resolved she should have all of him there was, and I continued my writhing ascent.

A rough voice hailed me in rage from the barn-yard below. Glancing over my shoulder, I beheld a shirt-sleeved, gray-whiskered giant shaking his fists at me. A white bulldog at his side flashed a horrible dental display.

But I was not minded to quit the race with the goal so near. Neither understanding nor heeding old Griswold's protests, I climbed upward.

"That Excelsior chap in the poem had nothing on me," I panted to myself. "I can settle with the old thief down below there after I catch Simon Peter Rhadamés. Possession is nine points of the law. But—I wonder how many points an angry bulldog scores?"

The decayed barn-roof was sagging and creaking perilously under my weight, but I was near my quarry.

Almost within arm's reach was Rhadamés. He was already crouching to speed away on another clipped-wing flight. I wriggled forward once more. The bird flapped upward. As he took flight, my right arm shot out. It was nip-and-tuck. But I won.

My fingers reached one of his legs. The squawking, flapping, panic-stricken bird was mine. *All* of him.

In triumph I tightened my grip on his leg, half rose to my feet, and—

There was a ripping, rending, tearing sound that mingled right harmoniously with Rhadamés's shrieks, and with the howls of the farmer below.

The barn roof gently collapsed under me—about ten square feet of it. And, peacock in hand, I drifted downward.

They say—in the science books—that a falling body travels sixteen feet the first second; from which I infer that my downward flight lasted just five-eighths of a second.

At the end of which time I found my descent stopped by a broad beam about nine feet above the hay-littered floor of the barn. Below me, as I balanced precariously on the dusty timber, lay the wreckage of shingles.

Above, the late afternoon sun poured in through the impromptu window my body's flight had inserted in the roof.

I managed to right myself by an effort worthy of a circus equilibrist. I sat astride the wide beam, my fall checked, and that abominable peacock still safe in my grasp. I had not even spilled the tail-feathers from my pocket.

The quest was accomplished. I had won!

Just how I was to get to the ground and—past the farmer and his dog—home again, I had not time to figure out.

For, barely had I established my balance on the beam, and assured myself that no bones were broken, when on the floor below me appeared Griswold. Gamboling at his side was the big bulldog, doing a veritable dance of delight at prospect of meeting me.

"Waal," drawled the farmer in the cheery tones of a sick bear, "I guess I've got ye now all right! Come down."

"I cannot bring myself to accept invitations from total strangers," I retorted coldly.

"Come down here, I tell ye!" roared Griswold, reaching for a ladder that lay in a corner, "or I'll come up after ye."

"That *might* be better," I agreed. "It will be amusing to upset the ladder just as you get close to the top."

He stopped, laid down the ladder, grunted in perplexity, and ran his gnarled fingers through his beard. I took advantage of his indecision to speak a few thoughtfully chosen words.

"Mr. Homer Griswold," I began, "I have in my hand—and in my pocket—a peacock, variously known as 'Rhadamés' and as 'Simon Peter.' What's in a name? I fared forth to-day to find him. I did so. If he chanced to be on your barn, it was no fault of mine. Nor was it my fault that you let your barn roof fall into such disrepair that part of it refused to stay where it belonged. I catch you red-handed in possession of the aforesaid Simon Peter—pronounced Rhadamés. If you want to avoid a lawsuit, kindly remove your dog and let me go on my way in peace."

"Waal, of all the— Avoid a lawsoot, hey? *Avoid it?* Say, you red-headed hippertotamus, lawsoots is meat and drink to me. An' I guess I've got the right end of the biggest one I've ever had. You trespassed on my premises. You've broke into my buildings. You've sp'iled my barn, an' you've tried to carry off a peacock valued at—"

"Prythee, peace!" I commanded. "Seek not to enmesh the real issue in a maze of words. I came here to get this peacock. I got him. Unless you want to go to jail, let me pass. O denizen of Pompford-loveliest-village-of-the-plain, enchain thy faithful hound, that I and this bird of vanity may depart in safety. Hasten, good yokel!"

"I don't speak them furren languages," he returned. "An' I don't need to. I'm a plain American citizen, an' I know my rights. I've caught ye breakin' the law an' damagin' my prop'ty. Are you comin' down, or ain't ye?"

"Are you going to tie up that dog first?"

"Not much, I ain't."

"Then," I decided, "be it never so humble, there's no place like this beam. Here I stay until—"

"Just as you please," he agreed suddenly. "Here, Rover! Watch him! *Watch* him, I say!"

The dog increased tenfold his eagerness to be near me.

"Thar!" announced Griswold. "Rover don't never stir away from anything I tell him to watch. He'll stay right here till doomsday. An' if ye try to git down, he'll be waitin' for you. Stay where ye be, if it soots yer. I'm off to git Constable Bartholf an' a posse. Ye'll sleep to-night in the calaboose, freshie! Ye'll stay where ye be till I bring 'em here. An' what they see for themselves then will be evidence enough. *Watch* him, Rover!"

He stamped out, leaving me a prisoner of hopelessness, a fugitive from injustice.

What was to be done? Clearly I could not wait here until a posse of rustic Jersey constabulary should dislodge me and drag me off to the local lockup.

I had come to Pompford to spend the week-end with the one girl's family. And now I was like enough to spend it in jail. For, in cooler moments, I could see that I had perhaps overstepped the rigid letter of the law by climbing a stranger's barn.

Even though the theft of the peacock could readily enough be proved on Griswold, I was liable to arrest for trespass. The one girl would never let me hear the last of it.

No, I could not stay there, tamely awaiting the arrival of Griswold and the law. Equally clearly, I could not descend and risk sudden death at the hands—teeth, I mean—of a large and very temperamental bulldog.

I glared at the offending, struggling peacock. He responded with an ear-splitting scream. The bulldog renewed his dance, to a deep-growled accompaniment.

I sat alone, aloft, unloved.

I have been happier. Several times.

Then I shook off my lethargy. I was ever a man of action. And now, if ever, was the time to act. But how?

I glanced about me, like a good general studying the battle-ground. And the survey brought no fruits.

I looked down winsomely on the dog. I chirped at him, and lyingly addressed him as "Good old doggie!" He retorted with a per-

fectly earth-shaking growl. No. Diplomacy would not suffice.

The peacock's struggles not only wholly engaged one of my hands, but endangered my balance. I took off my long tie and bound the bird's legs together with it.

I had a momentary thought of tossing Rhadamés down to the dog. Perhaps the brute might devour the bird, and then sink into a slumber of repletion, during which I could steal away unnoticed.

This was true strategy. But I would not do it. Not for naught had I been endowed with red hair and a square jaw.

I had fared forth on a peacock quest for the one girl. And I would return home with that peacock or not at all. So I tied him to my belt, and did some more thinking.

And, as I meditated, I recalled a story I had read years ago, of a man who circumvented an angry bulldog. My more or less fertile brain at last hit on a variation of that plan.

With me, to *think* was always to *do*. Or misdo, as the case might be.

Gingerly I took off my coat. Then I lay face downward at full length along the beam —Rhadamés squawking lustily at my belt the while.

My maneuvers stirred the bulldog into new activity. He leaped upward, snarling again and again in a crazy effort to reach me.

Gripping the beam, equestrian fashion, with my knees, I got a firm hold on one of the sleeves of my discarded coat. Then I dangled the garment insultingly over the dog.

While I shook the coat in tantalizing fashion, I shouted jeeringly at the animal. The double affront was more than any self-respecting bulldog could stand.

He sprang at the dangling sleeve of the coat. Adroitly I twitched it out of his reach.

Again I lowered it. This time, half dazed with fury, he launched himself, open-mouthed, at the offending cloth.

His mighty jaws met in the sleeve, several feet in air, caught their grip and held it like grim death. The weight of the dog's body, as he swung from one end of the coat while I clutched the other, almost hurled me from my perch on the beam.

But I kept my balance. Without letting the dog's feet touch ground, I swung the coat to and fro like a pendulum. To its sleeve hung the dog, resisting all my seeming efforts to shake him loose.

He had clamped his powerful jaws upon the cloth, and was not to be jerked free of it by any puny attempts of mine.

Wider and wider grew the swing of the pendulum. Tighter grew the dog's jaw-grip. Then, bracing myself harder, I gave a final swinging heave that brought dog, coat, and all upward till they touched the beam, not a yard from my face.

The dog, feeling the broad, solid beam under his feet, scrambled madly for a foothold, found it, dropped the coat, and rushed along the beam toward me.

But I was not there.

The instant I had seen the brute's feet touch the beam, I had let myself downward to the full sweep of my arms and had dropped awkwardly but safely to the hay-piled floor below.

There I scrambled to my feet, made sure the squawking peacock was still flapping secure at my belt, and looked upward.

Crouching on the beam, nine feet above ground, snarled the dog. But never yet was there a bulldog, be he never so brave, that dare launch himself downward to earth from such a height.

He capered along the beam, howling in an impotent rage that touched my heart.

I have sometimes wondered what old Griswold must have thought when, on his return, he found me gone and his faithful watchdog occupying my place on the beam. On less foundation, in ancient times, have tales of witchcraft been evolved.

III.

COATLESS, disheveled, yet triumphant, with the peacock tucked under my arm, I walked through the glory of the beautiful sunset to the house of the one girl. She was on the lawn.

So were her father and mother. So was the other man. They were gazing admiringly at something that their intervening bodies shut off for the moment from my view. I stole upon them silently, and then cried, exultant:

"See, the conquering hero comes! Behold Rhadamés! Here is part of him under my arm, and the rest is in my pocket. The Jersey knight errant has fulfilled his quest, O lady fair! I—"

My jubilant tones trailed away into a gasp. The others had turned as I spoke.

And then it was that I saw the object they had been admiring.

On the lawn in front of them strutted and posed a gorgeous peacock.

"The coachman," began the only girl, at first sound of my voice, "had put him in

the stable because the chicken-house wasn't strong enough. He was there all the time! I'm so sorry I sent you— Why, *Bobbie Ballard,*" she continued, catching full sight of me, "what's the matter with you? And what have you got there?"

I let my prize flutter to earth. With a farewell squawk, he made off in the direction of the Griswold farm.

"Why," went on the only girl, "that is old Mr. Griswold's peacock! The very apple of his eye. He—"

I stalked to the house. At the door I turned and said majestically:

"The days of knight errantry have fled forever. I think I will lie down for a while. Before I go to jail, you know."

A week later I paid a bill, itemized as follows:

R. Ballard to H. Griswold, Dr.

To 1 broaken roof	$55.79
To 1 Trespsing	50.10
To 1 Ill-treetment of a inosent dog	25.25
To 1 borowing a pecock	10.
To 1 Loss of said pecox tale	30.05
Total	$171.19

Please remit.

Yes, I "remitted." And cheerfully. I was too happy to care. Although, on the same day I had the delight of "remitting" $250 more.

For an engagement ring.

FENCING WITH VILLAINY.

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "Because of the Green House," "A Blow to Liberty," "The Road to Misfortune," etc.

A Partnership with Death in Which a Live Man Becomes a Serious Handicap to the Game.

CHAPTER I.

A LITTLE SCRAP.

THE chips were rattling merrily, the chink of glasses sounded musically, and the hum of voices told that the games were on when I strolled into the bar of the Gray Wolf Hotel.

I had no particular use for the bar, being a temperance man as a rule, but there was no other place to stroll.

I had come to Dattleton with the idea that I might find a little use for what money I had that would bring me in a profit. I had made the money bringing a consignment of machinery, and having disposed of that, and liking the atmosphere of Texas, I decided to remain there for a short time at least.

I went to the bar, purchased a cigar, and was just putting a match to it when a revolver was fired and the bullet took the cigar out of my mouth without doing me any physical injury.

I turned to see who had fired the shot, and was surprised to find that nobody was paying me any attention at all. The shot had not been fired at me.

Backed up against a side wall stood a man I judged to be fifty years old, perhaps more.

"Come on," he said. "You think you've got me, but I'm a pretty good man yet."

The four or five men he faced were not of the sort that builds a town from a rough mining village to a successful city. They were short, squat individuals, while he was the rugged sort I had known before in other towns like Dattleton.

As none of the rest in the place seemed to be more than moderately interested in the matter, I judged that the man at bay was a stranger like myself.

Perhaps my own interest would not have been so great had I not just missed death by so narrow a margin; but I felt that, somehow, the man against the wall was right in whatever controversy had arisen.

"You stacked the cards," insisted one of the swarthy men.

At this a roar went up from all the others.

"'Magine Mexican Pete accusin' anybody of stackin' cards," said somebody.

I could see how the land lay at once. The man, whoever he was, had got up against a gang of sharpers, who, if they did not succeed in robbing a victim, accused the successful honest gambler of robbing them.

"We fix you," threatened one of the toughs, and they made a set for him.

His fist shot out, and one went down and out. The others overpowered him.

I was amazed that nobody seemed to be eager to help the lone fighter, but I knew that men in such towns do not, as a rule, intefere in the quarrels of outsiders.

However, I was young and impetuous, and when I saw the gleam of a knife I sailed in with hands and feet working overtime.

Then a shot was fired, and I heard the underdog groan.

After that I became the center of attraction for the toughs, and had my hands full. I had a little more than this, being sorely beset. I received several kicks and a slight scratch with a knife, and one of my assailants was aiming at me when still another person hurled himself into the fray.

I had never seen this man before, but he was taking my part.

Between us we knocked them about, took their pistols and knives from them, and then kicked them bodily out of the place.

The man I had taken up the fight for was lying on the floor, evidently very seriously wounded.

"This is a hospitable place you keep," I said to the fellow behind the bar. "Nice, genteel sort of place."

"I didn't know what it was all about," he answered, shrugging his shoulders. "I never saw this man before. Who is he?"

"I never saw him before, either."

"Then what'd you want to butt in for? Any of your business?"

"I made it my business. I couldn't stand by and see one man attacked by nearly half a dozen."

"Well, don't butt in here again."

"I'll butt in whenever I feel like it. If this man here had not butted in, my name would have been mud."

"My name is Ralph Hennon," said the one who had so opportunely come to my assistance.

"And mine," I answered, as I took his hand, "is John Dale. I thank you for butting in."

"Don't speak of it. The question is, what are we to do with our friend here? He seems to be going to sleep."

"Has this man got a room here?" I asked the proprietor.

"No. I told you I never saw him before."

"Well, I want a room, if you think my money is good enough for me to butt in to that extent. And if you'll have the unexampled generosity and kindness to designate the room, I'll have him taken there now."

"You want the room for him?"

"I want a room. I'll see about the rest of it when we see how badly he's hurt."

"All right. You're welcome. Your money is as good as anybody's, I guess, and you look as if you had some. I'll show you."

"Help me carry him, Hennon," I said.

The crowd showed less indifference now. They had stopped all play and were looking on curiously at the scene. No one spoke until we picked up the wounded man.

"You're a couple of plucky devils, all the same," said one. "When you get him fixed, come down and have a drink."

"Is there a doctor here?"

"Oh, yes, but he's the coroner, and is away on a mysterious case of sudden death."

We carried the wounded and now unconscious man to the room to which the proprietor guided us.

"Bring some water, and some whisky," I said. "If you've got anything better than the red brain-disturber usually sold over a bar like yours, let's have it. And bring some bandages. If you haven't got bandages, bring a clean extra sheet."

"Are you a doctor?"

"No. I'm not much of anything. But get a move on. The man will die while you are asking questions."

He moved away, and Hennon and I began taking off the wounded chap's clothing.

"I guess it's all up with him, Dale," said my new friend.

"Looks like it. We'll try, though."

And we did try. When the articles I had ordered were brought, I poured some whisky down the stranger's throat, bathed his wounds, and bandaged them. He revived.

"Ah!" he breathed. "They got me at last. You tried to help, but my lights are out, I guess. You made a gallant fight. But—it's no go."

"Don't talk so much," I told him. "Give us a chance. We may pull you through."

"I must talk before I die. It won't take long. I want to thank you for what you've done, and to pay you—"

"We don't want any pay," I put in.

He made a gesture of impatience.

"You make it worse by interrupting. By pay I do not mean money. I have little enough of that, and it will take that to bury me. I can trust you, I know, and I have a trust to repose in you, even though a small reward goes with it. Listen.

"My name is Thomas Whitten. I have but one relative in the whole world, and that is a daughter. She is now in Chicago, at a

seminary for young ladies. She is young, but I could do nothing else.

"I am a gold-hunter. I have found some, and have sent it all to her except what I had to keep to live on. And I have about three hundred now. It is in my wallet. Get it out of my pocket."

I got the wallet.

"Count it," he said.

"Just three hundred and twenty-five," I told him.

"Now," he went on, "this is to be used to bury me. I guess, from your appearance, that you each have some money. But as you will be partners hereafter, decide which one is to have the purse."

"Partners?" echoed Hennon. "We are total strangers."

"But you will be partners. I am, as I said, reposing a sacred trust in you. Beside the money you will find a folded parchment."

"I have it," I said.

"It is a map and description of a place on the Red Fork of the Brazos, where I have found gold. I have taken none out, nor have I learned if the place can be staked. If it belongs to any one, it must be bought.

"Now, I am giving you each a third of this find. I want you to be partners, and to work the claim, if it is a claim. If you haven't the money to buy it, finance it somehow. It is placer gold, and your outfit won't cost you much.

"And I want you to solemnly swear that you will give my daughter the other third. It would have been all hers had I lived. It is no more than fair that she have one third now."

"I think she is entitled to all," I said.

"Certainly," assented Hennon.

"No, no, that won't do. She would have to employ some one and she would be robbed. Men who jump to the aid of strangers as you did, are men indeed, honest men. You will find letters in the wallet telling where Nellie can be found."

He lay back wearily and Hennon and I stood staring at each other in mute astonishment.

CHAPTER II.

THE PARTNERSHIP.

HENNON was ghastly pale. I still held the wallet in my hand.

A peculiar sound from the man on the bed made us both turn to him again.

"You are wasting time," he whispered. "You know now that I am going to die. I have said all I can say. But I would be happy to hear that you accept this trust. And also that you will come to an agreement between you as to which shall be the one to handle the money.

"Mind you, I do not insist on this because I have doubts of either one of you. But I have seen partnerships before, and where there is not some previous determination as to which shall draw checks, receive payments, and perform other financial duties, there is always trouble. You are strangers to each other, the same as I am a stranger to both of you. It ought not to be a difficult matter to decide."

"It is not," answered Hennon soberly. "It is not a difficult task at all. There is, in fact, no choice to be made. When you were attacked, it was Dale who went to your relief. It was really Dale who risked his life, not me. Therefore, I designate Dale as the treasurer of this unique partnership."

"A partnership with Death," said Mr. Whitten grimly. "What do you say, Dale?"

"There is another side to the question," I replied. "This is a serious and sacred matter. If, as you seem to think, and as we must all confess seems likely, you are a dying man, the matter must not be settled at haphazard. My own choice would be Hennon. He is apparently somewhat older than I am, and has, I believe, a more settled mind.

"It may be true that I was first to come to your relief. But that attempt on my part would have proven fruitless had Hennon not come to your assistance and mine. You see there is a double debt due Hennon. He aided you to the best of his ability and undoubtedly saved my life. My own gratitude is to be considered, and therefore, I designate Hennon."

The old man's eyes twinkled even in his weakness.

"I like you both," he said. "There is no selfishness, and no danger of one robbing the other. There is no question in my mind that you will both do your duty to my daughter. But I am growing weaker, and this thing must be settled."

"Is there no way to come to an agreement?"

"I decline in favor of Dale," said Hennon positively.

"And I refuse to take a responsibility that belongs to Hennon," I added.

Mr. Whitten sighed.

"Place your right hands on mine," he directed.

We did so.

"Do you each solemnly swear that you will carry out my wishes, no matter which one seems to be the head of the company?" he asked.

We both answered in the affirmative.

"Hand me a coin."

Mechanically I took a coin from my pocket and placed it in his hands.

"It seems to be the only way," he said. "I will not last much longer. With what remaining strength I have, I must settle this matter, to which I may seem to give more importance than is due. But I have seen much of the world, and you are both young. When I do the best I can to toss this coin, you, Dale, cry heads or tails. It is the only way."

He made an attempt, closing his eyes. The coin rose and twirled in the air.

"Heads," I said.

"Heads it is," cried Hennon when the coin dropped on the coverlet of the bed. "It is just as it should be, and I am glad. Dale, we will carry out the wishes of Mr. Whitten."

"But—" I began.

"Give me some whisky," said the dying man. "I feel it coming now. Do not annoy me in these last moments by quarreling. The thing is settled."

"Do you want a priest or clergyman?" I asked.

"No," he replied in a whisper. "I have not lived a wicked life, and I have wronged neither man, woman, nor child. Let me die in peace with my hands in yours."

We each took one of his hands, and, standing over him, thus we saw this strange man pass peacefully away.

"He is dead," I said to Hennon.

He nodded, and his eyes were moist.

We gently laid the hands down and faced each other.

"We have duties to perform at once," Hennon reminded me. "Before we notify anybody about his death, let us come to an understanding. Shall we tell of this wallet and our strange compact, or keep it to ourselves?"

"Keep it to ourselves," I said without much deliberation. "If we make a public thing of it we may have trouble."

"My idea exactly."

I put the wallet in my pocket, and we went down to the hotel office, or bar.

"He is dead," I told the proprietor. "Now, the coroner must know. And I suppose there is an undertaker here."

"Yes. And the doctor will be back probably to-morrow."

The fact that so many in the barroom had seen the attack, and had known the seriousness of the wounds, made it easy for Hennon and me. The undertaker performed his duties, and the coroner asked us no questions, except those pertaining directly to the fight. With the punishment of the murderers we had nothing to do.

We waited until after the simple funeral before Hennon and I mentioned the subject of the partnership.

We were both a little shaken by what had occurred, but we met in my room to talk matters over.

We sat down near each other so that our conversation might not be overheard.

"Now," began Hennon, "we are up against the queerest deal I ever knew. There is something uncanny about it."

"There surely is," I answered. "It seems as though the guiding hand of fate was in it all. It means either prosperity to us, or—trouble."

"And a deuce of a lot of trouble at that."

"Do you think that the enemies of Whitten will attack us?"

"They attacked him, didn't they? Whatever enemies he had, and why they were his enemies, we don't know. But now, the first thing to understand is how we are to get to work. I'm broke."

"I'm not quite broke," I said. "I have about six hundred dollars."

"Ah! Then see again the guiding hand of fate. You were the proper one to handle the money. And your name must head the list of names in the company. And there comes in another question to be settled. What shall we call this partnership with Death?"

"I scarcely know," I said with a nervous laugh. "We don't want to bring in Whitten's name."

"No. I suggest that we call ourselves 'Dale, Hennon & Co.' The girl in Chicago is the company, of course."

"That goes," I said. "'Dale, Hennon & Co.' Sounds good to me. Now, the next thing to do is to learn where this girl is, and notify her of her father's death, and the provisions he has made."

"Get the letters."

There is no necessity for repeating here the tender letters from the girl to her wandering father. Suffice to say that they were signed "Nellie," and were dated from "Pembrose Seminary," Chicago.

"I will write to-night and tell her the whole thing," I said. "Now we'll get down to business. I'll grub-stake the outfit. I

guess I've got enough. But where is this Red Fork?"

"I don't know."

It was, however, an easy matter to ascertain, and we found that the Red Fork of the Brazos, and the spot designated on the little map Whitten had given us, was about forty miles from Dattleton.

I bought a wagon outfit, containing the implements required in placer mining, and on a bright early morning we started for the Red Fork with visions of wealth before us.

CHAPTER III.

AN ANNIVERSARY HAPPENING.

We had little difficulty in locating the mine. It was on the south side of the Fork and we found that Whitten had begun the erection of a small shack. We finished this and then began the serious business of mining. And we found gold.

We had determined to do our own cooking. The peculiar circumstances surrounding our enterprise made it necessary, so we explained to our own satisfaction, that we should keep the matter as secret as possible.

After a month of hard work we had a quantity of gold that was too much to keep in the shack. So I rode into Dattleton and deposited it in the Dattleton Bank, which made a business of forwarding to the assay office and mint, and receiving the money in return as a deposit for the firm.

Having placed the gold in safe custody, I went to the post-office. I must say here that my letter to Miss Whitten had been mailed at Dattleton before we left.

I found a dainty missive addressed to "Dale, Hennon & Co.," and put it in my pocket without opening it. I then mailed a letter Hennon had given me addressed to "Robert Hennon, care of Caleb Hennon, New York."

When I reached the camp I opened the letter from Chicago.

It was written in a fine, girlish hand, and read:

> DEAR MR. DALE AND MR. HENNON:
>
> Your letter, informing me of the death of my dear father, reached me, and filled me with grief. It is true that I have not seen my father in a long time, but he wrote every week, and supplied me well with money.
>
> I am sure that he felt great confidence in you both to do as he did, and I would be an undutiful daughter if I did not share that confidence now. Believe me, that whatever you do, I shall believe it the best that could be done.
>
> I wish you would take the first share of the money coming to me and put a suitable stone at the head of my father's grave. I shall certainly some day come to see it, and perhaps when I see my way clear, I shall have his body removed to some other place.
>
> Thanking you both for what you have done, and again assuring you of my confidence in your future actions, I am yours very truly,
>
> NELLIE WHITTEN.

"That's a good letter," said Hennon, looking off across the Red Fork. "And now, Dale, we won't do any more work to-day. Let's smoke our pipes out here. I've got a little confidence to repose in you myself."

I glanced at him in surprise. His face was grave and pale. Yet he had always been gay enough.

"Go ahead," I told him.

"Dale," he continued, "I'm a widower. That letter I gave you to mail was to my little boy in New York. He is boarding with my uncle, and that uncle is one of the greatest scoundrels, I think, that ever lived. He is mean, penurious, and would rob a church.

"The boy is only ten, and of course had to have some one to look after him while I was wandering around in search of money. I have found the money now, and there is something I want you to promise me."

"Go ahead," I answered again.

"You know I've coughed some and, though this is a healthy climate, I may get sick and not pull through. And if I die, from any cause whatever, I don't want you to let them know it in New York—nor anywhere else, until my boy Robbie is twenty-one.

"My reason for asking that, is this: If my share of the gold should amount to a good deal, and I should die before the boy is of age, the man who now has him in his care, my father's brother, would have himself appointed his guardian. And with that power, I'll gamble that he would rob the boy in a year."

"You have a great respect for your father's brother," I remarked.

"I know him. He's as hard as nails. Now will you promise?"

"I'm willing enough to promise, Hennon," I answered, "but how the mischief am I going to keep your death a secret? I'd have to notify the boy, wouldn't I?"

"No, not necessarily. Copy my handwriting and send him a letter once in a while."

"But that strikes me as being an injustice and an imposition on the boy."

"He will appreciate it and thank you when he becomes a man."

"Well, granting that, there are a few dozen other difficulties in the way. A dead man is not a pleasant thing to keep handy around the house. There are sanitary and legal objections to it. It is usually considered necessary to have a doctor take care of a sick man. And if he dies, the doctor files a certificate of death. How am I going to overcome all these things?"

"I don't know, but you must. I don't want my boy robbed."

His voice shook with emotion, and I looked at him in surprise.

"You don't feel well, Hennon," I said. "Turn in and have a good snooze."

"I'm all right," he answered. "I feel deeply on this subject. Let me tell you, I've known what it was to face the world without a dollar. And I took his mother from a good home and she faced poverty with me till it broke her heart. I don't want my boy to repeat that when I've got the money to prevent it."

"Well, that's an easy thing. Make a will. You won't die in a week. Some day, when you are in Dattleton, go to a lawyer, and have a will drawn, and appoint a guardian for the boy. That will shut out your uncle."

"Yes," he said slowly, "so it would. I will do that. I don't know much about law. But if anything should happen to me, and—hang it, I'm afraid. I'm afraid, Dale."

The fellow looked feverish.

"You may think it strange, my showing the white feather, but I know what I'm talking about, and I want you to look after the interests of my boy."

"I'll do that, Hennon."

The next day he was more cheerful, and I did not mention the matter. And so the days passed, and the firm of Dale, Hennon & Co. saw their wealth piling up to moderate but very satisfactory proportions.

Weeks passed. Money was now deposited in the bank at Dattleton. Hennon sent money to New York for the maintainnance of his boy, and I sent one-third of every month's output to Miss Nellie Whitten in Chicago.

Hennon followed my advice, and one day when he was in Dattleton had a will drawn.

"It's all right, Dale," he reported. "Now I feel that if I die my boy will be in good hands. I've made my will."

"Did you appoint a guardian for the boy?"

"Sure, yourself."

This was satisfactory to me, for I had little idea that Hennon was in any danger of dying before I did. True, he had a little hacking cough, but he was a big, husky fellow, and the air of the Red Fork region was salubrious.

Months passed. No more was ever said about the matter of the will. We were too busy piling up wealth. And at the end of the year we had taken out about four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. We had perfected a plan by which, with improved machinery, we could do the work of ten men.

Our own needs were small, and the money had not been drawn on for camp expenses.

One hundred and fifty thousand dollars had been sent to Miss Whitten in Chicago, who had written several letters. She had had a guardian appointed of her own choosing, and was enjoying the novelty of being her own mistress with plenty of money.

Hennon had sent his regular remittances for the boy in New York. My own hundred and fifty thousand lay in the bank.

"Do you know what day this is?" asked Hennon one afternoon as we were quitting work.

"Tuesday."

"What else?"

"Fifteenth of October."

"What else?"

"The year—"

"I don't mean that. This is the anniversary of the beginning of our partnership."

"So it is," I said. "Let's celebrate."

"What've we got good?"

"Well, there's some of those cigars you brought out on your birthday and—let's see. I'll see what I can find," I said.

I went into the shack, leaving Hennon washing up at the Fork. I had not been gone more than five minutes when I heard a rifle-shot.

We had kept a rifle near us while at work, so that no game should pass us by, and I supposed Hennon had sighted something good. I went to the door and looked.

Hennon was lying on the ground.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEAD SPEAKS.

With a cold, terrified feeling I ran to him. He was not dead. Kneeling, and lifting his head from the gravel on which it had fallen, I sought for the wound.

"Who did this, Hennon?" I asked.

"I—don't know—Dale," he replied. "But—I knew—it was coming."

"Did you have an enemy?"

He shook his head wearily and shut his eyes.

Making a pillow for him, I ran back to the house and brought out the bottle of port with which we were going to celebrate.

This revived him a little.

"Can you get to the house?" I asked.

"I'll—try."

I helped him to his feet. He managed to walk, half carried by me, and I got him to bed.

"More of that port," he said.

I gave him a liberal dose.

"Dale," he said, "I had no personal enemies. I know who did this. But how am I going to prove it? Do you think I'll die?"

"No, Hennon, I don't think so."

"Then I'll try not to. I'll live for the boy. But let me lie here and think a minute. Don't leave me."

I sat and watched him.

All sorts of wild thoughts coursed through my brain. The natural supposition would be that Hennon had enemies. That they had tracked him to the Red Fork and avenged themselves for some real or fancied wrong of the past.

But Hennon had been a man of whom no wrong would be expected. He was free from vices.

Putting this theory aside, the next one was robbers. Almost everybody—everybody, in fact, in Dattleton, and for miles around, knew that we were successful. But the method was not the one usually followed in a raid on a small mining camp like ours.

Undoubtedly, the man who had shot Hennon had been watching us both for some time. And the fact that he waited till I went into the house indicated that he had no wish to kill me, and had taken that opportunity.

I remembered what Hennon had told me about his boy a year ago.

Suddenly he opened his eyes.

"My uncle," he said.

"But surely you wouldn't accuse your father's brother of trying to murder you."

"I would not have accused him of that quite. But I can think of no one else. But—"

"But what, Hennon?"

"What was his hurry?"

"I can't understand that, either. You are getting richer every month. Why should a man want to murder you now?"

"And kill the goose that is laying the golden egg. We must learn that, Dale."

"We'll try."

I went outside, and looked as far as I could in every direction. I could see no one.

I dared not leave Hennon long enough to go and make a search. If the would-be assassin was still in the neighborhood he might enter and finish his dastardly work.

"There is no one around now," I said, returning to the house.

"Dale, now do you really think I am going to die?" he asked.

"You are not very badly wounded. The bullet passed through the muscles of your neck, but has cut neither artery nor vein."

"That's good. Let me think a minute."

He shut his eyes when he did his thinking, as had been his habit before he was shot.

"Dale," he said, "I'm dead."

"Eh?"

"I'm dead, Dale. You've got to report me dead."

"Why? What good will that do?"

"Don't you see? It's all on account of the money. And I can think of no one but my uncle who would want the boy's money. Of course he knows nothing of the will. If we let it be known that an attack was made and was unsuccessful, he—ugh!"

I knew talking must be painful to him, but he was an obstinate chap and now made a grimace as he put his hand up to the bandage I had placed.

"Shut up," I said. "You can't talk now. There's plenty of time."

He nodded and lay quiet.

I wondered what his scheme was. Why did he want it given out that he was dead, and how were we to keep up the lie?

"You sleep a while and perhaps you can talk," I said. "I'll go outside."

I strolled around, keeping my hand on my revolver, and my eyes watching in every direction. But I saw no sign of any one.

Night came, and I feared another attempt on his life. I resolved to remain awake.

I got the supper, and as swallowing was painful to Hennon I made some soup with a sage-hen we had shot that morning and he managed to get some of that down.

"I'm going to sit up and keep watch tonight," I announced. "Your affectionate friend may return and give you another token of his love."

"That's good of you, Dale. Dale, we're brothers, are we not?"

"Sure thing."

"You'll do anything I ask?"

"Surer thing."

"Then I'm dead."

"So you said before. But look here, I can't be bothered making chicken broth for corpses."

"I know. I can talk enough now to explain what I mean."

"Wait till I take another look around."

I went outside and took a look. But there was no one in sight, as before.

"I guess, after all, he's gone," I reported. "If it was revenge he wanted he's got enough. Anyway, whoever shot you must have thought he had you right. You must have dropped like a log."

"I guess so. I never was a log."

"Don't try to be funny just because you've got the only wound in camp."

"That's right, Dale. But I'd rather die with a joke on my lips than a curse."

"Right enough, only I think if I was dying I'd curse the man who shot me."

"Yes, I guess I would, too. But listen, now. I'm dead. You've got to manage some how to hide me where nobody can possibly find me. There must be a way somehow. And you've got to go to Dattleton and tell them there that I am dead.'"

"That's easy enough, but what's the game? Put me on."

"Make him show his hand. See? Make him go the full length. If it was my uncle who did this, in a hurry to get my money, there is a reason for it. And if he thinks he has succeeded he will try in a hurry to get the money."

"But he can't. Your will holds good. I am the boy's guardian."

"I know. But if—my God!"

He struggled up in bed and stared at me.

"What's the mater?" I demanded.

"Dale! Suppose he has killed the boy? The money would be his."

CHAPTER V.

REMOVING A LIVING CORPSE.

I SAT with queer chills chasing each other up and down my spine. This was an appalling idea of Hennon's, and yet by no means beyond the range of possibility and plausibility.

If these three, uncle of Hennon, and Hennon's son, and Ralph himself, were the only three living relatives the matter could be understood. If the boy Robbie had died, and then Hennon, or if Hennon died first, and then Robbie, Caleb Hennon would inherit the hundred and fifty thousand, or thereabouts, that Hennon had in bank.

It was not a pretty thing to dream of. It left a bad taste in a fellow's mouth. But the more I thought of it the more I believed it possible.

"The first thing to think of," said Hennon, "is my funeral."

"I have heard of people arranging their own funerals, but never attending them alive," I remarked.

"I'm not going to attend it. We can't take any chances. You've got to find me a good hiding-place."

"Let me think about that. How would you like to attend your own funeral.."

"But there mustn't be any funeral."

"I don't see how we can get along without a funeral. If I go to Dattleton and tell everybody you are dead, there will be a stampede to attend your funeral. And if there is no funeral what am I going to say?"

"Ye—es," he observed slowly, after a pause. "I see. Well, I can disappear and you can say that I was sick or wounded."

"No good. Your wits are leaving you. That wouldn't prove your death."

"No," he replied. "I see we've got to take somebody into our confidence. Who shall it be?"

"Suppose I find a safe place for you first, and then see Dalton?"

"He's a good one. He can advise, and would know just what to do."

Dalton was the lawyer who drew his will. He was a young, square-jawed chap, poor as a church mouse when he came to Dattleton, so he had told us, but shoving ahead at a fair rate of speed.

I judged him to be ready to help a decent fellow out in an emergency.

But the first thing I had to do was to find a place for Hennon to hide so that nobody not in the secret could ever find him or identify him and give the snap away.

And this was no easy matter. There were plenty of places to *hide*. But merely hiding wasn't all we needed. He could go away, for that matter. But he needed to be on the ground to watch the sequel and spring his trap when the right time came.

"Say," I exclaimed. "What's the matter with the *padre?*"

"Padre José?"

"The same, the good soul."

"What can he do?"

"I'll see him. But how the deuce am I to leave you alone?"

"I'll be able to leave to-morrow. We can hitch up the burros and drive."

"So we can. Great head, that of yours."

I did not stay up all night, though my sleeplessness and my frequent trips outside with a gun might have been called that.

And after a good night's sleep Hennon was able to sit up.

Padre José was the superior of a small monastery situated about five miles from our camp. We knew him well. He was always ready to help the needy. He was always ready to feed the passing stranger.

And, better yet in our immediate emergency, there was a resident physician brother who could give Hennon the care he needed.

In the bottom of the wagon I made a rude bed. This was not because Hennon was not able to ride on the seat with me, but it was absolutely necessary to prevent anybody seeing him while on the way to the monastery.

I arranged Hennon on the bed, and put some empty sacks over him.

The monks under Padre José cultivated a large tract of ground and sold the proceeds to travelers, or those in camps like ours, or near-by villages where the men were busy at other things than raising table stuff.

Taking what gold we had in the shack, and my rifle, I got in and drove off.

My precautions were not in vain. I had not gone more than a mile when I met a man I knew in Dattleton.

"Hello, Dale," he said; "how's things? You look peaky."

"I am peaky. Hennon's dead."

"The devil he is. Seemed all right when I saw him last."

"Died last night."

"What's the matter? Shall I ride around and take a look at him?"

"You may if you like. He's in the shack. It's locked, but I'll give you the key." I reached for my pocket. "I wouldn't go, though, if I were you."

"No, why not?"

"Well, I'm not much of a doctor, but it looked like smallpox to me."

"The—well, I reckon I won't go. I ain't afraid, but I might give it to somebody."

"Yes," I said, "you might be blamed for it. So-long."

We reached the monastery without meeting any one else, and having made my wishes known to the gate-keeper, I drove into the large enclosure. At the door I left the wagon and helped Hennon out.

Padre José stared when he saw us.

"Well, well, my two lonely gold digging sons," said the jovial priest. "What has happened? I see that there is something wrong."

"I am dead," announced Hennon soberly.

"Not quite," said the padre, looking at him wonderingly.

"But yes," I insisted. "Sit down, Hennon, while I explain things to the *padre*. Now, the situation is this. Somebody fired at Hennon last night and he thinks he knows who it was. But there is no proof. And if it is known that he wasn't killed, the fellow will go home and will never be caught, and in fact can make another attempt in the future. The idea is to make him believe that he did kill Hennon, and force him to show his hand.

"You see, the difficulty is that Hennon has got to be around so that when the proper time comes he can spring the trap and nab his man. Otherwise he could go somewhere at a distance."

"I see, I see," cried the *padre*, who had a a little romance left in him. "A trap to catch a wolf. Come, let us think of this."

His eyes were twinkling.

"It is a good and worthy cause," he went on; "and one that I may assist without breaking any of the rules of my superiors. Let me get just what you do wish. Our son Hennon has been murderously attacked. If the rogue who fired the shot thinks that he killed our son Hennon he will go further in the plot involved."

"Yes," said Hennon. "It is a matter of money and my own little boy's inheritance."

"Good. We guard the young then. Another good cause. We are aiming high and worthily. It shall be done. Leave him with me. Undoubtedly you have other duties to perform."

"Many," I answered. "And here is what gold we have on hand. Use it as you think best."

"A thousand blessings on you. Good luck. But have some dinner before you go."

CHAPTER VI.

AN OFFICIAL PLOT.

RELIEVED of all anxiety and responsibility now concerning Hennon, I breathed more freely and felt more like entering into the little comedy we had mapped out. For, since Hennon was no longer in danger from his wound, or of receiving another one, the thing did take on a comic side, provided, of course, his fears that his boy Robbie had been killed were unfounded.

I drove back to the shack and, making sure that everything was secure, and that there

was no sign of any one prying round, I went on toward Dattleton. I did not hurry the burros, for they had already done ten miles; but I knew these sturdy little animals, with plenty of food, and if not pushed to speed, would travel all day and show no signs of fatigue.

It was late when I drove into Dattleton, and went straight to the Gray Wolf, where I put up for the night.

Leaving the burros to be cared for, I found Dalton.

"Come and take supper with me," I said, "and a smoke, and I'll tell you a story."

"Good," rejoined the only lawyer in Dattleton. "You mean a lie, I suppose."

"I'm not going to tell you a lie. I am going to have you tell one. But, being a lawyer, you won't mind that."

"Certainly not, for a consideration. Where shall we feed? At the Gray Wolf?"

"Yes; I've ordered the suppers."

We were soon facing each other across a well-served table, where there was no one near enough to hear us.

"Dalton," I began, in so low a tone that he looked at me surprisedly, "did Hennon tell you anything about his domestic affairs when he had you draw his will?"

He laid down his fork and looked at me keenly.

"Has anything happened to Hennon?"

"Yes."

"Is he dead?"

"No; but he had so close a call that the next one might not miss him. He was fired at last night by somebody, and hit in the neck."

"The devil! Is he in a bad way?"

"Well, not dangerously wounded. But, as I say, it was a shot meant to kill."

"Anybody see who did it?"

"No. I was in the shack, and he says he didn't see anybody. He had just finished washing up in the Red Fork when the shot came. I fancy, and he says he thinks, it came from the north side."

"Trees over there, are there not?"

"Yes; thick enough to enable a man to creep pretty close to the bank and get away unseen."

"Then probably that's where it came from. How wide is the Fork at your place?"

"About a hundred feet."

"Sure thing. Well, where is Hennon now?"

"With Padre José in the monastery. He's got an idea that it was his uncle who shot him."

"He told me something about his having an uncle who now had charge of the boy because he had no other relatives with whom to leave him. He also said that this uncle was grabby after money. He seemed to fear something of this kind. That was why he wanted to make you the boy's guardian."

"Yes. That's what he told me, and I guess it's the truth. Now the idea is that Hennon's dead."

"I thought you said he was not dangerously wounded."

"Actually not. But don't you see the point? Not matter where this uncle may be at the present moment, even if he walked in here now we couldn't accuse him of the crime. There is nothing to stick it onto him with. He may even be in New York and have sent a hired assassin to do the work.

"Hennon's idea is to be dead. Dead to all the world except to you and me and whoever we must take into our confidence. And we must play the game close. Too many in a secret makes it good reading matter."

"I see," said Dalton with a smile. "In other words, we announce the death of our friend and companion, Ralph Hennon, and await developments."

"Exactly."

"H'm. How about the will? Would you want that sprung at once?"

"No, I think not. What do you advise about it? If we do that, in my mind it will spoil the game."

"Sure it will. Let's see. What shall we say he died of?"

"Well, it'll have to be by gunshot wound inflicted by somebody unknown."

"Sure thing. Else whoever did it will smell a large rat. In that case we've got to take Coroner Murray in."

"Yes; and the sheriff, Hicks. I guess that's about all."

"It seems to be all. We'll have a talk with Murray about it. I suppose if this should prove to be the uncle, he will be foxy enough to go smelling all around among the vital statistics to make sure Hennon is really dead. And besides that, we've got to bury something."

"Can't I dig a hole out by the shack and plunk in a box of stones?"

Dalton shook his head.

"Private burying grounds have rather gone out of fashion, even in Texas," he said. "Still, we can fix that up all right. But that means we've got to take Jackson in with us."

"Is he the undertaker?"

"Yes. But that ends it, and all three are accustomed to keeping secrets. There will be no leak."

"We'd better be about it then. I wonder how Jackson will get over the necessity of showing the face of Hennon in his casket?"

"Leave that to Jackson."

So, somewhat later that night, in a room at the Gray Wolf, another conference took place. This time those present included the coroner, the sheriff, and Jackson.

Dalton, who knew them all better than I did, explained at considerable length the necessities of the case.

"I wonder how the uncle will go at it?" said Murray, the coroner. "If he shot Hennon and returns to New York, and applies by letter for the money, and is appointed by a New York court as the boy's guardian, what are we going to do?"

"Show Hennon's will. But if it was the uncle, you can gamble he's around here somewhere, and will apply here."

"But it seems to me," said Hicks, the sheriff, "that he was too early. He lost money by killing Hennon so soon."

"There will be a reason for that, you can gamble. While the farce is going on I'll be having inquiries made as to the gentleman's standing. It may be he is greatly in need of ready money, and prefers what Hennon has now to waiting longer at a disadvantage."

"Well, we've got to go ahead," said Hicks. "If the coroner has a jury, and it brings in a verdict of murder by some person unknown, there won't be anything for me to do. But how are you going to do that, Murray? It is still the fashion here for the coroner's jury to view the body."

"I'll get out of that. Names are easy to manufacture. It may surprise a few of the denizens of Dattleton that they were not called to serve, but then—we'll have to cheek it out. A little forgery in the interest of justice is permissible. Detectives do it, so why shouldn't I? And it is not done to cover a crime, but to unearth one."

"You're it," said Hicks. "Let's get a move on."

CHAPTER VII.

COMPLICATIONS.

LATE that night the bar of the Gray Wolf was thronged with people who wanted to know more about the murder of poor Hennon.

"He was a gentleman."

"Better man never lived."

"Pretty close with money, though."

"Well, a man who don't drink don't spend much."

Notwithstanding the excitement in Dattleton, those interested were preparing their plans.

"Going to have a big funeral, Dale?" somebody asked me.

"No. No services public, except at the grave. It was a special request of his just before he died. I'm going to get Padre José from the monastery to hold a small service in private—himself and the dead man alone. That was according to Hennon's wishes. Then Jackson will bring him here to the cemetery. He has arranged for a grave in the new ground, and if the boys want to show their respect there, there will be no objection."

This satisfied everybody. And so, on the following day, a solemn cortège entered Dattleton.

First came Jackson's wagon, conveying the corpse in a box that was screwed tight with so many screws that there was no danger of the poor fellow inside ever getting out. Then, in wagons, came the coroner, the sheriff, and myself.

And as we moved, soberly and with propriety, toward the burying-ground, the inhabitants of Dattleton fell in line and with bared heads followed the black wagon to the grave.

Never was a six-foot box of sod and stones buried with so much accompanying grief and solemnity. We let poor Hennon down into his last resting-place with a tenderness that would have made him weep had he seen us. And then the majority adjourned to the Gray Wolf to drink to the memory of him who was not lost, but gone before.

After that Dattleton sat down to its usual routine of business and poker, and I sent a message to Caleb Hennon, notifying him of the death of Ralph Hennon, my partner.

I waited a week, Dalton waited, the sheriff waited, and Jackson waited, all with impatience. But Hennon's impatience was the greatest of all.

Then there alighted one day from the stage from Hillton a little, keen-eyed shrimp of a man, who walked into the Gray Wolf and set down a traveling-bag.

"I am Caleb Hennon," he announced, "the uncle of that Ralph Hennon who recently died. I received word from his partner, one John Dale. Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Dale?"

"There's Mr. Dale, sir," replied the proprietor, pointing to me.

"Ah," said Mr. Hennon. "What can you tell me of my dear nephew's death?"

"Well, there isn't much to tell," I answered, studying him well.

He was a type I never liked, and yet he was well-dressed. He had a nervous, fidgety manner.

"Surely," he answered, "there must be something to tell. A man is not snuffed out like a candle."

"The only thing there is to tell is that he was murdered—shot."

"Well, well. Too bad. Ralph was a good fellow, but a little wild. You see, I am his uncle and have his boy. I shall become the boy's guardian now."

"Quite likely," I answered.

"I should like to see his grave."

"I'll go with you."

I walked with him to the burying-ground, not a great distance, and pointed out the grave.

"I gave him as good a casket as I could buy here," I explained. "And I have ordered a fancy headstone."

"Good. Very kind of you, I'm sure. But not too fancy. Not too fancy. Poor Ralph!"

I saw no tears in his eyes, however, and we returned to the Gray Wolf.

"I shall apply at once for papers of administration, and then take his money from the bank," said Uncle Caleb. "I suppose he had quite a lot of money. I suppose, as his partner, you could tell me how much."

"Oh, somewhere around a hundred and fifty thousand."

He almost jumped.

"A hundred and fifty thousand! As much as that? Great goodness. Well, well, well. Yes, I'll take out letters of administration and get the money—for the boy. I'll be his guardian now. I must see to that as soon as I get back to New York."

Now, the situation struck me as turning just the way I wanted it to. I left the Gray Wolf and went to see Dalton.

"Say," I began, "Uncle Caleb has come."

"So I heard," replied Dalton.

"And he says he will apply for letters of administration at once."

"Yes?"

"But then—if he gets the letters of administration he will get the money."

"He won't get the letters of administration."

"How are you going to prevent it?"

"By offering the will for probate. It's the only way. I've been thinking about it. We've got to spring the will."

"I suppose so," I said dubiously. "But the game doesn't seem to be playing into our hands at all."

"The game is young yet."

"Well, I'll go out and tell Hennon."

I drove out to the monastery and acquainted Hennon with the fact that his uncle had arrived.

"What did the old shark say?" he asked.

"Wept copious tears—nit. But he did say you were a good boy, only a little wild."

"He be darned," he blurted out. "I tell you he's the man, and he hasn't come from New York, either. He's been around here all the time."

"Well, Dalton and Hicks are working up that end of it. Dalton is going to probate your will to forestall letters of administration."

"That'll prove to him that I'm dead, eh?"

"I don't think he has any doubts."

I returned the next morning. Jackson met me at the hotel in consternation.

"Say," he said, in a tone that was scarcely more than a hoarse whisper, "what the deuce is this game you've got me into? That old yap isn't so green. What do you think now? He wants the grave reopened so that he can identify the remains."

I stared aghast.

"What in the world are we going to do about it? He can have it done, I suppose."

"We can delay the thing; but, as Hennon's uncle, he can get an order from the court to have the grave opened on the ground that he wishes to make sure the dead man is really his nephew."

"And what'll be the result when he finds a box of stones?"

Jackson began to whistle.

"Dale," he said, "there are phases of life that I don't like to consider at too short range. If the old fellow actually succeeds in having that box of junk dug up, I fancy there will be just such a time as the parrot told the cat about."

Ruefully I wended my way to see Dalton.

CHAPTER VIII.

CALEB TURNS THE TRICK.

DALTON sat in his office with his head buried behind his feet, which were elevated as high as he could get them on his desk. He peered around his shoes to see who had come in.

"I know all about it," he began when he saw my gloomy face. "I know all about it. Don't say a word."

"Well, what are we going to do?" I asked.

"I have been counting the eyelets in my shoes the last two hours trying to think that out. So far as I can see, we are somewhat up a tree."

"I wonder what the mischief he wants to see the body for?"

"A crafty criminal leaves nothing to chance. He wants to make sure that it is Ralph Hennon who is buried there. It often happens even in the best-regulated families."

"Yes; but what are we going to do?"

"Dig up the cobblestones, I suppose."

"And then what?"

"I don't know. I've been thinking of a scheme, though. It may work and it may not. I thought perhaps if we had him here, and I read Ralph's will to him, he might back down. You, as executor, could stand up and make a terrible ado and refuse to have the body exhumed."

"Wouldn't that make him think something was wrong? Suppose, now, that he *is* the man who shot Hennon, and he comes on here and finds everybody sorry for poor Hennon, and a grave and all that, and then the grave is opened and he sees stones and dirt. He'd know Hennon wasn't dead, wouldn't he?"

"That strikes me as being the natural conclusion," said Dalton gloomily. "Almost anybody might go as far as that."

"And then he'd turn the virtuous act on us, and demand to know where Hennon was."

"Like as not."

"Well, could I, as the executor of Hennon's will, refuse to tell him?"

"An executor can do any blamed thing he likes as long as other people will let him. But an order from the court will yank that box out of the ground so quick the bones inside would rattle."

"Can't we fix up a grave robbery?"

Dalton sat up and took notice.

"We might. Coyotes have been robbing graves lately—nit. But we could say so. We've got to do something or drop the whole thing. The fellow is a rascal all right. Hicks says so, and so does Murray. But he hasn't done anything to give us a handle on him. He may be suspicious of a trap, too."

"Can't we fix it with the court to refuse?"

"We can't fix it with every court in Texas. We might as well take him out to the monastery and introduce him to Hennon."

"Has Murray said anything?"

"Murray is close to nervous prostration, and Jackson feels symptoms of paresis. I'm under the weather myself. We put up a fine job and hit our thumbs with the hammer."

I lit a cigar and smoked long and furiously.

"Say!" I shouted. "Couldn't we fix Hennon up somehow so he couldn't move and bury him a while?"

"I thought of that. We might smother him to death."

"I've read of people being rendered unconscious—put into a cataleptic state, and kept that way in a grave or some such place without any air."

"I've read of it. I read once that a man cut a cat's head off and threw body and head in the river, and the cat went home with its head in its mouth. I never had much confidence in the story, however."

"You're a consoling cuss. You're the lawyer in this case and planned it all. You've got to get us out of it somehow."

"Will you stand for what I do to get you out?"

"What do you mean—will I stand for it?"

"Darn it! We're all in the same bog. We've got to pull each other out somehow. I haven't thought it all out yet, but we've got to do something. I'll try the job of throwing a scare into him first.

"I'll send a notice to him and to you that I want to see him and you here. And I'll get Murray and Jackson. If they'll back you up when you refuse to permit the grave to be opened, it'll work maybe. If it don't work, I'll have to think of something else."

"Well, try the bluff," I said, and went wearily and moodily back to the hotel.

Late that night those in the game received from the hands of a messenger a note from Dalton. All read the same except for the name.

Mine read as follows:

> MR. JOHN DALE:
>
> You are hereby notified to appear at my office at 9 A.M. to-morrow, in the matter of the will of Mr. Ralph Hennon, recently deceased. Yours, RUFUS DALTON.

I'm a temperance man, but when Jackson came into the Gray Wolf that night after he had received his notice, with a face on him so long he almost trod on it, I walked silently out to the bar with him and paid. It was up to me.

We drank silent toasts. I don't know what Jackson's was. I'll gamble it wasn't complimentary to me.

Anyway, at nine o'clock the next morning we were in the office of Rufus Dalton. I had not seen Mr. Hennon in the meantime,

and his face was very white when he came in. He looked at everybody there, and seemed very ill at ease.

Dalton's face was grim and had an adamantine firmness I admired.

"Gentlemen," began Dalton with the most judicial manner, "I have called you together on a matter that has made more or less disturbance in Dattleton. We all know that our friend Ralph Hennon was killed—shot dead by some miscreant unknown. He was buried with due honors and respect, and it seems fitting that we should permit his body to enjoy the calm that was denied him in life.

"Mr. Dale here, who is now the person most interested, is somewhat perturbed at the idea of having the grave of his partner desecrated by an exhumation. Therefore, in order to give him the opportunity to refuse his permission if he so chooses, it is necessary to read the will of the late Ralph Hennon. I will proceed to do so."

He read the will, which was not a very long one, and Caleb Hennon sat with his little eyes almost shut and a grayish pallor playing around his lips, and the muscles tightening until it seemed that he must be grinning, though he was very far from that.

Perhaps he suspected that a trap was being laid for him, provided, of course, that he was guilty; or, perhaps, if innocent, he merely saw the fortune of Hennon sliding rapidly away from him. And as Dalton read on, in a monotonous voice, that part making me the executor of the will and guardian of Robbie, the man's face turned positively green.

"Do I understand, then," he cried, leaping to his feet as Dalton ceased, "that you are the executor of my nephew, and that you refuse to permit me to see his body?"

"I must take that position," I said as calmly as I could. "You see, the fact that you are the only relative except the son doesn't really affect the matter. Suppose my poor friend and partner had had three or four hundred relatives, none of them interested in his estate, and they all came here in strings and demanded that the grave be dug open and the body exhibited. It would be preposterous, as you can see for yourself.

"In the first place, it would require a force of men constantly at work to do the exhuming. The undertaker would have to be present each time. And the expense would be too much for the estate to stand.

"Further, the health authorities would object. So, in view of the possibilities, if I establish a precedent in Dattleton now, I must decline to have Ralph Hennon's grave opened."

The man swayed. He looked from one to the other. It was clear that his mind was in a mad whirl. Was he in a trap? What was the game?"

But his nerve was magnificent. He did nothing, said nothing, that could not be attributed to bitter disappointment and rage. Not a word or action that would justify Hicks in arresting him, for a shaking hand is not proof of murder when there is no other evidence.

"Did you see the body of Ralph Hennon when he was dead?" he asked Hicks in a shrill voice.

Hick was game.

"Yes," he said; "I saw his body."

"Did you see his body dead?" demanded Hennon of Murray.

"Yes; I called a coroner's jury."

"Did you see him dead?" he asked of Jackson.

"I embalmed him and buried him," said that admirable individual.

"Then, in the name of Heaven," cried Caleb Hennon, raising his hand in that direction, "I pronounce John Dale the murderer of my nephew, and demand his arrest at once."

(To be continued.)

AN ARAB PROVERB.

THE man who knows not that he knows not aught—
He is a fool; no light shall ever reach him.
Who knows he knows not, and would fain be taught—
He is but simple; take thou him and teach him.

But who so, knowing, knows not that he knows—
He is asleep; go thou to him and wake him.
The truly wise both knows, and knows he knows—
Cleave thou to him, and nevermore forsake him.

Anonymous.

HIS SLEEPING-CAR TRAIL.

BY GARRET SMITH.

A Tale That Involves a Detective, a Telegraph Operator, a Clergyman and a Few Others in a Sunday Morning Mix-Up.

GEORGE LAVERY, fledgling detective, was acting without orders. As a result he had within his reach the clever crook who, for three weeks, had baffled the police force of Penchester. To Lavery alone would fall the glory of his capture.

Nevetheless the enthusiast knew that in a strict sense his actions had been unwarranted. When he had seen the bank-looter swing aboard the Bradenberg local, he was well aware that Jordan, the man assigned to this case at the N. and C. station, was within hail. Clearly it had been Lavery's duty to give Jordan the tip and keep his own unauthorized hands off.

But he knew Jordan's method. The orders were to nab the fugitive on sight. The regular man would simply have stepped on the train, arrested the desired one in a matter of fact fashion, utterly devoid of any dime novel romance, and, in the opinion of Mr. Lavery, thus stupidly inform the fleeing one's accomplices.

Now Lavery's private theory was that a good sleuth would track the robber to the place where he had hidden his loot and capture man, money and pals. He believed he could do it. In fact he had said some arrogant things to that effect among his associates when the chief had refused to put him on the case.

Particularly was he disgruntled that Jordan had been preferred over him. Their terms of service were equal and between the two existed a jealous rivalry fruitful of much ill feeling.

The affronted one was a new member of the force, and in his own estimation, an important one. He was filled with the lust of promotion. Moreover, there was a handsome reward coming to the man who captured James Trudeau. Added to that was the hope of downing his hated rival.

Trudeau, by five years of apparently faithful currency handling, had cajoled the directors of the First National Bank of Penchester into making him cashier. Two months later a hundred thousand dollar deficiency was discovered in the bank's assets. At the same time Trudeau faded out of public vision.

Then it was learned that he had an old criminal record. A woman acomplice had apparently made away with the plunder.

There was evidence that the fellow was still hiding in town, and Lavery, who knew Trudeau personally, had put in his spare moments hanging around the station he surmised the looter would make for, hoping for luck to throw him into his hands.

It had. The rush hour had been waning when he saw his quarry slip through the exit gate and aboard the local that was just starting. The man was well disguised, but not too well for the keen eyes of his acquaintance.

The detective climbed on the next platform. He stood where he could see the head he sought in the dim corner of the forward coach. They were now well out into the early darkness of a cloudy autumn evening.

As they left the last switches of the yard the watcher saw his prey rise and step to the platform, putting a cigar in his mouth, as though bound for the smoker.

"Going to jump," thought the detective, also dodging out to his platform. "That chap won't take the slightest chances on being followed."

Lavery knew there was not as yet any possibility that Trudeau had noticed him. These were simply the wily moves of a fox laying a false trail against possible pursuit.

Sure enough. Peering ahead from the bottom step, he saw in the dim light of the forward window a rigid figure shoot back and out into the blackness. Lavery followed.

The detective lay silent beside the rails till the noise of the train died in the distance, though a sharp pain in one ankle, wrenched on a frog as he fell, nearly made him cry out. Then he heard some one hurrying away.

Rising, he hobbled in the direction of the sound. They were now in the dim outskirts of town, a fact both favorable and unfavorable to the pursuer, who, despite the ease of keeping himself hidden, found it difficult to hold his man within range.

Over the tracks they stumbled, lighted vaguely here and there by faint rays from switch-lights, which the pursuer carefully avoided. Then down a precipitous bank, through an abysmal ditch and a tangle of season-old weeds continued the mad chase.

They mounted a board fence that for the moment to the crippled detective seemed an impassable stockade.

Still the fugitive gave no sign that he scented pursuit.

The fence was the first of a painful series bounding the little box-like rear yards of an outskirting street. These they hurdled and found themselves on the Nile Road, the northeast limits of the city.

For a mile or more the trail of faint-falling footsteps led along this highway. Once they barely missed passing under the nose of a policeman, but discovered him in time to make a wide circuit and escape unseen, an item equally pleasing both to pursuer and pursued.

Then they struck the tracks of the D. M. and P. and here a little way from the road the crook halted and his shadow did likewise.

Evidently Trudeau meant to catch a train which would take him out of the city in a direction exactly opposite to the false lead he had started. At this point all trains held reduced speed that made the Nile Road a favorite hangout for hobos bent on "beating the shacks," as runs the tramp phrase for getting a free ride.

Three locals passed untouched and then came the big Southwestern Limited. Now was the time. Lavery slouched as close to his man as he dared. Trudeau jumped the first "blind," as the platform of a baggage-car is called, and the detective an instant later made the second.

The next stop was Ontowana. There, to Lavery's surprise, Trudeau dropped from the "blind" and boldly entered the day-coach. The detective, crouching in the other end, saw the fellow present a mileage book and the conductor passed on without the slightest suspicion.

In the busy railroad center of Walden the man made his next break. Here he stepped from the Limited and started as if for the exit, then at an unfrequented point in the train-shed, he suddenly turned back and caught another local train.

Lavery followed, but the train had scarcely begun to gather speed outside the train-shed when Trudeau was off again. This time the sleuth nearly lost him. Instead of making for some rendezvous in Walden, as the detective expected, Trudeau doubled back through several side streets and reentered the station by a side door of the waiting-room.

In that interval of darkness the wily fugitive had changed his disguise so successfully that when he appeared in the lighted room, Lavery for a moment was baffled. Had he switched off and followed the wrong man after all? But on closer inspection he recognized a characteristic feature and saw through the trick.

Trudeau boldly made for the Pullman ticket-window. Unobserved, Lavery slipped up to an angle in the wall and stood concealed within a foot of his quarry.

"Lower berth on the 12.03 for St. Louis," he heard the crook demand.

"Car 1, lower 6," said the agent passing out the slip.

Trudeau walked leisurely away without noting the man at his back who had been ostentatiously studying a notice beside the window.

Quick as a flash came an inspiration to the sleuth. Hastily buying a ticket to St. Louis, he returned to the Pullman window. Trudeau was now at the exit gate.

"Anything on Car 1 of the 12:03 for St. Louis?" he asked. "I like to ride well forward."

"Plenty," was the response. "Light travel to-night."

"Give me an upper about the middle of the car," said Lavery. "I'll take upper six if it's empty."

Accustomed to deaing with all sorts of sleeping-car cranks, the agent merely smiled wearily at these exactions and passed out a slip with the desired booking.

The detective hurried out to the train-shed just in time to see Trudeau disappear in car 1 of the train which had just pulled in.

Lavery waited in the smoker of the next car till they were well under way and he felt sure that the crook had taken to his berth. He was satisfied that the man had completed his evolutions and, confident that he had sufficiently bewildered any possible trailers, would calmly sleep the night through and alight in St. Louis, the last place on earth in which the Penchester police department had reckoned on finding him.

As the detective climbed cautiously into upper 6 he heard, despite the rumble of the train, a reassuring snore from the man under him.

For an hour Lavery lay in his clothes enjoying the triumph now so certain. He had merely to follow the no longer suspicious

Trudeau to his lair, then call in an officer of that jurisdiction and not only gather in the robber but his associates and his plunder.

And he was thankful that there was no more foot-racing for the pain in his ankle was fast becoming acute. In fact, he soon began to worry for fear it would force him to end the chase.

Then it was that an incident occurred which convinced him more than ever of his wisdom in getting a berth next to the man he sought. Trudeau began talking in his sleep.

Eagerly the sleuth hung over his man, straining neck as well as ears till he nearly fell out on his head. Here was a chance of getting some clue to the fellow's purposes.

It was not till the train slowed down at a station, however, that he caught anything tangible.

"Yes, Grace," I'm coming to stay this time. In the morning, little girl," was what he heard.

"Grace!" exulted Lavery. "That must be the woman! I'll try a little suggestion on him. That sometimes makes a sleeper talk, they say."

"Yes," soothingly whispered the overhanging Nemesis.

The sleeper sighed and stirred.

"Yes, dear," he mumbled. "You have all I have to give. I'm coming to you in little old Roseville."

Lavery almost shouted in glee.

"I must get Grace's other name," he decided hitching down a little closer to the sleeper at the imminent risk of a catastrophe. The train was beginning to move again.

"Grace! Grace!" whispered Lavery.

The man below him stirred a little.

"Who is Grace?" demanded the detective sharply.

"Grace? Grace Tennant, of course. You know," came the reply.

Then the somnambulist made a sudden wakeful move and Lavery dodged back. He had carried his experiment as far as it was safe and learned all he needed to know.

Drawing a time-table from his pocket, he eagerly studied it in the dim light. It was as he remembered. Roseville, the sleeper's confessed destination was a little way-station on this very road just this side of Harrington, the next stopping-place of the Limited.

Trudeau's purchase of a ticket to St. Louis was another blind. He would slip off the train at Harrington, execute some more dodging, then take a rig or an early morning train for Roseville.

But here was another difficulty. Lavery's ankle positively wouldn't permit him to follow any more roundabout dodgings. Trudeau might easily drop him in Harrington and get to his lair ahead of his pursuer. As soon as the crook joined his pal in Roseville the couple might vanish back in the country and never be found. Then, too, perhaps the girl would be meeting him in Harrington.

In an instant the mind of the resourceful Mr. Lavery was made up. Climbing from his berth he sought the train conductor.

II.

A HALF hour later, Lavery stood on the platform at Roseville. A little cajoling of the conductor and a display of the detective's badge had brought the train down to a speed permitting a jump accompanied by another anathema at his throbbing ankle.

A moment he rested on the sound member and watched the tail-lights of the Limited disappear around the bend. Then, overcome by a revulsion of feeling, he wished himself back aboard.

Suppose Trudeau had wakened at the last enough to realize what had happened and should alter his program? Perhaps the man had been awake all the time and had feigned his little sleep talk to throw the sleuth off his track. Lavery had acted on impulse. Now his move seemed particularly childish.

Through the window of the telegraph office he saw the night operator dozing over his keys. Beyond the station the village slept.

Only a moment of misgiving and then the young man's resourcefulness returned. He could telegraph to the next station and have Trudeau arrested there. Better alter his program than let the man escape. Perhaps, though, he could learn something from the operator. He wouldn't avow himself yet.

A tap on the window aroused the knight of the brass key.

"Don't be alarmed, my friend," soothed Lavery. "I'm just a harmless traveling man. Got the Limited to slow down and let me off so I could do this town up in a hurry and get away the first thing in the morning."

A moment the startled eyes blinked at him through the window, then the operator roused himself.

"First thing in the morning!" he snorted sarcastically. "Do ye think this is a wide open town? You can't do any business here on Sunday. Back up there!"

The detective gasped. Till that moment he had forgotten that the next day was Sunday. Then he forced a chuckle.

"Well! Well!" he laughed. "To-morrow *is* Sunday, isn't it? I've been on the road so much lately I'd lost track of the days. I remember now."

Then he paused, weakly realizing how foolish his statement must seem. He could think of no further explanation. Plainly the operator thought him drunk, and no wonder.

"Can you direct me to a hotel?" he asked, thinking of nothing else to say.

"Now, see here, old man," replied the other in the tones generally adopted to soothe children and inebriates. "You can't git into the hotel at this time in the morning. Come in here and sleep it off on a bench. Got banged up a little, didn't ye?"

The man had by now opened the waiting-room door and with comprehending eye was surveying the clothes in which Lavery had floundered through ditches and over fences.

But the detective didn't purpose to be shut in the railroad station and be turned over to the village jail in the morning.

"Now, don't worry," he remonstrated. "I'm not drunk, just a little dazed by my jump from that train. No. I won't come in. By the way, I met some people from around here once. Maybe they'll take me in. The Tennants. Know them?"

"Old Deacon Tennant? Sure," was the reply, still a little reserved.

The detective was pleased to note, however, that he was dealing with a person of no great keenness. What made his heart leap for joy, though, was the discovery that there was really a Tennant family in the neighborhood. So the slumberer had not altogether misled him after all in his sleep-talking directions.

"That's the Tennant who has a daughter Grace?" ventured the sleuth.

"Sure," assented his informer. "They live up this road across the track, third house on the right. The girl just got home last evening. They may be glad to see ye at two o'clock in the morning."

The last remark was plainly very sarcastic and Lavery, with a brief "thanks," stalked away in as dignified a manner as his lame ankle would allow.

He had decided not to telegraph for Trudeau's arrest. The Grace Tennant of whom the crook had murmured did live in Roseville, as he had said. She was still home. He'd see that she didn't escape. It was unlucky that he had aroused the suspicions of the station-agent, but he could explain to that worthy and shut him up if necessary.

In a few moments he had made out in the blackness the house to which he had been directed. In front of it he paused, and then came another attack of misgiving.

Perhaps the intention of Trudeau to seek Miss Tennant in Roseville might be a mere sleeper's delusion. Perhaps she had been a lost love of the bank-looter's innocent youth, of whom he had been dreaming. Well, at any rate he must see it through.

Lavery still hoped that his quarry would arrive in the morning and determined to explore the Tennant grounds a little and find a good place to conceal himself and await developments. There was nothing to be gained by disturbing the family till he had more reason for doing so.

He had just made the circuit of the place, and was crossing the front lawn again, when a light flashed in his face and a strong hand grasped his collar.

"That's about enough for you, mister," rasped a voice in his ear. "Come along now, quiet, or I'll shoot ye full of holes."

Lavery was so astonished that he allowed himself to be half led, half dragged, back to the road before he found speech. Then he made a determined stand.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "You are making a mistake."

"Be, am I?" grunted his captor, throwing a pair of iron arms about the struggling young man's body.

Then the stranger gave a low whistle and hurried steps were heard in the direction of the station. In a moment another man arrived, and Lavery, seeing resistance was useless, allowed himself to be dragged back across the tracks and into the lighted telegraph office.

Then he understood. One of his captors was the station-agent, who had evidently acted on suspicion and called the other, whom from a conspicuous tin badge on his coat-lapel, the city sleuth knew to be the village constable.

The officer put a pair of handcuffs on the prisoner and pushed him into a chair. Then the two stood in front of him and grinned congratulations at each other. At that, Lavery found his wits.

Raising his manacled hands, he turned aside the front of his coat and displayed the badge of the Penchester detective service. His captors examined it for a moment, and the amateur was visibly impressed. Not so the constable.

"Fake!" he snorted.

"Now," said Lavery, ignoring the skepticism, "if you will kindly reach into my coat-pocket you will find other credentials that will

show you that this performance was a little hasty."

The village peace guardian did as he was bidden, and came on a bunch of letters all addressed to Lavery at police headquarters in Penchester. This time the constable's face showed that the prisoner had scored.

"Now," went on Lavery, "take my revolver away, lock the waiting-room door, and remove my handcuffs. I give you my word of honor that I have no desire to escape. In fact, I had intended to call on the officers of the village as soon as I was sure of my ground. The mistake is more mine than yours. I should not have been snooping around without a local warrant. I hold no grudge."

The two men, still a little doubtful, did as they were requested, however, and then Lavery, seeing that frankness was necessary, told them the story of Trudeau and the clue that pointed to Grace Tennant as the man's accomplice.

As he progressed, the faces of the men before him showed signs of increasing amazement. When he had finished, the constable broke out.

"Look here!" he almost shouted. "Do you know who you are talking about? Grace Tennant is the daughter of the leadin' citizen of this place. She's popular and goes around a lot, but there ain't never anything been said against her. She's jest back from college. And this here crook you talk about! Why, the young man that's waitin' on her, an' has been fer a year, an' the man that's expected out here in the morning, is the minister of the Baptist church here, an' always supposed by everybody in this part of the country to have made the earth and planted the trees."

Lavery, for a full moment, could merely sit and stare at his informers in stupid, speechless surprise and chagrin. It was the rural constable who finally recovered first. There was a new light in his eye.

"Why, say!" he exclaimed in sudden excitement. "What sort o' lookin' feller is this bank looter?"

"Tall and dark and smooth-faced when not disguised," answered Lavery.

"So is this Rev. Corson," said the other, now all excitement. "And he ain't been stayin' here, except Sundays, since he came a year ago. He said he was in the seminary in Chicago, so he's been comin' in here early Sunday mornin's and goin' back Sunday nights. He ain't been here in three weeks or so, havin' it give out he had finished the seminary and was takin' a vacation before comin' here for good. To-day he begins his regular work, and him and Grace plans to be married next Friday. Seems he was all wore out and had to rest up. Gosh, it looks as though the reverend fitted in with your Trudeau!"

"Fits in! Of course he fits in!" yelled Lavery in glee. "He's the same man. Been away three weeks? Why he was hiding in Penchester! Don't I know him personally? Didn't I hear him talk about this town in his sleep? Why, he's just been playin' you people here for suckers. This girl has hidden his swag for him, and the pulpit has been a fine blind. And she's been away at college! Who knows where she's been?"

Lavery was elated. He had won out. Trudeau was surely walking right into a trap. Crook and money would be captured now in a few hours. And what a story for the papers! "Bank Looter Plays Preacher—Caught by Clever Young Detective," he seemed to see in front-page display heads.

But even now the matter of getting the handcuffs on this wily crook was a delicate one. For that, a dramatic climax was arranged.

The telegraph operator and the constable were won over to cooperation and secrecy by promise of a share in the reward. They agreed that, while the means were a little irregular, the end justified them.

The local justice of the peace, who was routed out of bed at four o'clock in the morning, agreed also to this doctrine, and readily granted warrants for the arrest of the "Rev. Martin Corson, alias James Trudeau," and such other persons as the evidence should warrant. He also issued a search-warrant for the Tennant premises.

At five o'clock the three hounds of the law roused the Tennant family. The good deacon was at first highly indignant and used some language not consonant with his religious professions on Sunday morning. But when the evidence against his future son-in-law was unfolded he was half convinced.

It appeared he was not particularly loath to hear such evidence, as he had opposed the match with a poor preacher as long as he could. He refused to believe, however, that his daughter knew of her lover's culpability.

Then came the daughter's turn, and Lavery was baffled. She had overheard the charges against Corson, and if they had occasioned any surprise she had recovered from it. The detective tried every art of the third degree at his command, but was met only by a quiet smile of defiance from the piquant lit-

tle country beauty. Even her father was puzzled.

The deacon finally agreed, on condition that there be no search of his premises at present, that he and his family should remain in their home that day under technical arrest, and, to avoid any interference with justice, Miss Tennant should be locked in her room. The young clergyman was expected to drive into town early in the morning and go to his boarding-house, where he would dress for the ten-thirty service. He would not be expected at the Tennant home till afternoon.

So Lavery got the justice of the peace to watch the Tennant place, still feeling some misgivings over the baffling girl. Then he and his two original assistants, the constable and the telegraph operator, proceeded with arrangements for the grand public climax by which they hoped to make the Rev. Corson, alias Trudeau, confess everything, including the defiant Miss Tennant's connection with the case.

III.

A SUPPRESSED buzzing of surprised comment swept over the little congregation of the Roseville Baptist Church as the bell tolled for the opening of the morning service. There was a craning of necks, first one way, then the other.

The two centers of interest were the foremost corner pews at either side of the little auditorium. In the right-hand pew sat the village constable, and in the left the night telegraph operator. Both shifted about in their seats in great embarrassment.

And well might they suffer confusion, and no wonder the spectators were perplexed. Not since these two worthies sluffed off their knee-breeches, along with the parental leash, had they been seen in a house of worship. What could it mean?

"S'pose they come fer prayers?" shrilled old Miss Van Zant in a stage whisper that reached the ears of the two and deepened the red hue of those organs.

They had not. Nevertheless, both at that moment felt that a prayer or two thrown in extra wouldn't have done any hurt.

Those of the flock who came in at the last stroke of the old bell found a third point of interest in a stranger who stood in the corner of the entry, relieving the weight of a bandaged ankle by leaning heavily on a cane.

The scene was laid for a grand coup. The spying constable had seen the minister come into town as per schedule and go direct to his boarding-place, all unsuspicious of trouble. A little later he had walked across the open field from the back street and entered the session-room at the rear of the little church. Then the word had been passed to the other conspirators, and they had arranged themselves as before mentioned.

A few minutes later the Rev. Martin Corson stepped through the door beside the pulpit and mounted its steps. As the wheezy notes of the little cabinet-organ died away and the clergyman advanced to his desk to lead in the opening prayer, the murmur again broke over the audience, just now hushed with expectancy, and this time it rose almost to a shout.

For the constable had mounted the pulpit almost in lockstep with the preacher, and had firmly grasped one of the half-uplifted arms. At almost the same instant the telegraph operator had leaped to the other side of the dumfounded man and pinned tight the other arm.

Then, before the captive had recovered from the paralysis of surprise, or the outraged audience could make a move, there came a shout from the other end of the room.

"Stop!" it quavered. "Let him go. There has been a mistake."

It was the voice of Lavery. With eager anticipation the detective, watching from the entry, had seen the door beside the pulpit open to admit the man he had chased so effectively. As the preacher entered, Lavery's heart stopped suddenly. He hobbled forward a few feet and tried to speak, but for the moment his tongue refused him till after his two helpers had nabbed their prey, as agreed, and stood waiting for the public denunciation by the central-office man from Penchester.

But at that moment he would gladly have sunk into the depths of the earth. The man in the pulpit was not James Trudeau. Tall and dark he was, to be sure. There are many of that type. But the clerical prisoner looked no more like the bank-looter than he did like the painter's ideal conception of the late Adam.

IV.

NEVER before in his life did George Lavery regret anything quite so much as that sprained ankle of his, which prevented him from following out the one idea that occupied his stupefied brain in this moment of bewildering anticlimax — namely, that it was up to him to run, to go away from there as promptly and remotely as possible.

One look into the faces of the constable and the telegraph operator showed Lavery that even they were filled with resentment. Be-

fore the congregation recovered to the point of action, the minister and his two captors advanced down the aisle, and in unison demanded an explanation from the detective. Then the people rose as one man and crowded around them.

Only the pastor remained calm. With some difficulty he quieted the others; then, in level tones, which, however, showed no sign of compromise with this new manifestation of the power of darkness, he said:

"Now, sir, explain this outrage."

In halting diction the humbled sleuth told his story, interrupted now and again by the constable, eager to show that he and his friend, the operator, had acted in good faith. When Lavery reached his quotation from the slumbering bank-robber which had directed the sleuth to Roseville and Grace Tennant, the minister lost his calm; and when the narrator gave the account of the young woman's refusal to talk, he became greatly excited.

"That's enough," he said. "There's something strange here. We must look into it. Young man, let us talk this over."

But while Lavery had been speaking some of the young men of the congregation had departed. When the minister, leading his late shadower by the arm, forced his way out to the door, he found further passage blocked by a small mob. The young element of the congregation had quickly gathered a crowd of the unregenerate, who were fired partly by friendliness for the minister and partly by the village tough's hatred for a city man.

Two leaders of the aggregation held a big, old-fashioned, angular and splintery fence-rail, and it was evident they intended to treat Lavery to an exit that, to their minds, fitted the offense. The constable grinned with pleasure at the sight, and with a wink let the mob know that the forces of the law were, for the moment, quiescent.

Unheeding the minister's protest, the young men grabbed Lavery, and with no gentle hands were dragging him away, when another surprising thing happened. The churchman, without so much as removing his long, clerical coat, leaped into the midst of the group, and, before any one realized what was happening, had handed out a series of upper-cuts that would have done credit to a heavy-weight pugilist in training. When the ecclesiastical fists ceased their activity, four of the rioters were reclining on the church lawn, and the rest had drawn off and stood looking as though they had heard the blowing of the last trumpet and weren't hopeful of the outcome.

"Now," roared Mr. Corson, "I'm ashamed of the young men of this fair village. I am particularly ashamed of the officer of the law who allowed this disgraceful affair to get under way. This young stranger here has made a great mistake, of course. We all do that. He is, however, a duly accredited officer of the law in his own community, and there is something in his story that needs examination. I will attend to that. I ask you to disperse quietly, and leave him to me. We will abandon services to-day. And you, Mr. Constable, do likewise. I give you my word of honor that this gentleman shall not get out of town without your consent."

With that, the fighting parson led the crestfallen Lavery toward his boarding-place, and the throng, thoroughly cowed, made no move to follow them.

Once alone with Lavery, the minister asked him to repeat that part of his story that had to do with Grace Tennant, his *fiancée*.

"And he knew Grace!" murmured Corson to himself. "And Grace refused to deny anything! It can't be! You must be lying!" he wound up fiercely, turning on Lavery again.

"I beg your pardon," he added, an instant later. "I am all unstrung. Come! We will visit Deacon Tennant."

In a few moments they entered the Tennant yard, and were met there by the deacon himself in great agitation.

"Grace is gone!" gasped the father.

Now it was Lavery's turn to support the clergyman. The young man turned deathly pale, and for a moment threatened to collapse.

"Tell me about it, Mr. Tennant," demanded the detective.

"Why, a few minutes ago," responded the father, "one of the boys from up the road ran by and said you'd made a mistake about the parson, and they was goin' to ride you out o' town on a rail. Me an' the justice who was here watchin' us went up as fur as the tracks to see what was goin' on, and 'twan't more'n five minutes later when we heard a rig drive out of our yard, an' looked an' it was Grace. She'd pried her winder open and dropped out. Wan't no use to foller her. She had the fast mare on the road-cart."

When the old man had finished, the clergyman, still white and trembling, turned to Lavery and said simply:

"Come to my room."

Not a word was spoken till they were there and the door closed.

"Now," demanded Corson, "tell me what

you make of it, and don't spare my feelings in the least. It may be you have saved me future suffering."

"It can mean only one thing, to my mind," said Lavery. "I'm sorry to hurt you, but this is it. This young woman, while supposedly attending to her college duties, fell under the influence of Trudeau. She made away with his plunder for him, agreeing to meet him near here when he got a chance to slip out of Penchester. It may be she didn't know when he was coming, but they undoubtedly had a rendezvous agreed on, and my arrival this morning warned her."

"I can't believe it," moaned the preacher. "She always seemed so good and guileless. Yet, I never believed in sending a girl away to college unprotected. I can see no loophole in your story. I must have more proof, though. What shall we do?"

"We must follow them," decided Lavery. "We must get the fastest horse within immediate reach and be off in fifteen minutes. We may be able to trail them yet."

All that day the pair drove feverishly about the country, following clues, real and false, till at length, early in the evening, they found the Tennant horse and cart hitched in a little hotel shed near a railroad station some fifteen miles from Roseville. They learned that the young woman, still alone, had arrived there about noon, left the horse, and boarded the 12.30 train, east bound. She had not bought a ticket, and the agent had no idea whither she was bound.

From this station Lavery wired a description of Miss Tennant to every station on the line or its connections that could possibly have been reached in six hours' ride. Then he sent in a report to Penchester police headquarters, outlining briefly his experiences.

This done, the pair put up at the little hotel and awaited developments.

Early the following afternoon a letter arrived at the hotel for the Rev. Martin Corson. A glance at the handwriting, and he opened it with trembling fingers.

Twice he read it through; then, with an inscrutable smile, handed it to Lavery.

"For the first and last time, Mr. Lavery," he said, "I will allow a stranger to read one of my love-letters, inasmuch as this one constitutes a confession in the case."

This is what the detective read:

POLICE HEADQUARTERS,
PENCHESTER, OHIO, September 11.

DEAR MARTIN:

I suppose you think I'm crazy. When that detective told his story Sunday morning I couldn't believe you were guilty, but the evidence seemed so conclusive I knew we were in for an awful trouble. No. I didn't run away. I wanted time to go to Penchester and look it up before they arrested me. If there was a mistake I thought maybe I could rectify it. And if there wasn't—well, if you were guilty, I realized all in a minute it wouldn't make any difference. I just wanted to make sure there was no other woman in the case, as Mr. Lavery hinted, and if there wasn't I thought maybe I could share the blame some way with you.

Do you see? Foolish, wasn't it? But a woman doesn't stop to think much at such a time. Anyhow, I refused to say a word either way to the detective till I knew the truth, for fear it would spoil future moves. That made him think I was guilty, and I don't blame him much.

Well, it's all right now. Trudeau was arrested Sunday morning when he got off the train in St. Louis. He was so surprised that he gave away his partner and the hiding-place of the money. It seems Jordan, the detective assigned to watch the N. and C. station in Penchester, where the thief started, would have let him slip through his fingers if he hadn't happened at the last minute to see Lavery, his rival, who hadn't been assigned to the case at all but was acting without orders, making a dash for a train. Jordan ran up to see if anything was going on and caught sight of the thief just too late to catch him. So he telegraphed the alarm to all stations along the line.

But this Trudeau was so clever that he slipped by everybody and would have escaped if he hadn't recognized Lavery while he was buying his berth in the Walden station, and thought Lavery was the only one following him. Here comes the funniest thing and the cause of all our trouble, which at first seemed to threaten our future happiness.

Trudeau bought berth lower six, car one, on that train. Lavery heard him and bought the upper berth. Now it happened that by mistake they had already put you in that lower berth, and so they changed Trudeau to another on the same car. Lavery didn't know it, and when you, old goosie, got to talking about your sweetheart in your sleep, he thought you were Trudeau.

When you spoke the name "Tennant," and afterward, at the detective's suggestion murmured "Grace," he thought he had a sure clue.

Now, Trudeau was watching from the other berth all the while, and when he saw Lavery getting off at Roseville, thought the chase was over. So when he left the train at St. Louis, he was off his guard. I heard him tell his whole story. So you see, Mr. Lavery by his bungling got the crook caught after all, and the best joke of all here at headquarters is

that he put Trudeau right into the hands of his rival, Jordan.

I've coaxed them not to punish Mr. Lavery, though. I'll be in Roseville to-morrow. For fear you may be tempted to show this to Mr. Lavery, I'll just say good-by. GRACE.

As Lavery finished this illuminating letter, a telegram was handed to him. It was from the police commissioner's secretary in Penchester, with whom Lavery was on terms of intimacy, and ran thus:

You have been voted the prize ass of the Penchester central office. Report for duty to-morrow morning, and hereafter follow orders.

T. Z. B.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN,

Author of "Chicago by Thursday," "Washington or—Worse," "In Savage Splendor," etc.

The Deadly Import of That Central Initial in a Name, Given Certain Circumstances Which Make Privacy Imperative.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN IN GRAY.

"WILKS—BURG!" called the voice from the rear end of the Pullman.

Bryn started out of his reverie with a sudden, heavy sigh and glanced through the windows of the slowing transcontinental express.

He'd reached Wilksburg, fast enough. The straggling houses, the manufacturing suburbs were behind now; they were rambling across asphalt streets—and the train rolled into the shadows of the depot as the trainman, making his exit at the far end, cried again:

"Wilksburg!"

Some half dozen passengers were in line, up toward the door. Bryn rose and reached for his overcoat, caught up his suit-case, and fell in line as they began to leave the car

Rather heavily, his feet followed the procession, until at last he stood upon the platform, nodded away porters who would have seized his grip—and stood still.

People had left their chairs in several of the Pullmans, in favor of Wilksburg, it seemed, for the platform was momentarily crowded. There were brisk men who strode hurriedly away through the throng, their grips swinging, on their way home. There were little groups which had come to meet other little groups. There were kissings and laughter and chattering welcomes, and the groups flurried away to the line of motors chugging outside the shallow station.

There were hurrying men and women and tired children from the day coaches and the banging of trunks farther ahead.

Then, after a little, the crowd had thinned down to a few slow-moving elderly people, making their way toward the exits. The last of the baggage forward had ceased to clatter; the little stools were being replaced on Pullman platforms and uniformed colored porters were returning to their cars and slamming the doors.

And as the tremendous puffing of the locomotive began to shake the place and the wheels started to turn slowly, Bryn stood alone on the platform watching the departing monster which had brought him a thousand miles from home!

One thousand miles from Celia and the five-year-old son, from the star flat of Harlem, from the old, discarded twenty-five-dollar job as manager of one of a chain of tea-stores, from the town of New York and everything else that was placid and comfortable. One—thousand—miles!

Mr. Thomas Z. Bryn, who was in no sense mawkish, swallowed one tremendous lump in his throat, felt one terrible pang of homesickness—and gathered up his bulging suit-case and strode straight for the street, staring with somewhat filmy eyes straight ahead.

On the street, with newsboys yelling at him and cabmen beckoning to him and two hotel bus drivers coming insinuatingly near, Bryn brought himself down to a saunter and coughed loudly and nonchalantly.

At thirty, he was certainly not going to sit down on the curb and burst into a fit of weeping, however strange streets and strange buildings and strange electric cars might affect him for the moment. Why, even the

arc-lights were different, the poles were different, and—

Mr. Bryn caught himself again and walked briskly up the block, toward the busy, brilliantly lighted thoroughfare at the other end.

This was the center of Wilksburg, with her fifty thousand population, then? This was the Middle West city to which he had come, to step into the fifty-dollar job with King's concern—to double his income at once, assure his future and get out of the narrow, unprofitable rut into which he had been dropping for the last two or three years.

And if that well-paid, certain job had lost much of its glitter during the last few hours, it was up to Bryn to recall that occasionally a man has to tear himself away from the old things and plunge into the new, that this was in veriest fact the unexpected chance of his life; that, long before Christmas he'd be able to write Celia, and bid her have the packers come and—

Well, he was glad, just the same, that he had arranged to arrive Monday evening instead of Tuesday morning, when King expected him. Overnight, Bryn would have a chance to grow slightly accustomed to Wilksburg, and in the morning his usual brilliant smile would be ready!

And now—

No, he couldn't afford a hotel, even for one night. That ninety dollars in his hip pocket had come from the savings bank and belonged there. The best thing to do was to look up the Elm Street boarding-house the man in the smoker had recommended, and with such supreme self-command that he nearly frightened the youngster into a faint, Bryn fairly roared at a newsboy:

"Where's Elm Street?"

"What—" the boy jumped back. "Where's what?"

"Elm Street," repeated Bryn, more mildly. "Number fifty. Is it anywhere near Tenth Street?"

"Well—Tenth Street's down-town here—couple o' blocks down there. Elm Street's about ten blocks up-town. The red car'll take you there!"

"Thank you!" said Mr. Bryn, as he headed for the red car.

A matter of twenty minutes, and he was sitting, coatless, in a comfortable second story room at No. 50.

The landlady, a comfortable soul, had regretted that she couldn't give him the front room. It didn't matter.

She had deplored his arrival too late for dinner. It didn't matter.

He had declined her offers to "get *something*." It didn't matter! There were, doubtless, restaurants enough where he could satisfy his needs if he wished!

Indeed, nothing mattered—save to be alone behind a locked door and sit down and stare at the carpet, with his head between his hands, as if the last earthly hope had vanished.

What on earth had happened to him?

Why, two days ago, when word had come from King that *the* position was waiting for him, and that the quicker he showed up the better, there had been a general celebration in the flat! His time to move up in the world had come, justly and early enough to be worth—almost anything!

Celia's eyes had glowed glorious, justified faith in him. The boy had asked some twelve thousand questions about Wilksburg and the prospect there for five-year-olds. Jones had come in from across the hall, and wrung his hand and congratulated him mournfully, the while wishing to the skies that some kind friend in Wilksburg or Honolulu or anywhere else would yank him away from the assistant bookkeeper's job with the woolen house. Just about now, the boy was going to bed and—

And Bryn jumped to his feet and scowled! This was about the first time he had been called upon to know real homesickness.

Well, he'd fight it off. He'd wash up a bit, put on a clean collar and go out and take stock of this new town, meanwhile thanking Heaven that the chance of his life had actually arrived.

His hand was on the knob below when the big negress who had admitted him scurried to his side with:

"You goin' out, sah?"

"For a little while."

"Missis says, maybe you like a latch-key?"

Bryn pocketed it absently and departed.

One section of Wilksburg he knew slightly, at any rate—the route of the car that had brought him up-town. He'd take a walk down that way—stop for something to eat, perhaps—and then probably look up that Tenth Street address in the business section, so that he could walk in at nine the next morning and surprise King and the company of which he was secretary!

Some few blocks toward the down-town district and Wilksburg became distinctly lively. Along Wilks Avenue, shops were lighted brilliantly, some open, some closed. People were out in plenty, some going briskly, some walking leisurely in the crisp October air.

There was a theater and an electric sign without, bearing the name of a prominent star whom Bryn had seen in the late spring in New York. He sighed and quickened his pace a little. There was another theater, farther down. Nearer at hand, he espied a pair of restaurants; they were very, very far from the "quick lunch" sort he had expected to find.

Their windows were heavily curtained with lace, and within were men in evening dress, and countless shaded electric lights. Wilksburg wasn't exactly a mining town, after all!

Bryn passed on. About all he seemed to need was a couple of sandwiches from the first delicatessen store, to eat in his room. He'd plow through this crowd of strangers and—

He stopped short and wondered what it was about!

He'd seen the two men walking along, half a block ahead of him, and apparently chatting peaceably enough, a minute back. Now, evidently, the one had struck the other a terrific blow, for the man was on his knees, swaying and shouting.

He lumbered to his feet and rushed his assailant. The assailant seemed quite ready —and just there the mysterious crowd that springs up in every city street closed in about them.

It was a fight! Mr. Bryn felt that a fight was about the stimulant he needed just now, and he broke into a run and forced his way into the gathering.

Whatever the argument, it was being pressed earnestly, he noted by glimpses through the throng. The two men were down now, and hammering each other as if the fate of the nation depended on a quick settlement of their difficulties.

Yes, and now the little fellow was on top!

He had managed to get astride the larger man and, with knees dug into his ribs, was holding his saddle perfectly, dodging furious blows and pounding the nether person's face with almost fanatic enthusiasm.

As a street fight, it was really a highly successful and enjoyable affair; and the thoroughly thrilling point was coming now. The bigger gentleman had gained a grip on the smaller gentleman, and was heaving, presumably about to whirl him off and dash him to bits against the hard pavement, when—a couple of heavy-weight policemen suddenly forced their way through the mob, separated the pair without effort, and stood them up, apart, to cool.

It was all over but the patrol-wagon, and the crowd relaxed.

"Draw!" chuckled the tall, broad man in gray, just ahead of Bryn, half turning.

The new man in town glanced up at the large, smooth-shaven face beside him.

"Is this the usual thing here?"

"Give it up," smiled the latter. "This is my first night in this town."

"Mine, too," said Bryn fervently.

The other glanced at him.

"What's the matter? You a New Yorker, too?"

"Yes!"

"Same here!" said the man in gray.

He stared over the heads of the crowd with waning interest; and then, as one of the officers produced note-book and pencil:

"Time to leave now!" the man in gray announced.

"Eh?"

"I don't want to spend to-morrow in a police court as a witness, do you?"

"Hardly," laughed Bryn. "I—"

But the man in gray was edging his way discreetly out of the throng. It was an example worth following, Bryn reflected. He'd get to the outskirts himself, loiter about after the fashion of most city-bred mankind, until the wheels and hoofs of the law had clattered up to remove the malefactors, and then stroll home.

A few minutes of effort, and he was on clear sidewalk. The man in gray had vanished, and Bryn was distinctly sorry. He'd have given something for a chat with him just now.

The wagon came, with speed remarkable to one who did not know that the station-house was a bare three blocks farther downtown. The combatants were loaded in, policemen filled the spare seats, and the vehicle drove off, with the best part of the crowd trailing after.

And that excitement being over, and having stimulated him a trifle, Bryn would steer for bed and try to sleep off his pangs of loneliness.

Head somewhat down, he trudged a block or two.

And, with a jerk, his head came up!

He was not in imaginative shape this evening. His ears hadn't deceived him. Somewhere down that dark side-street of closed buildings three distinct shots had been fired.

He was just coming to the corner. He stopped short, and peered down the black way to the bright incandescent gas-lamp almost at the end of the long block. And, as

his very excellent eyes narrowed and strained, Mr. Bryn knew that he was not mistaken.

The man who had been reeling about and clutching at the lamp-post for several seconds had thrown up his hands and fallen flat to the street!

CHAPTER II.

ONE'S OWN AFFAIRS.

FOR the moment Bryn stood, all but gaping.

Whether the theaters or the fight crowd, or the two, had drawn the populace from this particular spot, there wasn't a soul in sight just then for a block in either direction.

A crowded car whizzed by, to be sure, and Bryn gave a rather faint, bewildered yell at the crowd on the platform.

Not one of them heard him; not one of them looked in his direction—and Bryn stared down the block again.

Had he fancied? No, he hadn't! Those two good eyes of his dispelled any doubt.

Right in the circle of light of that distant street-lamp a man was lying prone—very still and all alone.

And Bryn started to his aid at a dead run. No steps followed him.

His sudden dart into the darkness had attracted as little attention as the shots. Whatever he was due to find, he was going to find alone. And rather abruptly he found himself hoping sincerely that it might be nothing worse than a too ardent devotee of the flowing bowl putting a fireworks finish on his spree.

Puffing a little, he was perhaps ten yards distant when—he slowed down suddenly.

Something swifter than alcohol had struck the unknown. He was lying face down, and from his side a narrow, lengthening dark line pointed toward the curb.

Inch by inch that grisly, shining little line crept and crept and crept, even as Bryn watched, with his heart beating hard. A low, deep moaning came from the unfortunate and sent a chill through him.

Bryn looked around wildly. Not a building on the block held a living being, he guessed rather accurately. Just beside him lay a long, fenced lot with a huge "This Plot for Sale" in white-painted letters. Behind, across the street, were dimly lighted, closed stores with shuttered windows above. Whatever district of Wilksburg it might be, the police alone must have charge of it at night.

And this poor devil—Bryn knelt beside him suddenly and tried to lift his head.

It hung limply, and the moan grew louder.

A tug, and Bryn had turned him over.

And he started back with a gasp.

The man was in evening clothes. The white bosom of his shirt showed all too plainly the source of that thin crimson line. From the temple, too, came another fine trickle.

Things whirled about Bryn for half a minute, and he turned sick.

Then, with a hasty glance around, he noticed that there was no weapon in sight; that the man's hands were limp and open; that, unless a weapon were hidden somewhere under his open overcoat, it was a plain case of, at the least, attempted murder!

With a gulp, he raised the unlucky one's head again, and, however witlessly, shook him violently as he cried:

"Hey! Are you—are you—"

Startlingly the eyes came open. They were dazed, dull eyes, and for an instant they winced with pain. Then they stared up at Bryn, and:

"You—he—" the fellow mumbled.

"Who are you? What's your name?" the new man in town asked loudly.

"N-name?" Only a groan followed.

"Do you know who shot you?" Bryn tried again.

"Know? Yes—I know," came hoarsely. "Say! You—you—him—"

"Well, who was it?" the New York man cried, his voice shaking with excitement.

For answer, the other gripped hard at his sleeve.

"Lemme—lemme—get up!" he choked. "We'll—get him—you'n I."

The muscles strained hard and relaxed in an instant. The man on the sidewalk dropped back with a loud groan.

"I—he—you—you get—"

"What the deuce is this?" cried a voice over Bryn's shoulder.

The New York man turned, and a tidal wave of relief swept over him.

He was no longer alone. Bending over them was a thick-set little man in a business suit, whose paling face looked down at the terrible sight.

"This man's been shot. Isn't there any way of getting an ambulance here?"

The man stood erect quickly.

"Certainly there is. Isn't there an officer about?"

"No. I seem to have been the only one to hear the shots."

A bunch of keys rattled.

"St. James Hospital is only two blocks off," the newcomer said crisply. "I'm a

trustee there, and they'll answer my call without waiting for the police. Stay with him."

Locks snapped back at the store door behind Bryn. Electric lights, suddenly switched on, illuminated the blood-curdling little scene and cast a weird semicircular "Real Estate" in shadow letters on the pavement.

The injured man's eyes were closed again now, and he was breathing very slowly. Little as Bryn knew of the doctor's calling, it seemed a very safe guess that the poor fellow's very minutes were numbered.

Inside the store there was a sharp jingle of a telephone-bell—some few sharp words—and the man was beside him again with:

"What is it—suicide?"

"Can't be," said Bryn, as he stood erect helplessly and stared at the victim.

"Eh?"

"There are no powder-marks on him."

"You didn't see him shot, did you?"

"I saw him fall."

"Were you down here?"

"No," Bryn answered abruptly. "I heard three shots and I came to see what was the matter. I saw him fall, up at the corner of—Wilks Avenue, isn't it?"

"From the corner?" the business man asked, rather incredulously.

"I have good eyes."

"You must have almighty good eyes!" the other commented, as he looked back over the long block.

A little period of silence followed—nervous silence, in which Bryn could not keep his eyes from the figure at their feet. Meantime, the man of the real-estate office glanced alternately at Bryn and at the corner ahead.

Then, without its usual clatter, an ambulance whirled up the street.

It came to a sudden standstill before the real-estate office, and the tall young surgeon swung down, bag in hand, and was all but through the door before he caught sight of the business man.

He pulled up with a sigh of relief.

"We thought something had gone wrong in your place, Mr. Ludlow," he explained, rather deferentially.

"Something evidently went wrong in front of my place!" said that gentleman grimly.

The surgeon knelt swiftly beside the injured man, and Bryn knelt beside him, watching fascinatedly as the former looked over the case quickly and talked the while.

"Shot?"

"Yes. Twice—there on the temple, too."

"Gee whiz!" remarked the doctor, after a glance. "How did it happen?"

"Well, how the deuce do I know?" Bryn asked. "I was a good block away when I heard the shots and saw him drop."

"Yes, this gentleman saw that much from Wilks Avenue," Mr. Ludlow put in.

The surgeon looked at Bryn.

"See anybody running away?"

"No."

"Nobody in sight when you got down here?" the surgeon pursued.

"No."

"Nobody else hear the shots?"

"Apparently not," said Bryn, rather impatiently.

"He wasn't shot from any great distance," the surgeon commented. "You hear the disturbance, Mr. Ludlow?"

"I found things just as they are now, when I came down for some papers," the business man replied.

"Umum. Has he been conscious?"

"He was half conscious when I found him," Bryn replied.

"Say anything?"

"Nothing coherent. I tried to get his name and find out who shot him, but he wasn't up to telling."

"Well, what *did* he say?"

"Well—only a mumble about getting up and getting after somebody. That was all I could make out. Is he badly hurt?"

The surgeon stood erect.

"If we get him to the hospital alive, it'll be a miracle—that's all. He has about one chance in ten million. Jim!"

The ambulance driver, after a look at the situation, had opened the back of the vehicle and was ready.

Crisp directions were given. The unconscious man was transferred to a stretcher and slid quickly to the cot, and the back of the ambulance was closed.

The driver was already on his seat. Ludlow stood back in the doorway and watched silently, as the surgeon held the seat poised with one hand and said:

"Hop in!"

Bryn started.

"I?"

"Yes! Hurry up!"

"But I don't know—"

The surgeon snapped the fingers of his free hand.

"My dear sir, nobody can force you to come, but you'll be a great help in making out our report. Moreover, if we bring this man back to life, the sight of your face may recall things more rapidly—if he remembers you. Meanwhile, he is losing his last chance—"

Bryn was climbing in, bowing low under the top.

In a twinkling the seat was down and the strap hooked. And with a touch of the whip, the horse broke into a dead gallop, and the light of the real-estate place flitted away behind.

It was not quite the sort of ride to which Bryn was accustomed. Swaying from one side to the other, his whole attention was concentrated in bracing himself.

Vaguely, he knew that the surgeon was kneeling over the patient. Vaguely, as he all but swung out of the ambulance, he knew that they had turned a new corner and that the gong was clattering its message to the operating-room.

Then the horse came down to a trot and they drove into a broad alley—and backed around toward the open, brilliant doors, where two orderlies were waiting.

With speed born of long practise, the injured man was carried in—and to an elevator—and with the surgeon and Bryn, was going up!

And then, at what seemed to be the top floor of the small hospital, the doors of a big white room swung open. The patient went in. Bryn caught a glimpse of the operating-table, with a blaze of electricity above, the surgeon waved toward a chair—and as the doors closed again, the new man in town drew his first real breath in several minutes!

Verily, if everything in Wilksburg moved as rapidly as the people connected with the hospital, he was going to earn his fifty dollars each week!

A middle-aged man, with pointed beard, came hurrying through the anteroom, clad in slippers and trousers and a pajama blouse, rubbing his eyes and muttering deeply. That, doubtless, was their head surgeon.

A nurse ran lightly after him, and as they passed through the doors Bryn turned away. He had no desire whatever to know what was going on.

The orderlies came out after a little, and slowly walked to the stairs and down—and Bryn was left to his meditations.

In this shining hardwood room, or vestibule, or whatever it might be, with its trim chairs and inlaid floor, he grew rather more calm. And as his excitement lessened and lessened, his annoyance increased.

This certainly had been a choice way of passing his first evening in Wilksburg. He was sorry for the poor devil, of course, and would have done anything he could to help him; but after all, the said poor devil, while of no concern to him, was probably going to interfere markedly with his business and prospects.

For a little, Bryn could have sworn aloud. To-morrow morning at nine o'clock, according to his plans, he would have walked into Bennett & Brand's office, asked for Mr. King—and half an hour later, at the most, been settled down to work harder and more efficiently than ever before in his life! And thereafter, six days in every week.

He broke off with a savage little snort. As matters stood now, the unhappy man in that room was either dead or about to die. It would be bad enough, if he lived, for Bryn saw very clearly that much of his time for the next few days would be occupied in talking to detectives and reciting his part in the affray.

But if he died, there'd be inquests and hearings and investigations and identifications and Heaven alone knew what more; and by the time the officials felt able to allow him a full day of work, Bennett & Brand might—

The ambulance surgeon was at his side, and gave him a furtive glance.

"Will you come in, just a moment, please?" he said softly.

Bryn arose with a sigh of resignation and followed.

"There's no hope for him," the surgeon whispered as they passed into the hot, white place. "We've got him back to consciousness, but he can't live ten minutes."

"I believe it's my duty to learn if this man can recognize you."

Bryn shut his lips and followed.

The man was stretched upon the table now, a sheet covering him and a bandage about his head; and the elder surgeon, standing gravely beside him, beckoned.

The injured one's eyes were open, but the gaze in them was very distant. As they rested on Bryn, though, they lightened with recognition.

The man from New York moistened his lips and waited. The younger surgeon forced him a trifle closer and spoke in the patient's ear:

"This—man—do you know him?"

"Yes—yes— He—the lamp-post—shot!"

The eyes were closing slowly.

The bearded surgeon darted forward and clutched the dying man's shoulder—and they opened a little as he cried:

"Is—this—the—man—who—shot—you?"

The eyes turned dully toward Bryn.

"Yes. He—"

His lips worked for a little, but no sound

broke the vault-like stillness of the operating-room. The surgeon bent close.

And, as Bryn stood there frozen with horror, the eyes closed forever.

CHAPTER III.

PERILOUS PROSPECTS.

FOR a minute no one moved, no one spoke.

A nurse tiptoed forward then, and, glancing at the doctor and receiving his grim nod of confirmation, drew the sheet lightly over the dead man's face—and the tension broke.

As concerned Bryn, he knew that his throat had closed, and that his knees threatened to give way.

That unlucky thing upon the table—delirious, mistaken, dazed, or whatever else—had identified Bryn as the man who killed him.

And the younger surgeon was gripping his arm hard now, with a hand of no childlike proportions. The elder man still stared grimly at him; then, walking around to them, vouchsafed:

"You did a clever job—getting him here, Thurston."

"The idea struck me the moment I saw the case," the ambulance man responded in a brisk, low tone. "Ludlow must have arrived a second or two after it happened, and he was afraid to run then."

Firmly Bryn was being walked out of the operating-room. The doors swung behind them, and they were in the empty, immaculate anteroom again. The man with the beard looked him over with a hard smile.

"Every doctor his own detective," he observed sharply. "If this town doesn't get a new administration and a new police-force, we'll all be wearing shields and carrying clubs for our own protection."

He spent some twenty seconds staring into Bryn's eyes. "Gad, you don't look capable of a slaughter like that!" he burst out.

"And I'm not capable of it," Bryn shouted, as his voice returned with a rush. "I tell you, I never saw that man in my life until I found him lying there. I never—"

"Be quiet!" broke in the other. "This isn't an insane asylum. There are sick people here. You needn't say anything. We understand perfectly. And if you create any disturbance, we're capable of quelling it here without any undue excitement."

"But you—"

A large hand went over Bryn's mouth. Quite unceremoniously he was walked to the stairs and down them, and eventually to what seemed the extreme rear of the second floor.

The elder doctor opened the door, and Bryn saw before him a comfortable room, with a badly rumpled bed at the side.

It was the surgeon's own apartment, plainly enough, for he walked straight to the bureau and found a heavy revolver in an upper drawer.

"*That* will keep your nerves quiet for a little," he remarked. "Now, Thurston, if you'll telephone—"

A sharp knock sounded. The doctor scuffed across in his slippers and answered it.

There followed a few words in a woman's voice, and he turned back and handed the pistol to Thurston.

"Our friend in thirty-two is having his usual spell," he said wearily. "I'll tend to telephoning for the police. Just keep him here, Thurston—that's all. Keep the honors for yourself."

The doctor slipped on a bathrobe and left hurriedly; and Bryn was alone with the large young physician.

A faint, rather nervous grin rested upon the latter's lips. He seated himself on the edge of the couch and said:

"Sit down there."

"I prefer standing up," answered Bryn, breathing hard.

"Don't try any little capers. You'll be—um—shot if you do, you know." He tapped the pistol beside him. "Sit down there."

Somewhat astonished at himself, Bryn obeyed. His rather wild eyes were fixed on the ambulance man, but his brain was racing along other lines.

In the eyes of these two medical persons, as surely as he breathed, he was guilty of cold-blooded murder. They were keeping him there, an innocent man, awaiting the police.

And when they came he'd be locked up. Whoever the real murderer might have been, he was far away now — and the eternally sealed lips had placed the guilt upon Bryn.

He was growing a little calmer now, and calm brought reason; and reason brought sheer desperation.

Not ten minutes back he had contemplated escape to avoid losing his valuable time. Now he was contemplating escape to avoid losing—perhaps his very life.

His hands twitched and his eyes snapped, and—

"Cut out that jerking around," the doctor commanded.

"What!" Bryn stood erect, and the other grew tense.

"Sit down there again and tell me about it, Bill," the ambulance man suggested with some nervousness.

"Tell you! I tell you I'm innocent. I—"

"Well, don't shout. We—"

Bryn swallowed hard.

"I'll tell you just this," he cried. "Whether that dead man was out of his head or—"

"He wasn't out of his head."

"Or whether it was pure maliciousness, I never laid eyes on him until I saw him fall. You've no right to detain me here."

"We'll take the right." Dr. Thurston, having watched Bryn's striding up and down for a minute, himself arose; and he was rather paler. "Now, just quiet down and—"

"And, by Heaven, I'll make you suffer for it! If you try to bar my way—"

Bryn walked to the door and laid a hand on the knob.

The other doctor apparently had locked it from the outside, and for the moment Thurston seemed quite as interested in the phenomenon as Bryn himself.

"No—no use trying that," said the former, somewhat breathlessly. "You're not going to get away."

Bryn bit his lips.

"So sit down," concluded the doctor. "The best thing for you, if you're innocent, is to wait and prove it. If you can't, Heaven help you!"

"Eh?"

"We've got a new district attorney here. You'll be his first murder case, my boy."

The words went through Bryn as he walked back and forth. A new district attorney—and a first murder case. That, he fancied, would have meant a conviction for the first man found near the seat of the crime.

For him, discovered alone with the dying man, later identified as the slayer, it meant neither more nor less than the death penalty.

His innocence would have no bearing on the case now. He had no way under the sun of showing it, no way of controverting the testimony of the victim himself, no way of doing anything save going to trial, sentence, and execution.

But he *was* innocent. And being innocent—whatever the legal view of the case might be—he had every human right to defend his innocence, here and now, as best he could.

Cornered there as he was, he was never to see Celia again on earth, save with bars between them. The boy would never again climb on his lap and hang tight around his neck for a good-night kiss. Never—

An extremely peculiar sensation was stealing over Bryn. From a thoroughly thunderstruck, every-day citizen, he seemed to be turning into a being of unearthly craft and confidence.

He was going to get out of that apartment and make good his escape. There was no question about it, and there would be no delay.

The other fellow held a pistol, and was watching. It did not matter in the least. He might as well have had a cannon for all the difference it made to Bryn.

Just what was going to happen Bryn could not have told in those few startling seconds of the odd change within him. Whatever else he might lack in the way of accomplishments, he could wrestle pretty well; and he could hammer most men of his weight to pieces in the way of boxing.

Not that either of those things were likely to be of use to him here. There could be no disturbance without complicating matters.

But he looked Thurston in the eye quite placidly now. The man was nervous and white, and Bryn's heart beat harder. Thurston's hands were shaking a little, too, and his grip on the pistol was tense. Further, the contraction of his eyes told too plainly of a sincere desire to see the uniformed law enter.

Bryn glanced at the pistol again from the corner of his eye as he walked slowly across the room. Dr. Thurston's nervous trigger-finger was white as it tugged unconsciously at the metal. Had it been upon the trigger itself, the weapon would have been discharged long ago. It happened to be pressing on the outer guard.

"See here, doctor," said Bryn, "can't you understand what you're doing to an innocent man?"

"What? Get back there!" the surgeon commanded.

Bryn paused, and there were not two yards between them.

"Good Heavens, man!" he cried forlornly, throwing out his hands helplessly. "Can't you see—"

It had happened! And it had happened almost before Bryn himself realized the fact!

His hard, white fist had doubled into a knot of iron. His right arm had swung back in the barest fraction of a second. He had seen the pistol jerked upward and at him—he had seen the momentary look of horrified

amazement in Thurston's eyes—and between those eyes he had landed a blow with his whole weight, his whole muscle, his whole terrified desperation behind it, that might well have gone through the plastered wall.

The pistol dropped soundlessly to the sofa. With a little leap, Bryn caught Thurston's form as he fell toward the cushions, and dropped it there without the crash that would have followed a second's hesitation.

Then he stood erect and panting. He had knocked the senses out of the ambulance surgeon, and the way was clear.

Or clear for whatever number of seconds or minutes might elapse before the shock passed away. They might be very, very limited, and—

The door was locked. The window? Well, whatever might lay beneath that window, Bryn would have to chance the drop.

Noiselessly he sent up the lower sash and looked out for a moment. It was peculiarly black and still down there. Certainly, it wasn't the street — although a street-lamp's light seemed to be shining around the corner of the hospital, or something of the sort.

One leg went over the sill and then the other, and he rejoiced to find it broad. He turned quickly and closed the window. That meant a few minutes more, perhaps, before his means of escape would be noted.

And then—without hesitation he took a grip, allowed his body to slide until he hung at arm's length—and dropped.

Prepared for the shock, he hardly felt it. He could not have been six feet from the earth when he released his hold.

And it was earth, too—not stone or asphalt, but soft ground. Also, conditions just above the earth were pitchy black for the moment. Bryn squinted about eagerly, and as his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, the street-lamp came to his aid.

He was within the high-walled hospital garden. He ran to the wall on tiptoe, across the dry grass; and he found the top a yard above his reach. Quickly he felt his way along, toward the hospital. There must be a gate of some sort and—yes! The gate was there! Not that alone, but it was secured within by a heavy spring-latch.

Deftly, cautiously, he drew it back, and never a creak came to betray him. The gate came open; and the instinctive craft seemed still to be with Bryn, for he stepped out boldly and drew the gate after him very quietly.

He turned and walked away, briskly and openly; and the ears that had perforce to do his backward gazing told him that he was not pursued. Inscrutable Providence seemed to be traveling hand in hand with his innocence that night.

Where the street led mattered not at all. He contrived a low, whistled tune and marched on, with one solitary thought—No. 50 Elm Street!

He'd get there first, and then think. He'd get into that room unnoticed and plan — whatever was to be planned. Just now, where was Elm Street?

Five blocks in Heaven alone knew what direction, and he found a broad, well-lighted avenue, with a callow and overdressed youth on the corner. Bryn halted, with:

"Pardon me. Am I on the way to the Empire Theater?"

"Eh? The Empire?"

"Yes."

"Well—you've got to go about twelve blocks this way to—let's see. This is Chester—the next is Wray—the next is Beech—the next is—Elm—say! Walk down to Beech and then go over—that way—and take the Wilks Avenue car. That's the shortest way from here."

Bryn thanked him and walked on. Chester—Wray—Beech—and the next is Elm. Fate was pointing the way for him; he had not even to board a car and ask a conductor the way to Elm Street.

And something like a superstitious chill went through him; runs of luck like this business of getting away usually have a sharp break ahead.

He struck Elm Street in the low three hundreds; he turned down and walked placidly to No. 50. He found his blessed latch-key and entered quietly.

The lights were low in the corridors. He made his way noiselessly to his room, and lighted his own gas-jet.

And, with his door locked, something seemed to snap. Mr. Bryn dropped weakly into a chair and stared at the wall. There was no fear of immediate capture, and the physical part of him turned decidedly limp.

His brain, though, was busy enough, and it was chiefly concerned just now in cursing its owner for the most unmitigated fool that ever walked.

An hour or two ago, with the morrow opening the brightest kind of future, he had imagined himself miserable.

Now he was a fugitive from the law—and liable to be held for murder in the first degree!

The cold fact, now that his excitement had departed, staggered him. He'd have to act,

and act quickly. He had made one break after another; now he might find the way out as best he could.

He could have taken the same course as the rest of Wilksburg—and let the dying man alone. He hadn't. He could have declined to go to the hospital; it was no affair of his. He hadn't. He could have refrained from stunning that nervous young physician and escaping, and thus confirming his guilt.

But, after all, there was nothing particularly foolish about that escaping trick. Five minutes more, and he'd have been in the hands of the police—just as he might be five minutes from now.

Bryn licked his lips. He had two choices. To remain where he was and communicate with King, and depend upon his innocence—he shook his head.

The case, whatever his innocence might be, was too black. In the hands of an energetic prosecuting attorney, he would be "railroaded" to death.

Let that sting as it might, it was the truth, and his only course was a quick exit from Wilksburg. Yes, the quicker the better. Even now a general alarm was probably out for him.

What with the day of travel and the evening of excitement, he was deadly weary; and he'd have to find the way out of town and walk to the next station, wherever it might be. His future was gone—and he'd have to go after it.

Stiffly he rose to his feet. He'd leave suitcase and all behind and merely walk out with his ninety dollars and the pistol he had always carried in the store, as baggage, and—

With a gasp, one hand went to his hip-pocket. The pistol was gone.

With a stifled shriek his left hand went to the other hip-pocket—and Bryn tottered against the bed and sat down, swaying and mouthing.

In the wild excitement he had taken small account of the lightness of those pockets. Now, as the two were turned inside out, Bryn collapsed.

He would stay right in Wilksburg now and take whatever might be coming; for both pockets had been deftly picked. His wallet—and his precious money—was gone!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORNING PAPERS.

BRYN stretched and blinked, happily as usual. It was time to get up.

And the four panes in the upper sash and the stiffness in his body dispelled the happy blinking within one second.

Bryn, wrinkled and towsled and glaring of eye, sat up very abruptly and looked around the room. The whole wild nightmare was perfectly real. He was in Wilksburg, and in the boarding-house, stretched across the bed and fully dressed—and a fugitive!

Instinctively he listened for steps in the hall. Then he smiled rather sheepishly. It was hardly likely that any one was coming for him on the second of his awakening—and he seemed to have slept all night.

Indistinctly, he remembered throwing himself across the bed and choking back a very genuine desire to weep. Then utter exhaustion had come and—

Well, it was morning now, at all events. He reached for his watch. That, too, had been stolen.

A groan escaped Bryn. His pistol might have protected him, at the worst. The pickpocket had taken it. His ninety dollars might have helped him out of town. The pickpocket had taken it. His watch, at a pawnshop—if he dared appear in public—might have given him the means of getting a little way from Wilksburg at least—and the pickpocket had taken that, too.

And now—what?

He dared not communicate with King, old friend though he was. King might come and urge him to give himself up and depend upon his innocence; which would be perfectly good advice, because King wasn't under suspicion.

He dared not try writing home for money and remaining in the boarding-house until it came.

Such a letter would bring Celia to Wilksburg, just as surely as the sun rose, and perhaps to find him behind the bars. Now, very likely, she was reading about the Wilksburg murder in the morning papers, and wondering whether he had seen anything of it. It was better so. It might be even better, he reflected gloomily, if she never heard from him again now.

He looked forlornly at the one-dollar bill and the two or three silver coins he still possessed, and he wondered with a dreary smile how the pickpocket had neglected them.

Where the dickens had his pockets been picked, anyway?

In a crowd somewhere, doubtless. On the station-platform—passing through the station—on the street without—and, yes, on the crowded car, too. And during the street fight he'd been in the thickest jam of all!

Quite true; but in the other places he had had his overcoat swung over his arm, while in the evening he had worn it buttoned. It lay between two places.

Either in the crowded, inadequate station or, more probably, in the jammed street-car, a neat professional worker had had perfect access to those two hip-pockets—and had unwittingly stolen things of more value than he knew.

Of course, there was the barest possibility of the theft having taken place in the crowd, for he had been pretty well pushed around there; once, indeed, he had been almost propelled through the man in gray, who stood in front of him, and—

The man in gray—the man with whom he had interchanged a few words!

Bryn's heart began to pound. *There was the proof of his innocence.*

He arose, and walked rapidly up and down the room. The man in gray would have to be found—that was all!

He'd been sent by Providence to pass those few sentences with Bryn. Why? Because, beyond a doubt, there was a record at police headquarters of the exact time at which that fight call was sent in! And there was another record at the hospital of the exact time the ambulance call was received.

The man in gray could testify that he had left Bryn in the fight crowd at the time the call went in for the patrol. Probably, for that matter, people enough could be found who could swear that he was with the crowd when the wagon left.

But the man in gray was the one who could identify him positively!

Then, taking into consideration the lack of any motive, his easily proven ignorance of Wilksburg, and his good record, and the manner in which he would have had to race several blocks and commit a murder for no earthly reason, if they could make a case against him—bah!

And—by thunder! The pickpocket had done him a service! Even though he himself was ignorant of the fact at the time, he'd been unarmed!

Penniless or not, Bryn seemed to find new life. He'd get out and look for that man in gray!

At best, the authorities could have no description of himself that differed much from that of any other well-built citizen of medium height, with gray eyes and no distinctive features. Unless he ran upon Ludlow or some of the hospital people, he was almost safe to wander abroad, for a little, at any rate. He'd put on the old brown trousers he had brought in the suit-case for lounging; his overcoat would cover up the new blue coat and vest that might have been noted. And a low collar, with a dark bow-tie, would change the looks of a man who had been seen with a high collar and a bright four-in-hand. He'd trust again to last night's luck.

When he descended to breakfast he was very nearly himself.

The breakfast-hour was long past. The clock marked half past nine, and no other boarders were in sight.

His breakfast arrived from the kitchen. A little later, as he ate rapidly, his landlady herself appeared on the scene and settled down at the head of the table, with:

"I thought most likely you'd be dead tired, so I let you sleep, sir."

Bryn ate on, after thanking her; and the lady seemed to appreciate his devotion to breakfast.

It was an excellent breakfast, and he appreciated it highly just now. His brain grew more and more easy. He saw clearly that the whole thing hung on a fool young doctor's fictional detective mind and the identification of a man plainly out of his senses, dazed, and dying.

Older physicians enough would swear that such a thing was worthless as evidence.

His lips attended to the landlady. Yes, his room was excellent; his bed was first class; everything was all right. And then, just as peace had settled on his soul, Bryn's heart stopped short at:

"You're glad your initials aren't 'T. Z. B.' this morning, aren't you?"

Mr. Thomas Z. Bryn merely stared, with popping eyes and a heart that threatened to break through his vest; and he managed a faint:

"I beg pardon?"

"'T. Z. B.'" the landlady repeated distinctly. "Oh, you haven't seen the papers, though, Mr— Why, I never asked your name!"

"Rollins!" said Bryn almost in a shout.

His back was toward the window, his expression and his shout seemed both to have passed unnoticed: his hands clenched beneath the table.

What in the name of Heaven did that "T. Z. B." mean? He hadn't given any one his initials, and that infernal "Z" in the middle—

She had found the paper now, and was glancing over the flaring front page.

"Yes, that was right—'T. Z. B.,' Mr. Rol-

lins. Why, there was a fearful murder on Stevens Street last night!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; there was a terrible time. Some poor man was shot to pieces down there in a lonely spot. And they caught the murderer—and he escaped again. He nearly killed one of the hospital doctors and then jumped out of a window. All they know about him is that his initials are 'T. Z. B.' The police found the pistol he used, and there was 'T. Z. B.' engraved on it."

The napkin in Bryn's hand began to tear apart. He realized it suddenly and ground his teeth as he strove to control the sudden violent trembling. Then, rather hurriedly, he glanced at the clock and managed to exclaim:

"Fearful! Those things happen everywhere, though. I never read murder cases in the paper."

"I don't blame you one bit. They give me the creeps, too. But hadn't they ought to lynch that scoundrel when they find him?" asked the lady fervently.

"He—he probably deserves it!" said Bryn.

"I'm awful sorry if I let you sleep too late. You didn't say nothing about being called."

"It—it doesn't matter," Bryn contrived; and he escaped.

In his room, he clutched the bed and shook for a full minute.

The man had been killed with his own stolen gun! Besides having seen him, the authorities had that much more clue to him; but—what wild, outlandish freak of fate had ever possessed the murderer to *steal* a gun for his purpose?

What string of evil happenings had ever sent his own pistol to do murder? Worse—what unearthly, far-seeing accursed force had ever caused him to let his confounded engraver-cousin decorate the weapon when he first owned it, years back, to become now a curse to him?

It had been a unique sort of thing—that monogram cut through the heavy nickel plate. Now—*now* it was a new, overwhelming piece of evidence against him. Without it, that pistol would have been like tens of thousands of others; with it, it stood absolutely alone and damning!

And his suit-case! There was his suit-case right in front of him, with "T. Z. B." glaring at him in black letters.

Had the landlady seen that last night?

No, thank goodness, for she herself had been unsuspicious. But the servants? They would have read the papers; they would be wildly excited about the same "T. Z. B."—and if they came across it on his suit-case when they arrived to tidy up his room!

Swiftly he grabbed the thing and ran to the closet; and, with the initials pressed tight against the wall, he left it in the darkest corner.

Further than that he dared not go. Even locking the closet door, it seemed to him, would excite suspicion.

"T. Z. B.!"

Obliterate that "T. Z. B.!" For the moment it was Bryn's one surging thought. If it had been "T. F. B." or "T. J. B.," or anything else, things would have been different! Almost any man might own such a set of initials.

But that Z!

What in blazes had ever possessed any one to give him Zachariah for a middle name? What on earth did he care about his greatest ancestor, Zachariah Bryn, who had been something or other in the Revolution and governed something afterward? The very dead gentleman who had aided in freeing his country promised now to aid in sending his descendant to death!

Yes, that Z—Z—Z—Z! Bryn's head whirled crazily.

But he couldn't stand there cursing a letter all day. He'd have to get out and hunt for that man in gray. He'd have to go to the hotels, first of all, and ask if such a person had put up there yesterday, and feign to have forgotten his name.

Then, when once he got him, he'd lay the case before him, and—give himself up!

He found his overcoat, and buttoned it up tightly. He stood before the mirror and stared at himself until convinced that his eyes were not as frightened and furtive as they felt.

Then, as calmly as might be, he left the house.

First, to find the hotels. He'd have to inquire of some one. He'd make his way to Wilks Avenue, at the other end of the block, and halt the first apparent man-about-town he encountered.

He walked off with head erect and arms swinging, and an eye which, perhaps, looked a little too squarely at people.

Even up-town here Wilksburg's main avenue was a busy enough spot. Men hurried along with papers in their pockets. Bryn knew perfectly that their sole object in buying a paper that morning was to read about the murder.

Other men on cars were reading papers.

They were reading his own description, probably, at that very moment. Nothing else in the world could be so important, and Bryn knew it.

Proprietors of news-stands were looking at their stock; if they should happen on his description and glance up suddenly—

Half a block of the hurrying thoroughfare, and Bryn turned to stare into a store window. Every eye in town was on him! Every policeman stared him out of countenance—and he could endure it no longer. He'd rest here a moment, looking at the shoes in the window; and then try to face it all again!

And as he looked, it seemed to Bryn that a man stopped short behind him, turned, came to the window beside him and was examining him.

He dared not look around. He tried to whistle softly, and:

"Bryn, did you kill that man?" asked the voice of the man next him.

CHAPTER V.

QUESTIONS AND NEWS ITEMS.

THERE was no mistaking the words. There was no mistaking the name.

And even as he winced and started, with sheer terror, Bryn turned to ice. Fascinated, beyond his control, his eyes met the other's.

He'd been caught within five minutes of coming into the open and—

"King!" he croaked suddenly.

"It's King, Bryn," said the other quickly. "Where are you staying?"

"At—at 50 Elm Street."

"That's where I was going to look for you!" said the other, rather amazingly. "Come back there. I want to talk to you."

He turned without more ado, and Bryn turned with him, and struck off at a brisk pace for the boarding-house.

"We won't talk on the street!" King said sharply.

Bryn's half-open lips closed suddenly. This, emphatically, was a different King! This rather stout, keen-eyed, sharp-voiced, bustling man of business was not the King who had left New York six years ago!

They'd been pretty good friends since boyhood. Bryn could not remember when King had addressed him as "Bryn" before; it seemed, somehow, to sting! And the chuckle and the dreaminess and the slenderness had all left King, too; and now King had even forbidden him to speak!

They came quickly enough to the house. King drummed on the upper step with one foot as Bryn found his latch-key and entered. Then, without comment, he followed the latter to his room and locked the door!

"Any one likely to hear us here?" he asked, as he took a chair to the far corner and sat down.

"N—no!" Bryn said faintly, as he followed. "I suppose not."

He found a seat beside his one friend in town and stared blankly at him for a moment, until:

"What have you done, Tom?" was shot at him in a low voice.

"Nothing!"

"Do you mean to tell me that there are two pistols on earth with that monogram on them?"

"No. It was—"

"It was that same old gun of yours, wasn't it?"

"I—I suppose it must have been, but—"

"Well, who fired it?" King asked flatly.

Bryn drew a long, shaky breath.

"Jack!" he gulped. "Jack—do—do you think I'm capable—guilty—of murder?"

"Do I? No, I don't!" King answered. "I wouldn't believe it, if you said so yourself! But—look here, Tom! Have you taken to drink or—anything worse since I left New York?"

"I never took a drink in my life! You know that."

"I know you never did when I was with you. Are you sure—"

"Good Heaven, man! With a wife and child and a living to make—do you suppose I'm a lunatic?"

"If I had, I'd never have sent for you!"

King crossed his legs and drew breath.

"Did you get in last night?"

"Yes."

"Thought you were going to land this morning. I've been expecting word from you—I had been, until I read the *Globe* this morning."

"I changed my mind."

"Well, why didn't you communicate with me? Why didn't you come up to the house for dinner, or telephone at least?"

"I—I thought I'd rather be a trifle independent," Bryn stammered.

King looked at him sharply.

"Well, it was a blamed queer notion!" he commented.

"It was because—" Bryn started to confess.

But King had drawn a paper from his

overcoat pocket and spread it out before him; and cold business alone was in his eye.

"Now, we'll get straight to the bottom of this thing," he announced. "The whole town's excited over it—three pages in the *Globe*, and that's supposed to be *the* paper for accuracy. Wait. Here! Here it is! Unidentified man is found dying, all shot up, with a man answering your description perfectly! Why, even to that old trick of yours, of scratching the back of one hand with the nails of the other, when you're nervous. You're doing it now!"

Bryn's hands flew apart as if a bomb had exploded between them!

"Were you the man who was found with the fellow that was shot?" King fired at him.

"Yes! I heard shots and found him—"

"Hold on. You were taken to the hospital with the wounded man, and before he died, he identified you as the fellow who killed him! Is that right?"

"The man was dazed—crazy—delirious—" Bryn began wildly.

"After that, they held you. You nearly killed an ambulance surgeon—"

"I hit him once!"

"He's in bed still. Then you escaped and the police and everybody else lost track of you. Is that correct?"

"Yes!"

"Tell me exactly why and how it happened!" King commanded. "Did the man attack you? Was it somebody with a grudge against you, or a drunk, or what? The police know nothing about him, save that his clothes were made in Los Angeles! What trouble did you have with him?"

"I had no trouble with him! I never saw him before he was shot, I tell you, Jack! I—"

"That's the story the *Globe* said you told. The comment is that you'd shot the fellow, heard this man Ludlow coming and hadn't time to run. They—they say you're the nerviest criminal—oh, thunder!" King broke off short and stared at the carpet. "What was it, Tom?"

"The story I told was the truth and nothing but the truth," Bryn answered quietly.

"Then why did you do that spectacular escape?"

"Jack, if you'd seen that man, dying, accusing you just as he died—"

King shook his head.

"B-r-r-r! I understand. Now what?"

"There is one man in town who knows that I was attending a street fight just a few minutes before—that I'd have had to run all the way to get to that corner and shoot a man."

"What?"

Bryn told his whole story in detail.

King listened. And at the end:

"It's a chance!" he admitted. "Your man in gray."

"It's my only chance!"

"I don't know." King stood erect and stared out of the window. "I *should* advise you to give yourself up and face the music. I know you're innocent. So much for that. But we've got a new man here for district attorney, whose's been praying for a sensational murder for all his five weeks. With a deathbed identification, he'd convict you as sure as God made little apples!"

Bryn did not speak.

"The fact that the police might search for—and not find—the pickpocket who trimmed you would be laughed out of court. We may as well face that squarely. On the other hand, if you run, you're admitting your guilt still more completely."

"If I can find that man—"

"He may be of use and he may not. They might smash his evidence and they might not. I'm not saying that our district attorney's office is corrupt, of course, but—I know him—and I'd bet a hundred to one that, if it came to a last pinch, he'd produce an eye-witness to the murder!"

"But—"

King was thinking again. When he faced Bryn once more, his face had taken to hardening.

"Tom," he said, "I've gone to work and cracked you up to the skies with Bennett & Brand. Both of them are expecting to see a perfect man before night. By the mercy of Heaven, I don't think they know your middle initial—or your first name, for that matter—and here you go to work and get yourself mixed up in the murder of the decade, even before I know you've arrived in town!"

He looked away.

"I'll tell you the frank, candid truth!" he muttered. "I think I'm going to disown any knowledge of you, if I can! I'm not sure of it yet, but—I think so. I've got a dandy job there!"

"I don't blame you! I don't want to involve you—" Bryn began miserably.

"Yes, I think I'm going to disown you. You haven't a chance in the world, save in flight. I hate like the deuce to say it, but

you've got to run! If you're caught now, it means almost certain death for you and more notoriety than I ever want for myself in a lifetime. *I've* stood sponsor for you with the finest concern that ever did business on earth, and you've knocked everything heels over head now! When they come here for you—"

"No one knows that I'm here—"

"They don't?" King looked at him with a hard, dry smile. "You'd better invest two cents in a morning paper and learn more about yourself. Why, right at this minute, in all probability, the police are going through all the boarding-houses in town looking for new arrivals."

"What?"

"Why not? That's the plan the *Globe* says they're following. It didn't take them long to discover that nobody in the new Wilksburg directory—and it's a darned accurate one, too—owned those confounded initials, T. Z. B. They can do mighty quick and successful work, you know, by going through all the hotels and boarding-houses in the different precincts. I found you at the first of the advertised boarding-houses I tried."

Bryn rose in a panic.

"Then, while we're talking here—"

"Exactly! And that's why I've been talking so fast. Look here, Tom!"

"Well?"

"You've got to get away from here somehow. You're broke. Here's a ten-spot—it's all I have on me. You'd better hide right here in town during the day. Call up the house about seven, and I'll make an appointment and—er—have some one meet you with a couple of hundred in cash."

"But—"

"Pay it back a hundred years from now if you want to." King hurried on. "Then hire an automobile or a rig and drive over to Laymore. It's twenty miles north of here, and you can get a north-bound train on the I. O and R. branch there, that'll land you almost in Chicago. After that, do what's best."

Bryn turned away with a groan. King looked at his back—and bared his teeth and shook his head exasperatedly as he snapped:

"Well, you don't expect me to take you to the concern and say 'Here's Mr. Bryn. The city's ready to lynch him for murder, but I assure you he isn't guilty; which desk shall he have?'—do you?"

Bryn turned slowly.

"No. Never mind. I'll keep this ten, because I'll have to get a little distance from here. Never mind any more. I won't call up. Good-by, King. You'd better get away."

"I'm going." King avoided his eye and reddened annoyedly. "You—you call up just the same. I've been responsible, in a way, for getting you into this. Now I'll have to get you out of it. Around seven, Tom. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Bryn faintly.

He did not watch, as King unlocked the door. He paid no attention to the soft-called:

"Now get out of this house in a hurry, Tom."

He did not even turn as the door closed gently behind King.

He'd give that gentleman five minutes' headway now—and clear out. And King believed him guilty. Or, if he didn't believe quite that, he wasn't willing to side with him, in the face of the black evidence.

Well, the blame for King was small enough, Bryn thought bitterly. An older friend might have deserted him in the same way.

He had an idea that if he himself had sufficient faith in a person to bring him one-third across the continent, he'd let the faith extend a little further—but King knew his own business best.

The five minutes came to an end, and the end found Bryn in rather a different mood.

He was, to all intents, sure to be captured. If he were captured with his unlucky case in its present standing, there could be but one end. But if he could find that very large individual in gray, he'd at least have one shaky leg to stand on, he imagined.

And he might better be taken looking for that leg than sitting here, under an assumed name even, and waiting for the police.

With teeth shut and jaw squared, he picked up his hat, buttoned his overcoat once more and walked out of the house.

He'd walk right to Wilks Avenue again, and resume his hotel tour until—he was forced to desist, at any rate. He'd go to the heart of the business section and find the main hotels for himself, this time without quite so much confidence in the value of the man in gray and with the knowledge that he could not appeal to his only friend in town.

The walk was not startling. Hotels seemed to be few. He found the Wilksburg House and the United States Hotel. He walked into them boldly and asked his questions.

Nobody resembling the man in gray had put up there last night—and the man in gray had arrived yesterday, according to his own statement.

Moreover, they were second-class places, it seemed to him, and not the sort at which that particularly dignified and well-dressed gentleman would stop. Further inquiry, and he learned that the Inwood and the Bilton were Wilksburg's two fashionable stopping places.

They were over on the west side of town, it seemed, and having gained the general direction, he started for them less hurriedly. He had nowhere to stay now but outdoors, and he seemed to be attracting little or no attention in the crowd.

He turned west and found the little square park where Wilksburg's first court-house had stood. He walked through it and sat down upon a bench, and for a long time he stared at the big electric cars running on the street beyond the fence.

They were big fellows, he noted absently, displaying signs of "Denton Manor" and "Whitlette" and "Heatherford and Carnival Park."

They were suburban lines; and the corners of his mouth went down, down, down. If nothing had happened last night, what would he be thinking about those cars now?

Thinking of the trolley rides they'd take next summer—the boy and the boy's mother; thinking of the suburbs of Wilksburg, wherever they might be, as they'd look in the late spring—wondering, probably, whether, some day or other, they wouldn't build a place of their own outside of the city and—

Hurriedly, he broke off his meditations. That sort of mental trend was hardly in order, if he hoped to walk about town with a cheery and unconcerned air.

A newsboy came hurrying through the park, shouting his extras with a vigor that seemed to mean real news.

Bryn started as the word "murder" was bawled into his very face. He stopped the boy, found a penny, and an extremely damp and inky newspaper was thrust into his hand.

It chanced to be the Wilksburg *Evening Times*—a special edition, apparently, that had been in the press twenty minutes back. Bryn shut his lips and opened the sheet. Now, for the first time in his life, he would have an opportunity to read the public's opinion of himself.

And in glaring black letters across the entire front page, he saw, amazedly:

EYE WITNESS OF LAST NIGHT'S TRAGEDY DISCOVERED!

But it was only for an instant that he studied the line. His eyes went magnetically to the big, rough, quarter-page picture in the center of the page, and the caption below it:

J. R. SCARFORD, WHO CALLED AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, TOLD OF WITNESSING THE STEVENS STREET MURDER, AND CONFIRMED THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ESCAPED MURDERER.

Bryn emitted one dry, involuntary gasp. His wide eyes went back to the picture.

It showed a man descending a flight of four or five stone steps. Plainly, he had tried to shield his face from the photographer, for his hat was in his hand and, blurred, had evidently been moving forward to cover his features, and he was laughing.

But the *Times* photographer had been expert at catching people who did not wish to be photographed.

Through his paper he had given to the public a perfect likeness of the man in gray.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HUNTED ONE.

THE paper dropped to Bryn's knees.

He stared and stared, until the picture began to swim and broaden out and turn into a great solid gray blotch.

The man in gray—Scarford, or whatever his name was. That man had *seen* him kill the unknown. The one person on whom his slim hope rested had shattered every last shred of hope by turning straight against him, coming forward to describe him afresh, stating that he *saw*—

Bryn blinked wildly at the sheet.

Why—why—*had* he actually committed the crime? For a moment or two, his sorely tried mind raced back to cases in which people had lost their mental selves for a little, and done things quite as outrageous. Was it possible that he'd suffered some kind of aberration and done cold-blooded murder?

No! It was not!

Breathing hard, Bryn gathered his senses. After thirty years and more of sane and calm existence, he hadn't taken to brain spasms; he remembered every detail of last night altogether too clearly.

But—he took to the paper again, as it lay across his knees.

Every patrolman and detective in the city, not to mention several eminent detectives who were on their way thither, and including the whole population of Wilksburg, were on the hunt for the slaughterer of the night be-

fore—said the grand opening of the article. Happily, one or two tricks or mannerisms of the murderer had been observed during his short stay in St. James Hospital, and the peculiar one of scratching one hand with the other—

Bryn looked at his hands suddenly—and as suddenly they flew apart. He was at it again — that infernally idiotic trick of scratching the back of his right hand with the fingers of his left, when his mind was perturbed, or when he chanced to be thinking hard.

And as he took the *Times* by the edges and spread it before him, he glanced about furtively.

The glance was not altogether in vain.

The policeman outside seemed not to have noticed him, but—*who* was the active little gray-haired man?

Who was that brisk little old gentleman in the frock coat and slouch-hat, away off at the other end of the walk, who was approaching so rapidly? Bryn's all too good eyes narrowed as he looked at him.

He was smiling — an eager, triumphant little smile. He was looking straight at Bryn, too, and trying to make time without the semblance of hurry.

Yes, and the right arm ceased swinging as he found Bryn looking at him, and the right hand beckoned quickly to Bryn.

It was enough.

Be the gentleman policeman or detective, native or imported, or merely a sharp-eyed dweller of Wilksburg, it was enough.

There was still two-thirds of a long block between them. The old man was going away from his gate; Bryn sat almost beside the other gate—and there were cars passing. One of the big fellows was coming up the side of the park at this minute.

The old man might call to the policeman—the policeman might be able to stop him, but —Bryn left the bench and went through the gate in the same second.

A woman with a baby-carriage drew back and screamed as the figure shot by, waving the newspaper at the approaching car. The crossing sweeper stepped back in time to avoid being bowled over.

But the remarkable clear-headedness off his last night's escape was with Bryn again. He gaged the distance between the car and himself—he noted the speed, as it slowed under the motorman's brake-twisting efforts. He could cross about six feet ahead of it, at the risk of his life.

And so that his life would be beyond all risk by not catching the car, he crossed with a margin of perhaps six inches!

Windows rolled past above him—the car was going even slower—and he leaped for the rear platform; and the conductor, dragging him aboard with one hand and ringing his bell with the other, remarked:

"What d'ye wanter do? Kill yerself?"

There was a challenging, homelike sound about that! Bryn returned the glare with:

"Isn't this line running any more?"

"We're on time—we left on time!" the conductor responded.

"Well, I've been waiting twenty minutes for this car!" said Mr. Bryn fiercely.

It seemed the most natural chat he had had since reaching Wilksburg, and it was serving him, he imagined. A man with murder on his mind would hardly pause to exchange compliments with the conductor.

He proffered his dollar bill, and the conductor inquired:

"How far?"

"End of the line!"

"T' the park?"

"Well, isn't that the end of the line?" Bryn risked.

The conductor said nothing as he slid the change into Bryn's hand. Instead, he regarded the passenger with supercilious contempt; and as Bryn stepped within the big car he murmured:

"Aw, what you want's an automobile!"

"And what you want is a new job—and I'll see that you get the chance to look for it!" announced Mr. Bryn, turning savagely.

And then, after a correct and formal exchange of hostile stares, he turned back and settled himself in one of the cross seats. All in all, he imagined that bit of street-car etiquette had settled him in the conductor's mind as a Wilksburg crank—and the murderer was supposedly a stranger!

There were only four or five people in the car. They were not interested in him, apparently, and, quivering inwardly, he unfolded his newspaper once more and—read!

The *Times* seemed to be an enthusiastic little sheet.

It gave the information Bryn knew, and the further information King had imparted to him, and then added a little all its own. The *Times* reporters, as usual, were about to take the criminal. Two of them were certain that they had seen and talked with the man in a down-town saloon last night, before the crime was committed. They had not ascertained his name, but knew that he was a stranger in town from his own lips.

Further, he had a grudge against some one in Wilksburg for, half intoxicated, he exhibited a revolver and talked about "getting square." They had not seen the engraved "T. Z. B.," for that side of the pistol was in the man's hand, as he showed it; but it corresponded in shape and size and caliber with the one now at police headquarters.

Still further, there was some sort of reddish rash on the back of the man's right hand, at which he scratched occasionally. Hence, chanted the *Times*, "Look for the Red Hand!" and opined that it was more dastardly than the black extremity!

Bryn found the unembroidered details of the news report, too—the discovery of the pistol, with three chambers discharged and two loaded cartridges—the fact that two suspects had been arrested, but that Drs. Gritt and Thurston, of St. James Hospital, had stated that neither was the man.

Then, ignoring the rest, Bryn settled to the matter of the man in gray.

It made weird enough reading.

Mr. J. R. Scarford, an extremely wealthy New York merchant, who was in Wilksburg on business, and stopping at the Inwood Hotel, had called at police headquarters before eight that morning and asked for an interview with Chief Scanlon, the substance of which was later given exclusively to the representative of the *Times*.

According to Mr. Scarford's statement, he had been walking on Fenmore Avenue, near Stevens Street, on the previous evening, when he heard loud talking perhaps one hundred feet up the darker street. He paused for a moment and was able to discern two men, apparently in violent argument, in the light of a street lamp.

One of them was in evening clothes, and the other, Mr. Scarford was astonished to find, was a younger man with whom h himself had passed a few words perhaps a quarter of an hour before, as they stood in a street crowd watching a brawl.

Mr. Scarford was about to pass on when, to the best of his seeing, the younger man was pushed violently away by the elder. As he reeled, the former drew a pistol and fired three shots, thereafter throwing the pistol to the street.

He then turned to run, but some one appeared, hurrying down the block from Wilks Avenue, and the younger man quickly dropped to his knees and raised the wounded man's head, obviously to create the impression that he was a mere passer-by who wished to give aid.

Mr. Scarford stated frankly that, seeing help of some kind on the way, and being himself very much occupied with his business interests, he had hurried away from the scene, rather than risk wasting valuable time later in the courts.

When, however, he had read of the unknown's death and the desperate character of the criminal, he felt it his duty to come forward and lend whatever aid he could in taking the man. According to statements made to Mr. Scarford, the man was a stranger in Wilksburg, and had come from New York that evening.

Mr. Scarford could identify the man at one glance, he stated. At three o'clock that afternoon, he was to call at headquarters again and visit the morgue with Chief Scanlon. Meanwhile, at the Inwood, all reporters were denied access to Mr. Scarford!

The paper slid from Bryn's hands to the floor.

Heaven alone knew how long he had been riding and reading. Save for himself, the car was empty, and traveling at a high speed —through fields that had been cultivated, with a house here and there; between lots that wore aged "For Sale" signs and many tin cans and rubbish.

They were well outside of Wilksburg, at all events, and going—where?

And when he came to that "where," what was he going to do next? Would there be a railroad station within walking distance? Could he hire a rig to drive him to a station one side or the other of Wilksburg, and still have money enough to pay his fare for one or two hundred miles farther on?

He shook his head in bewilderment, and stared out of the windows again.

It was all bare waste now; but far, far ahead he made out what seemed to be a great, fenced-in area, with perhaps half a dozen houses in the neighborhood. He stared at it uninterestedly as the car drew closer and closer. At last, over a great gateway in the high boarding, he made out the letters, worn and faded, on the big semicircular sign:

CARNIVAL PARK.

So he'd caught one of those "Carnival Park" cars, and that was where he was due to land—in apparently as barren and godforsaken a region as could have been found in the whole country.

The big car slowed down at last—and stopped.

And with as much of a business air as he could assume, Bryn arose briskly and stepped

out. The conductor looked at him with a curious grin, but made no comment. The motorman, coming to the rear of the car with the controller handle, stared at him; and Bryn caught from behind:

"What's the matter with that guy, Jim? Don't he know summer's over?"

There was a laugh from the conductor — and Bryn was out of hearing.

And he was out of civilization, too, he reflected, as he looked around the bare country.

Carnival Park, plainly, was the local amusement park, and it was a big fellow. Inside the fence, at the far distant corner, he could see a steel tower rising high in the air; there was a hint, to the left, of some sort of roller-coaster device within; the tops of two poles, not very far apart, suggested that in the hot weather, somebody's big tent show held forth on the right side of the enclosure.

He took to examining the houses nearer at hand, and the absence of civilization became less marked to a degree.

Two of them were plainly big booths closed for the winter. There was a dwelling of some size, also boarded up in front, but with smoke coming from a lean-to chimney. There was a small cottage, and on the steps sat two rather rough-looking young men, reading a paper between them!

But, more than all, there were four or five hard-appearing, assorted citizens on the porch of "Bilmer's Hotel and Summer Garden"; and there was one who leaned against a tall beer sign and read a paper aloud; *and the rest were looking at Bryn!*

And, just then, one of their voices rose with:

"What if his pants ain't blue? Can't a man have two pairs o' pants?"

CHAPTER VII.

IN CARNIVAL PARK.

BRYN'S heart took the liberty of stopping once more!

His feet experienced an intense desire to break into a run. He subdued the desire; if anything, he walked a little slower. But his heart took to pounding as if trying to break into a run. He subdued the desire.

This crew out here was reading its morning papers—perhaps, for all he knew, they'd had time to receive that smudgy edition of the *Times*. They knew all about the murder; they knew all about the description of the murderer; they were duly excited about the whole thing.

And right in front of their eyes stood one lone man who answered the description perfectly! The fact that his trousers were brown, and not blue, was perhaps accentuated by the rather marked tan of the former—and very likely that very fact had caught the eye of the speaker on the porch!

In a crowd in the city he would have been comparatively safe.

Out here, where, apparently, he could have no possible business, he had been spotted before he'd walked ten yards! If ever a man lived who could do the wrong thing at the wrong time, Bryn reflected bitterly, he was the man!

The rising buzz of voices was behind him now. He dared a backward glance. It was a brief enough glance, but it told the worst. Three of the inquisitive gentlemen had left the porch; the motorman and conductor had left the car; and, with the motorman standing with folded arms and the heavy handle dangling suggestively from his fingers, they were all staring straight after him.

The pair by the cottage had risen, too.

They looked back at the other group as he approached; then they looked at him.

And, to Bryn's utter consternation, the bigger one came within some ten feet of him, and said:

"Mister!"

Bryn paused with what calm might be.

"Well?"

"Did you—did you want to see any one out here?"

"What?"

"I mean, were you looking for anybody?"

"No one in particular," Bryn contrived in a commendably steady voice. "Why?"

The other laughed uneasily and changed his fireless pipe to the other side of his mouth.

"Why, there ain't many people out here when the park's closed, y'know. Thought you might be hunting for some one that wasn't here this time o' year."

"No, just looking around, between cars."

His voice sounded quiet enough, and he gave thanks for that. He even went so far as to smile quizzically as the other said haltingly:

"Got a match, mister?"

Instinctively Bryn's hands came out of his overcoat-pockets—empty.

"Sorry—" he began.

The other turned a little paler. He hesitated for a moment, and his jaw threatened to drop. Then, as he backed away, his eyes seemed fixed on Bryn's side, and he muttered:

"It—it—it don't matter! It—don't matter!"

Conversation seemed to have reached its end.

Bryn resumed his lonely walk once more, and by the time he had taken three steps he was wondering what the other had been staring at so intently. There was nothing about him to attract attention, or— A great light came to him! "Look for the Red Hand!"

So the *Times* evidently had reached here, and the fellow had been looking for the red hand—in vain. Well, thank Heaven, he owned nothing in the nature of a rash on that hand.

That swinging right was clear and right; and he stole a downward glance at it. And what with the unmerciful treatment it had received in the last few hours, he had managed to claw it to a point of brilliant red rawness that was on the point of bleeding!

A low groan escaped Bryn.

He had managed to manufacture the last necessary touch of evidence to secure his capture. His insane, lifetime habit had created for him the final dash of color needed to identify him with the *Times's* own private suspect.

And out here!

Out here, *where there were not even police to protect him!* Out here, where at any second nearly a dozen men might take a notion to rush him—batter him to pieces, perhaps, in their desire to subdue a desperate character—lynch him, perchance, if they felt that to be proper—but let him out of their sight, never!

Well, it was practically all over but the shouting!

By evening, just about the time that Celia would be watching the letter-man on his last delivery, for her first word from Wilksburg, just about the time Jones rapped on the door to find out if the "old scout" had got there all right—just about that time the New York papers might be publishing a brief account of his capture or his killing by an "infuriated mob"!

He breathed hard as he walked. If they pursued, he'd make a stand and die facing the enemy—for whatever glory he might find in that. If they did not pursue, he'd walk on and on, past the big amusement park; perhaps, by some miraculous chance, he would find a path to freedom for another little space.

The park's big semicircular sign and the park's high gateway were hardly a dozen yards away now, displaying a riot of bizarre colors that had been. Through the gate, the little door that had been cut for between-seasons entrance was padlocked heavily. Bryn turned and walked toward the corner.

And as yet he was not pursued.

With two good city blocks behind, he was at the angle. He turned it and strode along steadily.

Once or twice, he glanced up the high fence beside him. The top was all of nine feet above his head. If he could get over *that* confounded thing. There might be some one inside; there might be a telephone inside; and if there were—well, if there were, Bryn had a very strong notion that he'd call up the Wilksburg police and give himself up to whatever men they could rush out here rather than risk the crowd behind.

The side fence seemed endless. Ahead, it stretched and stretched and stretched onward, a countless procession of broad, up-ended planks, some new, some old, some flawless, some cracked.

And two, by thunder!—two that had argued the entrance matter with an automobile, some time during the bygone summer, Bryn saw suddenly.

Whenever the tragedy had occurred, there were strong traces of the struggle. One board was smashed out to a distance of a foot from the ground. Its neighbor had been pretty thoroughly cracked and splintered. Half buried in the dust was the best part of a tire, torn to shreds; the tarnished remains of what had once been a headlight, lay crushed some feet away; a forlorn hint of a hub resembled a dry land starfish.

But Bryn took little account of the late machine. His interest lay in the splintered board. There was a waving section of timber; he clutched it and pulled. He pushed hard against its abused neighbor, and the aperture widened.

His head and shoulders went through, scraping. Another violent push at the loose board—and he was in Carnival Park.

His excited eyes swept the great space quickly. There were broad walks—boarded booths—a tight-shut Japanese tea-house—what seemed to be a theater, at the other end. And there was neither stick nor stone with which to defend that opening.

Overhead loomed the weather-beaten trestle of the roller-coaster. That could do him no good. Off toward the gateway—what was the little house, standing high in the air on its thick stilts?

There was a ladder leading up to its elevated door; there were round holes and square holes in the sides—and Bryn started

on a dead run toward the deserted motion-picture box of Carnival Park.

There, at least, he could hold them off for a time, if they followed him. There was the bare possibility, too, that the crowd wouldn't find him—for a time at least. And in that time some one outside the park would have communicated with Wilksburg's police.

It was a faint enough hope, but his only one—and he raced on across the wide space, a cloud of dust behind him, and slid at last to the foot of the ladder.

Like a sailor, he ran to the top and stepped upon the square yard of platform outside the door.

He seized the knob and twisted violently. There came a creaking of a rusting latch, and the door opened.

Bryn slammed it, and leaned against the wall, breathless in the half gloom. Whether it had been wisdom or blind following of primal instincts, he was out of sight of the crowd at the end of the car line.

For a minute or two he panted hard. Then he began to take account of his odd surroundings.

There were two or three shelves, empty. There was a rough little desk, with a dried-up bottle of ink. There was a solidly-built stand.

That, probably, was for the moving picture machine, and there was a round hole before it, and a tiny paneless window. For that matter, he noted, there were several more of the paneless windows on the other sides; and, curiously, he looked out.

He was several inches higher than the fence. Just then, he was looking back at the suburban electric car that had brought him. The motorman and the conductor were still standing there—*alone*.

Yes, alone. And the former knot of men were nowhere in sight.

Mr. Bilmer's place of business showed no sign of humans. The man who had been seated before the cottage was out of sight. Incidentally, though, there was a faint dust-cloud floating in the air, just beyond the side fence.

They were following him.

In all probability, they'd armed themselves. They were coming in a body to take him.

Doubtless, they'd find the hole in the fence; doubtless they would enter as he had entered; then they'd look about for him. It might take them a little time to locate him, but—

He stepped to the other side of the box-like little house and surveyed the other side of the park, the side of his entrance. His sharp eyes found the broken boards; and Bryn watched—and waited—and waited—and watched, minute after minute.

He took to the other little apertures in his observatory, and strained his eyes. Unless they'd slipped in elsewhere and were hiding behind distant booths, none of the crowd had seen fit to follow him.

It was odd in the extreme. He crossed again and looked in the direction of the houses.

The suburban car — the car he never should have boarded—was starting on its return trip now. Indeed, it was well under way and gathering speed every minute, and another cloud of dry dust was swirling up around it, and—

What the deuce was that?

Farther off—a good half mile, if Bryn judged correctly — a miniature cyclone was approaching—a cyclone with a black spot in its center. He watched it breathlessly.

Whatever it was, it was coming like an express-train and—yes! Of course, it was an automobile, and a big black one.

It had stopped suddenly, too, and the suburban car had come to a standstill beside it. Bryn could just discern the motorman leaning over the side and talking to some one in the machine. The tiny figure of the conductor left the platform and ran to the automobile.

And then the motor started again, headlong, in the direction of the park; and the suburban car took up its way afresh.

Beyond any question, some one was as anxious to reach the park as he was to leave.

The machine was shooting up to the summer garden now; and Bryn caught his breath. The man in the back seat—the white-haired little man—that was the very man who had been beckoning to him back in Wilksburg.

Yes, as his car whizzed by the garden, Bryn could see the brisk features and all. And then the car had come so near to the fence that it popped out of Bryn's vision.

And now he might cease to worry.

Five minutes more and he would be officially captured, for there could be no question of the capable little man's business. He was very evidently the particular detective of Wilksburg who was going to gain the credit for capturing the murderer.

They were shouting in the park itself now.

Grimly Bryn went back to his other peep-hole. The crowd was engaged in crawling through the hole in the fence. The eight or nine men already within were listening to the fellow who had accosted him by the cottage, and Bryn caught distantly:

"Sure he's up here. Look where he run."

He indicated the too plain trail to the motion-picture box, and waved a revolver. The eyes turned upward.

"Well, keep back. How do you know he ain't going t' shoot from there?" bawled another voice. "He can't git away now, anyway. We got him covered."

They had, too, Bryn observed. From the double-barreled shotgun visible at the rear of the knot to the flourishing horse-pistol in front, every man was armed. He prayed only that they might refrain from opening fire on the box until—

With a faint crack the loose board had snapped off short. The crowd had turned; and walking toward them briskly was the little man with the slouch-hat.

He paused. Some few words were exchanged. Half a dozen fingers pointed toward Bryn's elevated refuge.

The little man started straight for it. The man with the horse-pistol caught him by the shoulder and proffered the weapon. The man in the slouch-hat laughed and waved it away, and steered for the box.

Well, he had a good bit of pluck, anyway, Bryn reflected. For all he knew to the contrary, the presumed desperate murderer might have a Gatling gun with him, and be ready to blow him into the next world. Yet he was walking straight to the house.

And he was so close that Bryn lost sight of him.

And now he was ascending the ladder.

And as he landed on the platform, the door was opened without a second's hesitation.

The short man walked in and closed the door behind him—and Bryn was captured.

For the moment his throat closed; then, hoarsely:

"Who—who are you?" he managed to say.

The other looked at him with peculiar directness.

"I'm the best friend you've got on earth," he said quietly. "Do as I tell you and you'll be all right."

"I—"

"Never mind. Come on. That crew's going to try shooting you up in another two minutes. I'm going down first."

A black automatic pistol came out of his pocket and a pair of handcuffs. And the old gentleman stepped out and went lightly down the ladder.

And from the ground, as he waved the little crowd back:

"Come down!"

Limply, Bryn followed. He stood on solid ground then, and the short man was proffering the handcuffs with a low:

"Put up your wrists."

"I'll—go quietly."

"Put them on, you confounded fool! There! What did you ever give me this chase for, anyway?" the other demanded impatiently. "Now, act like a cowed prisoner. Come!"

At the moment the words did not impress Bryn as odd. His heart was bursting, and his head hung low as the other took his arm and pointed his pistol at the crowd with a loud: "I'll shoot the first man that moves a step."

The group seemed turned to stone.

"Now quick, you T. Z. B.!"

Side by side, the pistol swinging threateningly, they strode away to the broken spot in the fence. The little crowd remained judiciously motionless. Then:

"Get through there!"

Bryn obeyed dumbly and his cheeks felt ready to explode as a yell of excitement went up from the group of natives lingering outside. The small man was with him again—the crowd had backed away hurriedly before his pistol—and Bryn was being forced through the open door of the waiting automobile.

And as he dropped into the seat he heard dimly:

"What did you stall that motor for, you clown? Get out and crank it up! Move!"

The driver jumped from his seat. The elder man took his place beside Bryn, and slammed the door as the motor began to roar.

"Police headquarters. Hustle!"

Bryn's chin dropped lower and lower. He'd been taken. He'd be convicted and murdered by the State, just as surely as he sat there. And the wife and the little boy back home—his heart broke!

"My God, man!" he cried piteously, as his handcuffed wrists stretched toward the other. "I'm—I'm not guilty. I—"

The car was whirring now and gathering speed. The old man jerked a bunch of keys from his pockets, hastily found a little one, and, grabbing Bryn's wrists unceremoniously, unlocked the steel bracelets.

"I know darn well you're not," he snapped, as he pocketed them. "Now, hang on like grim death!"

The amazing person slapped the chauffeur smartly on the shoulder.

"What is this thing—an ice-wagon?" he demanded. "Take your foot off the brake and give it some gas, or—"

The chauffeur turned one dry, pitying glance backward.

Immediately after which the machine fairly left the ground behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH THE POLICE.

WILKSBURG'S police headquarters is rather imposing. It was built only a year or two back, and the architects sensed the future day when Wilksburg shall be among the big cities.

The automobile paused at last before the doors. The old man stepped out with the same remarkable briskness, and Bryn followed, thoroughly puzzled.

But there was hope. He'd had a tiny chance at meditation during that furious ride. Why, under the sun, should any detective remove the cuffs from his prisoner, inform him that he was innocent, and then—"

"Well, come along," said the sharp voice.

Side by side, they went up the steps. Moving smartly, they passed the doorman; and the elderly mystery strode to the uniformed officer behind the desk with:

"Chief here?"

"Yes. Who—"

"I want to see him!"

"What's the business?"

"Blast the business! I want to see him quick! I've got your 'T. Z. B.' man here!"

An exclamation, and the officer was on his feet and looking at Bryn with popping eyes.

"Well, if that's the man, you sure have—" he began.

"Certainly. Where's the chief's office?"

"On the second floor. He—"

"Come up-stairs!" the white-haired man ordered, as he twitched Bryn's sleeve.

He led the way. Bryn followed. Staring after them, the officer called to the doorman to take his place at the desk, and trailed in their wake.

The old man looked briskly around at the landing. The big, ground-glass door at the front of the hall identified itself suddenly, for a young man with a note-book hurried out with: "Very well, chief!"

The old man gripped Bryn's arm.

"What's your full name?" he asked.

"Thomas Z. Bryn!" escaped from that person.

"Tell me one thing more. Did the fellow that robbed you get anything more than your gun?"

"How do—do you know any one—"

"Did he get anything else?"

"My wallet and my watch."

"Was the watch expensive?"

"Yes!" Bryn found himself answering breathlessly.

"Was it marked in any way?"

"My monogram was on it."

A burst of laughter escaped the other.

"Holy smoke!" he cried. "It couldn't be better!" He poked Bryn's ribs! "How much money?"

"All I had—ninety dollars!"

"Bills of course?"

"One fifty and two twenties?"

"Been folded up some time in your wallet?" the other asked keenly.

"Yes!"

"How!"

"Why—twice over, to fit the wallet!"

"Come along!" cried the elderly cyclone, as he headed for the ground-glass door.

He did not pause to knock. He walked in and dragged Bryn after him—and the heavy-browed man at the big desk started up with a snarled:

"What the—"

The short man walked straight to the desk.

"Pardon the intrusion," he said. "I've caught your 'T. Z. B.' suspect! Chief Scanlon, Mr. Byrn!"

The head of Wilksburg's force, who was evidently a policeman first and an executive afterward, strode around his desk and made straight and rather threateningly for the short man. And at the same second the short man came close to the chief and said something that ended in:

"—convince you in two minutes!"

Scanlon stopped short and stared at Bryn; and the old man was asking quickly:

"Will you please get this Mr. Scar—what was it?—Scarford here at once? I want to have the identification complete!"

Briskly enough, the chief telephoned his orders. The door was closed, and the short mystery took the liberty of locking it. He motioned Bryn to a chair in the far corner—and Bryn sat down there dazedly.

"Can you get the district attorney here in a hurry—just for a little conference?" was the next request.

"I've been sitting here for some time!" observed the lean individual across the room!

The old man turned swiftly, and fairly beamed.

"Mr. Steele?" he cried eagerly.

"Yes."

"It's Fate!"

And there, while Bryn watched wonderingly, his exuberance seemed to subside. He was settling to business; and from an inner pocket he produced a long black wallet, and from it two long envelopes. The first he handed to the chief, and waited, while the latter opened a sheet—stared at it a moment—and muttered:

Credentials from Governor—um!" And then, as he finished reading, he rose and grinned admiringly and thrust out his heavy hand with:

"Are you really—*him?* Well, I'm darned glad to meet you!"

They shook hands. The second envelope was proffered, and the chief glanced through it.

"Look here, Steele!" he said, extending the papers. And to the small man: "We can't doubt you after these, hey. Well, well, well, well, Mr.—" he stopped.

"Oh—Remsen."

"Mr. Remsen!" chuckled the chief.

He turned and regarded Mr. Bryn much as a pleased cat might study a well-fed mouse.

"Well, you've got him subdued at that! He don't look much for that kind o' job." He nodded. "And *you* went out of your way—"

"I often go out of my way." The mystery drew up a chair to the desk and turned to the district attorney. "Will you come over here, Mr. Steele."

The district attorney complied. They settled down comfortably. The chief produced a box of cigars and they smoked.

For Bryn's part, he seemed to be merely part of the general scenery. Perfectly in sight, no anxious glances were cast in his direction! He watched the trio in astonishment until, having considered his cigar, the short man began:

"See here, gentlemen, I'm going to speak with perfect frankness. Mr. Bryn, over there, won't repeat anything."

He winked at Bryn!

"You, Scanlon, want to keep up the record of your all-star detective bureau, eh?"

"It could be better," the chief admitted.

"And you, Mr. Steele, being new in office, would like to get a straight, quick conviction of the right man, eh?"

"Naturally."

"By the way, have you identified that dead man?"

"Not yet."

"Um!" Remsen gazed dreamily at the ceiling. "Well, we've got a clear case now, haven't we?"

"Circumstantial evidence couldn't be much stronger," said the county prosecutor. "If this is the right man, of course."

"Oh, this is old 'T. Z. B.' all right. I saw him get off the train last night and noticed the initials on his grip!"

Bryn started. Remsen leaned far back, and his eyes closed.

"Wouldn't it—wouldn't it be a whole lot better, if you had a *real* case?" he mused. "I mean a case with a motive and eye-witnesses and all that sort of thing?"

"What's wrong with this case, as it stands?"

"No end of things," Remsen chuckled. His eyes closed as he sent a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling. "You know—" he yawned. "Since I left the service and—so on—I've seen some of the funniest cases! Some of 'em—"

He yawned again and sat up with an effort. He blinked humorously at the chief.

"It isn't often a man has to come to this," he observed. "But you keep things too blistering hot in here for me!"

His hands went up to his white hair. For a little, they felt carefully about the locks and tugged hither and thither, and Mr. Remsen winced with apparent pain. Then, with a subdued oath, he dislodged his rather long white hair and rubbed one hand ruefully over a close-cut blond crop, very faintly streaked with gray!

If Mr. Remsen was over forty, not more than a year or so had elapsed since that birthday!

Bryn stared agape.

"Say, that is one slick wig!" the chief observed. "I was honestly wondering—"

"It ought to be. It stood me seventy-five dollars! That's the first time I've made up in eight years, Scanlon—but it had to be this time." He glanced toward the open door of the chief's sitting-room. "Bath-room in there?"

"A peach!"

"I'll remove the footprints of time," Remsen said as he moved toward it. "Don't answer any yells for help. This stuff's no grease paint. It's a devilish French mess that takes the skin along with it when you have to scrub it off."

He disappeared.

Bryn looked from one to the other of the pair.

The chief was staring at him interestedly, when the telephone bell rang. Then:

"What? What? Conductor reported—what? Carnival Park? Hey?" He put his hand over the transmitter and said to Bryn: "Did you come from Carnival Park just now? Yes? All right! Hallo! Well, he's here now. I say, he's here now. Yes, I guess so. Well, it's the man, all right."

The chief was studying him anew, and Bryn's lips began to open. As a matter of fact, he didn't seem to be of much account here!

He was a sort of cherished exhibit, a bit of glory in the way of a capture, a matter of future glory in the way of future conviction—but hardly a human being with ideas of his own or views regarding that same future! He'd ask—

The telephone bell rang again. The lord of the police department picked up the receiver impatiently.

"What's that? Scarford? Yes, Scarford. What about him? Not at the Inwood? What? Depot, eh? Telegram called him away, did it? What? No, he hasn't phoned me, whatever he said. I say, I haven't heard from him; he was coming here at three. Well, Ryan's bringing him in now, isn't he? What? So much the better?"

The chief chewed thoughtfully on his cigar. The legal protector of the county had pursed his lips and was considering Bryn pensively when a knock came on the door.

The chief stepped around and opened it quickly. The big man with the heavy-soled shoes stepped aside, and, upright, smiling, dignified, the man in gray walked in.

He shook the chief's hand heartily and said:

"I phoned—left word for you—that I'd been called to Chicago. I'd have been back day after to-morrow, but one of your men found me at the depot. Have you really—"

The chief turned to Bryn.

"Stand up."

Bryn obeyed. The man in gray looked squarely at him; his eyes widened and he smiled.

"You've got your man, chief!" he exclaimed softly. "You're to be congratulated!"

"There is no doubt about him?" Scanlon asked. "That's the man you *saw*—"

"That is the man!" replied Mr. Scarford emphatically.

He looked straight at Bryn and Bryn looked straight at him, and a roar was coming up in Bryn's throat when:

"Ever see *me* before, Jim?" asked a sharp, distinct voice from the sitting-room door.

Scarford turned suddenly. In the doorway stood Mr. Remsen, in his shirt-sleeves and collarless, with a towel in his left hand and the automatic pistol in his right!

Mr. Scarford stood perfectly still. Second after second, he looked at the muzzle of the pistol—and moved not a muscle. But, however great his self-control might be, his cheeks betrayed him.

Slowly, their healthy red faded to white—to a faint greenish tinge—and to the ashen pallor of death itself!

"Put up your hands, palms out!" ordered Remsen.

Scarford obeyed silently.

"Walk over there to the desk. Sit down." The mysterious gentleman followed the little walk with his pistol. "Now put your hands out flat on that desk! That's the way! Chief!"

"Uh—what?" gasped Scanlon.

"I'm not nervous, but I want you to put two men outside the door here. So!"

The chief picked up his telephone. Mr. Remsen tossed aside his towel and drew a chair to the big flat desk.

"Just sort of cluster around here, gentlemen. That's right. Let Mr.—er—Scarford, isn't it, sit alone over there—don't wiggle your fingers, Jim!"

CHAPTER IX.

HOW IT WAS DONE.

It was a breathless little group that settled down as heavy steps approached the door and stopped. Mr. Remsen planted his arms on the table, the gun covering the man in gray with a sort of careless grace.

"Now, gentlemen," the rapid-fire voice shot forth. "A murder has been committed. We suspect that Bryn here committed the murder. There is everything to show that he did—except the obvious fact that he didn't. Item one, he never saw the dead man before."

"What?" asked the district attorney flatly.

"Because the dead man has never been farther East than Chicago, and I'll gamble that this fellow has never been two hundred miles from New York before. Can you prove that, Bryn?"

"Certainly!"

"By any one in this town?"

"Yes. A Mr. King, at Bennett & Brand's—"

"Their place is only around the corner,"

the chief observed, as he took momentarily to his telephone once more. "Go on—er—Remsen."

"Item two. Never having seen or heard of the man, he had no motive."

"What? He might have been attacked?" questioned the attorney.

"Greenfield never carried a gun in his life. A bull couldn't pick a fight with him!" Remsen exclaimed impatiently.

"What Greenfield was that?" the chief inquired suddenly.

"Harry Greenfield, the big California gambler."

"Great Scott!" muttered Scanlon. "Was that *him* that was shot?"

"It was. Let's get on with your suspect. I don't know him. I never saw him before the train got in last night, when I was watching the station. Then I only noticed him on account of that 'T. Z. B.' on his grip. It was the 'Z' that struck me, at that. I sized him up as a good, energetic clerk, or something like that. Right, Bryn?"

"Yes."

Remsen leaned back.

"I don't say that I've proved him innocent," he said. "But let's get down to our tall friend here. Know him?"

"No."

"Well, let me introduce Mr. James Blake, alias McCarthy, alias Scarford, alias Heaven knows what else. Under the name of McCarthy, and with a mustache on, his picture was all over the country two years ago."

He paused for a study of Mr. Scarford.

"Jim, you nice, clever, greedy, cheap crook—you low-down robber and murderer, this is Chief Scanlon. You'll be better acquainted shortly."

Scarford said nothing; but Bryn caught the gleam in his eye and shuddered.

"Now, I'll tell you exactly what Mr. James Blake has done," Remsen went on. "He graduated from picking pockets and so on after he'd reached perfection. He cornered all the nerve on earth for his own use. Then I guess he looked around for some real, profitable field of crime. Anyway, he took to counterfeiting. That's where I met him first, nine years ago, and—I couldn't get a conviction. Maybe counterfeiting wasn't to his taste; probably burglary was too common—so Jimmy took to bank work.

"I've followed his career with deep interest. I thought I had him good in Savannah, four years ago. Three of them cleaned up a bank, killed the cashier, and—well, I didn't get a conviction that time, either."

Mr. Remsen reddened a little; the faintest smile came to Scarford's lips.

"Now to come down to last night. I've been looking for Blake for three weeks, in connection with that big box-busting, regular old-time stunt in the Denver bank—the one where they got away with a clean seventy thousand dollars in cash. I've got a warrant in my pocket for Mr. Blake. I'm going to take him along with me, if you don't want him by the time I'm done," grinned Mr. Remsen pleasantly.

"However, I got it pretty straight that Mr. Blake was either here, or coming here, for a little rest. My partner and I didn't pick him up yesterday afternoon—we got here the night before. I met my partner somewhere around eight, and he'd spotted Blake coming out of the Inwood, and then managed to lose him in the crowd. And, by the way, the nearest Blake got to stopping at the Inwood was risking last night's dinner there and getting permission to have his mail received there.

"Well, we knew he was in town, and I got the notion that he knew that we knew, for the estimable James here can usually scent a chase ten miles away. I started off for the depot again, with quite a little hope of getting him as he passed onward. That's how I ran across Greenfield—and it nearly took my breath away."

"Why?" the district attorney asked pointedly.

"Well, that's a story in itself," said Remsen. "There's been bad blood between them for three years or more. It was a matter of some diamonds and a woman. Greenfield got the best of it, and Blake promised to shoot him on sight. And he's kept several of those promises in his time. He—say!" He glanced at the chief. "Did you happen to find a diamond on that dead man, about the size of a walnut?"

"Is that thing *real*?" demanded the chief.

"It'll bring twenty thousand dollars, cut up. So he had it on him, eh? Well, to get back to Greenfield. We've known each other for years. I told him Blake was in town, and to get under cover and stay there till he was arrested. He laughed at me. I tried to drum it into him that he'd be shot—and he laughed some more, and said he'd kept out of Blake's way up to date and he could do it a little longer.

"He headed up Stevens Street, to keep an appointment some of his friends had made by telephone at the saloon at the head of the street. I tried to tell him that it was ten chances to one that Blake was getting ready

to do him; he laughed at that, too; he knew Casey's voice—or whatever his name was—as well as he knew his own name.

"Well, to make a long story short, he insisted on saying good night and going up the street. I followed him, and I had to keep a block or two behind, for it made Greenfield sore to think he needed any protection.

"And then it happened—and I was a full block off!"

"And you *saw* the shooting?" asked the prosecutor.

"I saw just this. I saw a tall man step out, apparently from a doorway, and stop Greenfield. I saw Greenfield push him away suddenly. Then I saw three spurts of flame and heard three shots, and by that time I was running for the scene of the trouble. When I was pretty near the corner, *I saw Blake here, who was the tall man,* shoot right around it, under the light on the opposite side of the way, and head up the avenue block with those six-cylinder legs at a mile a minute. I saw some one racing down the block—Bryn, evidently—to see what had happened, and I was foolish enough to run after Blake."

A short, bark-like laugh escaped the man in gray, and Remsen glanced at him.

"Yes, you got away. I doubt like the dickens whether you knew any one was after you. I didn't understand until I saw the early editions of the evening papers, this morning, that you were absolutely unaware that *we* were here looking for you. I don't pretend to know where you went; but I knew for a pretty sure thing you wouldn't try leaving town after kicking up such an excitement, when some one might possibly have seen you.

"And to conclude the story," said Mr. Remsen, "I saw by the papers that he had had the chilly nerve to come to you, doubtless after he'd read the morning reports and seen the 'T. Z. B.' business, and offer his services in identifying Bryn."

The district attorney was tapping his glasses on the desk.

"We can't doubt your integrity or your positive value as an eye-witness," he said slowly. "At the same time—where have you injured our case against Bryn?"

Remsen leaned forward.

"Gentlemen, we'll have to take a little glance at the psychology in Blake. He is, I think, the meanest, greediest, nerviest crook doing business to-day. He would just as gladly steal a workman's wages as he'd open a bank—if he needed them.

"If you people are willing to go to the expense, I can prove that eight years ago in Montreal, when, in a general mix-up, he got a peculiar, German-made pistol from a man's pocket, did some shooting with it, and threw it away and later identified it and got the poor devil three years in jail. By the way, he was caught that time just leaving town, too.

"I don't say that he started out with any intention of using Bryn's pistol. I do say that he'd looked over everything—knew just about how Greenfield would come. He was on his way down Stevens Street, counting on getting Greenfield either there or as he left the saloon. Somewhere or other, he rubbed against Bryn and felt the pistol—and he took it with great pleasure. Bryn!"

The absorbed man looked up.

"Did you actually talk with this fellow in the fight crowd, as the papers state?"

"Certainly! But—but he was ahead of me and my coat was buttoned—"

Remsen leaned back and laughed aloud.

"My dear boy," he cried, "if you'd been in a steam boiler and Blake had needed your collar, he'd have had it, and you'd never have known that a rivet had been disturbed until long afterward. Blake had cleaned you out long before you saw him, Bryn."

He turned to the chief.

"What I want to show is that Blake was in the neighborhood at the time of the shooting, and I've smashed all automobile records to get Bryn here to prove it—and incidentally to save his own neck. What time did the patrol go to that fight?"

"I got a record of it," said Scanlon, looking over his papers. "Eight-fifty-three. The driver says it got there at eight-fifty-seven."

"Three minutes of nine," Remsen commented. "Bryn, was this man with you when the wagon came?"

"No. He left before that."

"How long?"

"Well, perhaps three minutes—four at the most," Bryn said.

"Which way did he head?"

"Up-town."

"Toward Stevens Street. Thank you," Remsen laughed. "And now for the last little bit of confirmation. It is my positive opinion that this man cleaned out Bryn thoroughly, chief. He'd never leave money behind, or a valuable watch, once he was in a man's pockets. Logically, since he hasn't had a chance of getting rid of a watch here, he ought to have one with 'T. Z. B.' on it, somewhere on his person. Stand up, Blake! Take off your coat and vest! Put them on the table!"

The man in gray obeyed.

"Look through them, chief! Hands in the air, you!"

"Well, there's your watch!" the chief remarked.

"Now, just remove that infant ten-inch gun from his pocket, chief, and go into the other pocket for his roll of ready cash. That's it, I guess. Now, see if you can find one fifty and two twenties that have recently been folded twice over!"

Close to a thousand dollars in bills lay on the table. Quite obligingly, three of them began to crinkle into their old folds.

The three men laughed dryly. The chief walked to the door and opened it, and two uniformed officers entered.

"And I'll go down and see him locked up," volunteered Mr. Remsen. "It may take three men."

The four departed. The chief looked long and dryly at Bryn.

"Well, you got off by the skin of your teeth!" he remarked. "I'd never have thought it. Where do you live?"

"At Fifty Elm Street," Bryn said with some difficulty.

He wasn't guilty! The amazing little old man had, in cold truth, saved his life. Things were beginning to swim all around; his blood seemed to have turned to a very weak kind of water; his bones felt rather like worn and aged lengths of rubber.

"You're going to stay here, eh?"

"I came on here to take a position—yes."

"You'll be on hand for the trial—that's all we want," said the district attorney, with a sigh of relief.

"I certainly will!" replied Bryn fervently.

The chief considered him again; and the chief was a judge of men.

"That firm was Bennett & Brand, wasn't it? All right. You can recover your property later, in the formal way. You may go; and I wish you the best of luck."

Vaguely, Bryn recalled later, he seemed to have thanked both men several times. In a sort of mist, he seemed to soar downward, until he landed in the broad corridor on the ground floor of headquarters.

He was free. The nightmare was over. They weren't going to hang him. Nobody was pursuing him, nobody could hound him now.

He fancied he'd go and apologize to that ambulance-surgeon. He—he was face to face with the small man of the blond hair, and he burst out:

"How can I ever—"

"Dry up!" said the other impolitely, albeit he grinned. "You don't grasp my side of it. I wanted that man bad, and the extradition laws here are open to any old conception with the present Governor, as I happen to know. Furthermore, Blake is the most accomplished crook I ever met. And he won't get loose on a first degree murder charge; I'll get everything *I* want out of that desperate criminal now.

"Another thing, I never expected he'd dare repeat that Montreal stunt, to make a getaway. But when I struck the red-hot extras this morning, and doped the whole thing out to my own satisfaction, I wanted *you* and I wanted you quick—and I got you quick, and you panned out exactly as I had figured!"

"But who—" Bryn held out his hand and the other shook it briefly.

"I am Mr. Remsen, a private citizen, and don't you forget it, either!" said the small man forcefully. "After this thing's over, remember that you wouldn't know me if we met face to face in the middle of the Sahara. I'm just the individual that is going to collect a ten-thousand-dollar reward on Blake, in addition to my regular fees—and who saved your neck! So long!"

He started for the stairs—and into Bryn's swimming vision rushed King, who was panting for breath.

"I just got back to the office—the boss said they'd got you!" he cried, in wild excitement. "Tom, I acted like a cur, and I want to beg your pardon, old man. I told the firm and—Tom, nobody else like 'em was ever born—and they said that they'd take you at my estimate, and they've instructed their own lawyers—"

King's breath gave out. Bryn laid a hand on his shoulder and swayed as he said with great joy:

"I won't need 'em. I'm free—vindicated. Where's a telegraph office?"

"What?"

"A telegraph office!" said Bryn forcefully.

"Well, come and—"

"Where's the nearest one?" demanded the late captive savagely.

"Why—you can send a message from our place. Come and meet the firm, and then you can send your telegram."

Mr. Bryn gripped him hard and fixed a pair of blazing eyes on him.

"To blazes with the firm!" he thundered. "Can't you understand that the devilish papers in New York may have made a big news

item of this? Can't you see *they* may be reading it all this minute? Haven't you any wits left? Where's the nearest—"

"Well, who—" King began amazedly.

Bryn drew a long breath and gulped hard. His excitement was dying away and things were growing hazy again; his lips were twitching a little and he stared straight ahead, as he took King's arm and said, quietly and very thickly:

"Take me where I can send a wire to—to Celia and the kid, King!"

THE END.

FARCE-ADVENTURE STORY No. 3.

His Morning After Vacation.

BY FRITZ KROG.

A Memorable Ride in a Taxicab, with Horrors Accumulating upon Horrors' Head

"YOU know," she said coyly, "I feel rather sad than otherwise."

"But why?" he asked as tenderly as tenderness is possible with a two-hundred-pound man trying to step on one's toes, and a tall, nervous lady trying to shove an umbrella-rib into one's eye.

For they were standing in the crowd before the gates of a ferry-boat churning near the end of its trip across the Hudson, New-Yorkward.

"You see the summer is over," she went on, "and we are near home again."

"That won't keep me from calling, will it?" he replied. "You live in New York, don't you? and I work there, don't I?"

"Yes, Chick, but they say these summer friendships—"

"Friendship?" he demanded fiercely. "Clarice, is that all?"

Just then the two-hundred-pound man came down on Chick's toes like a pile-driver, the long, thin female rammed her umbrella into his nostril, a boy with a basket hit him in the small of the back, and somebody else jabbed him in the pit of the stomach. For the boat had struck the outermost piles of the ferry-slip.

"Umph!" Chick exclaimed.

Clarice sighed.

These two—Clarice and her Chick—were returning from a month's stay at Coral Beach, where their kindred souls had fused together under the spell of big round moons, the roar of the surges, and shore dinners. But "business is business"; Clarice had to go home to her father, and Chick to his duty by the soap business.

Clarice had a "Mrs." attached to her name, but Chick had got over that in quick time when she told him that she was a widow. She was the sweetest, youngest-looking widow Chick had ever seen and most unaccountably shy. Heretofore, Chick had always had a prejudice against widows, but far from that now.

"You haven't given me your address yet," said Chick.

"No," Clarice replied. "You know I said I wouldn't until we reached the parting of the ways, and then if you still want it—"

Chick went through the pantomime of licking his chops, no doubt, to prove how much he wanted it.

"You better give it to me now," he went on. "The boat will be tied up in thirty seconds; it's just nine o'clock, and I must be at my desk at nine-thirty without fail. The old man always gets sore when returned vacationers report late. So I'll have to run for it."

"But you'll have time to help me get my things in the car?" said Clarice reproachfully. "John is meeting me with father's automobile, and it'll only take a few seconds."

Chick pricked up his ears. So her father owned a motor-car! He had a swift vision of himself ordering that car out some of these days.

"You didn't think," Chick exclaimed,

"that I'd leave you like this — in such a crowd?"

The fat man with his heels, and the long, thin lady with her umbrella, reminded Chick now that the boat had landed. Whereupon he and the dashing widow moved on with the streaming crowd and ran the gantlet of insistent cabbies to the rackety area before the ferry-house.

"Oh," said Clarice, staring about, "I don't see John anywhere."

"What sort of car is it?" asked Chick.

"A purple one," Clarice explained, "with gold trimmings."

Not only a motor-car, but a purple one with gold trimmings! Chick's excitement increased.

"Such a car would be easy to find," he said. "I don't see it anywhere."

Clarice dropped her baggage and clasped her hands.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she exclaimed.

"Don't cry," said Chick, drawing himself up to full height and expanding his chest until his necktie stood out almost at a horizontal.

"Cabby!" he went on, raising the forefinger of his right hand.

Cabby was bright eyes on the job. He had a brand-new yellow taxicab alongside in three ticks of a dollar watch.

"And now the address!" said Chick when Clarice was within.

"Are you going to leave me now?" asked Clarice, raising her eyes in surprise. "You won't—"

Chick blushed. Clarice might just as well have asked: "Are you going to let me pay the fare?"

Chick was beside her with a bound that would have done credit to a kangaroo.

"The address?" he asked again.

Clarice murmured the name of a hotel on Fifth Avenue that made Chick's eyes grow round as saucers.

"The Placid!" he repeated.

Even the chauffeur took a brace when Chick called that at him.

"Well," thought Chick, "I see where I get down to work about lunch-time. But here's a widow in distress and that's no lightsome matter. After us the deluge. Let soap bide its time."

Chick was hard at it, telling Clarice that, considering a proper conservation of national resources, it was a crime to keep the stars lit when she was out nights, when he stopped midway in his oratory to grow deadly pale and gasp for breath.

"What's the matter?" Clarice asked in fright. "Dear me, my smelling salts are in my trunk."

"Nothing—a mere nothing," Chick assured her and continued about starlight and eyelight with feverish energy.

Chick had said nothing and he meant nothing. That is to say, he had suddenly recalled the fact that he had nothing wherewith to meet the fare, which was rolling up dollar after dollar on the meter without.

Chick had forgotten for the moment that, as almost invariably happens, he was returning from his vacation—dead broke.

He thought of his watch as they passed a pawn-shop, but remembered that it was one of those cheap nickel-plated affairs.

He became rattled.

"Stop the car!" he yelled.

The chauffeur shoved down the brake.

"Go on!" Chick yelled.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Clarice.

"It's too late," Chick replied, licking his lips. "I thought I saw a ten-dollar gold piece on the street, but if it was there, it's gone now."

Clarice murmured a little something and then looked up archly at her companion.

"Speaking of gold pieces—" she began.

"Don't," Chick whispered.

"Do you know," Clarice went on, "I have a special reason for being glad that you are still with me."

Chick struggled bravely to turn on a smile.

"Yes," Clarice continued happily, and opening her hand-bag so that Chick could look into its emptiness, "because I haven't a cent of money. I think it's about lunch-time. I'm hungry as a wolf. I believe I could eat a five-course dinner—"

"Wow!" Chick shouted. "Stop the car!"

This time, when the chauffeur obeyed, Chick wrenched the door open, leaped out on the street and found a book-store entrance staring him in the face. He darted in among the last editions and seized a bilious-looking clerk by the arm.

"Is there a side door to this place?" Chick hissed.

"Over there." The clerk pointed it out.

Chick was out like a scared rabbit, and off up the side street like another scared hare. But after the third leap toward disgraceful safety, he stopped.

"This will never do," he soliloquized. "Leave that peach to face the music alone? No; never. I'll keep the cab rolling until I see a friend."

Back to the taxi he sped. As he stepped in, he noted that the chauffeur was a powerful looking man with a very uncompromising-looking jaw.

"Why?" said Clarice. "Where have you been?"

"Er—ah," Chick answered unblushingly, "I stopped in the book-store to—to telephone the office. And" — Chick's face lit up as an idea occurred to him—"the boss wants to see me right away. Do you mind if we turn around and run down there before we go on to the Placid?"

"Oh, no," Clarice assured him, "it will be jolly."

"Yes," Chick smiled. "We can be together so much longer."

When the cab rolled up before the Rankeller Company's office, where the sales of Grandma's Marvel Soap and Other Extraordinary Toilet Preparations were engineered, Chick glanced at the taximeter. It read, seven dollars and sixty cents. Chick multiplied by two and added ten as he brushed past the doorkeeper.

Inside he stared about him in bewilderment. Where once had been a score of friends and desks, there were now only three desks and two boys. Behind the railing where once Mr. Rankeller had scowled and smoked, sat a stranger.

"What is the meaning of this?" Chick gasped.

"Who are you?" the stranger demanded coldly.

"I had charge of the city sales," Chick replied.

"Ah!" the stranger exclaimed, raising his eyebrows. "You don't know of the change?"

"Change?"

"Yes, the Rankeller Company was absorbed two weeks ago by Hiram Talcum of Amalgamated Potash. This office is only a branch house now."

Chick's legs began to wobble.

"However," the affable stranger continued, "if you will write to Mr. Talcum, or call at his office, perhaps he might, some time in the future, take some interest in your case."

Chick laughed bitterly and dashed out on the street. He arrived beside the taxi door with his hat in his hand, his hair on end, and such a wild look in his eyes that Clarice shrank back in dismay.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "How you look! What—"

"It's all right," Chick interrupted hastily. "Drive on, chauffeur!"

Chick glanced at the meter as he stepped in. It had rolled up thirty cents while he was getting the information that he was out of a job.

"Where?" asked the driver.

"Anywhere," Chick jerked out—"into the East River—that is, up-town, you fool, that's where!"

All the way up the perspiration poured down Chick's haggard cheeks and dripped off his chin.

"Poor boy," said Clarice, "are you so warm?"

"I was never in a hotter place," Chick muttered. "But, anywhere, as long as you're with me."

Clarice sighed.

"Do you love me so much?" she whispered.

"I do."

"Do you love me just because I'm me?" Clarice went on.

Chick's mind was in no shape to solve Chinese puzzles, but he was game.

"I loved you when I first laid eyes on you in your new bathing-suit," he said. "I love you now, and will forever. Nothing can come between us. I'll marry you to-morrow if you'll say the word. I'll marry you right now. We could spend the honeymoon in jail —I mean, I would if we had to."

"Oh, you dear Chickey bird!" Clarice exclaimed, wrapping her arms around Chick's neck and planting one on his sagging mouth.

"And now," she went on. "I am going to make a confession."

Chick's lawer jaw began to wobble.

"I'm not a widow," Clarice began.

Chick began fanning himself with his hat.

"My father isn't stopping at the Placid."

Chick slid forward in his seat until he was sitting on the small of his back.

"He has no purple motor-car."

Chick closed his eyes and his head fell over to one side.

"Clarice!" he gasped, starting up.

"What is it?"

"I'll make a confession, too."

Chick swallowed hard once or twice before he could make his tongue perform.

"I'm broke," he burst out. "I didn't have a cent with me when we hailed this cab. I found out at the office that the house had sold out and I couldn't borrow from the boys I had worked with. Clarice, prepare for the Tombs!"

"Here we are," Clarice murmured absently.

"We can't stop," Chick exclaimed. "Who told the chauffeur to stop here?"

"I did," Clarice replied. "I told him to drive up home while you were in your office."

Chick stared out of the cab window in utter bewilderment.

"There's father!" Clarice burst out, and jumped past Chick into the arms of a short, fat, choleric-looking gentleman.

"Father," said Clarice, "this is my *fiancé*."

"Your what?" shouted the old man, while some of that choler sprang into his face.

"Yes," Clarice went on, "he's going to marry me."

"What is he?" the father went on in a hard voice, "Duke, lord, or marquis?"

"No, no," Clarice replied, "he's just a plain American and he loves me because I'm me. He doesn't even know my name. I told him I was a widow."

Father cast four baleful looks at Chick and hitched up his cuffs.

"Say!" the chauffeur put in gruffly at this stage of the proceedings and pointed at the taximeter. It read nineteen dollars and forty cents.

"Father," said Clarice, "pay him."

Father paid, but when he returned from that amusement, Chick began to look around for some handy haven of refuge.

"Say, young man," said father fiercely, "what's your business?"

"Soap," said Chick, "but—but—I hope to do better soon."

"Soap!" exclaimed father. "My boy, come to my arms. I am the king of soap, Hiram Talcum, sir, who has done more for cleanliness than the inventor of the bathtub."

Only one thing remained to disappoint Chick; his vision of a purple motor-car with gold trimmings never materialized. The Talcum cars (note the plural) were all pink and bore a distinct resemblance to a bar of Talcum's Finest Coralynne—the Soap That Made Washing Popular.

THE BIG OBSTACLE.

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Odds Against the Banner," "His Handicap Mate," "The Isle of Mysteries," etc.

The Thing a Man Did When He Didn't Care What Happened to Him and Why He Had Cause to Regret It Later.

CHAPTER I.

A COLD RECEPTION.

"WELL? What do you want?"

The bookkeeper of Philip Rousey & Co., stock brokers, eyed the shabby young man with disfavor. It was plain that he did not at all like the visitor's looks.

"I wish to see Mr. Philip Rousey," replied the caller, with an air of dignity which seemed ludicrously out of keeping with his ragged clothes, unshaven face, and general run-down appearance.

"Oh, you do, eh?" sneered the bookkeeper. "And what do you wish to see him about, if you please?"

"I beg your pardon. I do not care to discuss my business with you," retorted the young man. "Be good enough to tell your employer that I am here."

The bookkeeper's glance fell upon the package the visitor carried under his arm.

"I suppose you are a canvasser," he remarked knowingly. "Want to sell the boss a set of encyclopedias or the latest edition of 'The World's Best Literature,' in twenty volumes, eh? Well, young man, there's nothing doing. When Mr. Rousey wishes to buy anything he goes to a reliable store for it. He is too busy a man to be bothered by pedlers, so you might as well be going."

"You are mistaken," was the haughty reply to this. "I have nothing to sell. It seems to me that you are inclined to be impudent, my friend. I should strongly advise you to be a little more civil—otherwise you may have cause to regret it. Go and tell your employer that his nephew wishes to see him."

The bookkeeper laughed boisterously.

"His nephew, eh? Well, that's pretty good. Do you think you can work that bluff with me? I'm quite certain that if the boss has a nephew, he doesn't look anything like you. Do you think I am an idiot?"

"I think you are a very impertinent fellow," rejoined the other indignantly. "If you question my identity, perhaps this will serve to convince you."

He took from his pocket a much-worn leather card-case and extracted therefrom a card, which he handed to the bookkeeper.

"Mr. Cowper Rousey," was the name engraved thereon. The bookkeeper read it and glanced at the visitor incredulously.

"I suppose I've got to take it into the boss," he said hesitatingly. "If you're really who you say you are, sir, I beg a thousand pardons; but if you're not, I'll kick you out of this office when I return, I warn you."

The young man shrugged his shoulders. The bookkeeper, muttering to himself, went through the doorway leading to the private office, the card in his hand.

"If you please, sir," he said deferentially to a lean, shriveled, white-haired man, of very sharp features, who sat at a mahogany desk, "there's a young man outside—a shabby fellow who looks as if he's got something to sell—and he says that he is your nephew. Here is his card."

The man at the desk glanced at the card.

"Humph!" he exclaimed. "Cowper Rousey, eh? What does he want, Johnson?"

"He says he wishes to see you, sir."

"What about?"

"He wouldn't tell me, sir. He said that he did not care to discuss his business with me."

"Well—send him in here."

Johnson returned to the outer office, still in doubt as to whether the visitor was really Mr. Rousey's nephew or not; for his employer's replies had not enlightened him on this point.

"Step inside, sir. The boss will see you," he said, with tentative courtesy in his tone.

The young man walked hastily into the private office and carefully closed the door behind him.

"Hallo, Uncle Philip!" he exclaimed, approaching the white-haired man at the desk.

The latter did not rise; neither did he grasp the hand which the other impulsively extended toward him. His own hands appeared to be glued to the arms of his chair as he stared coldly at his visitor.

"Well?" he demanded in a rasping tone. "What do you want?"

"What do I want?" repeated the caller, with a bitter laugh. "Say, uncle, that's a pretty poor sort of greeting to extend to your dead brother's son whom you have not seen for four years."

"Well, I assure you that I have not missed you," replied the older man. "You could have stayed away forty years without my feeling at all neglected. Why have you come to me now?"

"Why shouldn't I come to you, Uncle Philip? You're my own flesh and blood—the only relative I have in all the world. I have just returned to the United States, so isn't it quite natural that I should pay you a visit?"

"I don't know about that," replied the other gruffly. "So you have been abroad?"

"Yes, sir, for four years."

"Where to, may I ask?"

"Certainly, uncle. I have been to Australia."

"Why did you go there?"

"To seek my fortune," answered the nephew, with a whimsical smile.

"Humph!" grunted old Rousey, his keen eyes summarizing every detail of the other's appearance. "You don't seem to have succeeded in your quest. You look like a tramp."

"I *feel* like a tramp," declared the young man. "I can scarcely blame your bookkeeper for treating me as he would a beggar, just now. I realize that I must look the part.

"The fact is, Uncle Philip," he went on, "I have had a wretched spell of bad luck. Everything I put my hand to out in Australia seemed to turn out wrong. I have come back here absolutely penniless. I had to work my way to New York on a freighter. It was rough, I tell you, and the ship was none too clean—hence my present shabby and bedraggled appearance."

"Serves you right," declared the old man viciously. "You had your chance four years ago and you let it go. I wanted you to give up your foolish art notions and go into a legitimate business, and you wouldn't do it. I wanted you to marry Margaret Adair, and you refused. You declined to obey my wishes, so you have only yourself to blame for your present straits."

"I realize that," said the young man contritely. "I assure you that I am indeed sorry for it now, Uncle Philip. I thought that I possessed artistic talent and could make my living with my pencil. I have been trying to sell my sketches for the past four years without any success, and now I am prepared to agree with you that I am no good as an artist."

"If it took you four years to find that out, you must be even a bigger fool than you look," snapped the old man.

"As for marrying Margaret," went on the nephew, ignoring this gibe and speaking very earnestly, "I assure you that you do me a great injustice in saying that I refused to marry her, uncle. I would gladly have made her my wife, even without any prompting on your part, for I love her dearly—but she would not have me.

"We had a quarrel and Margaret told me that she never wanted to see me again. That is the real reason why I went to Australia—and that is why I have come back now," he added quietly.

"What is why you have come back?—I don't understand that," exclaimed the uncle quickly.

The young man sighed.

"After my quarrel with Margaret I sailed for Australia, determined to forget her. I have tried to do so for four years, but without success. Since the day I sailed I have not heard a word either from her or concerning her; but nevertheless I find that I love her more than ever. A yearning to see her again and to try to win my way into her good graces once more has brought me back here now."

The old man grunted disdainfully.

"So you want to make another attempt to win her, eh?" he sneered. "You're in a fine condition now to entertain such hopes, aren't you? You're a pretty looking specimen of humanity to think of paying court to a fine girl like Margaret Adair."

"Well, of course I am not going to make any attempt to see her in my present condition," declared the nephew, flushing. "I must pull myself together first. I want you to loan me a little cash, Uncle Philip—just enough to buy me some decent clothes and a shave and admission to a Turkish-bath. And after I have got these very necessary things, I want you also to help me to land a job of some sort."

He smiled at his uncle confidently, but the latter scowled and banged his fist on his desk emphatically.

"You won't get a red cent from me!" he declared. "Not a red cent! I don't care if you look like a vagabond for the rest of your days. You *are* a vagabond, so you may as well sail under your true colors. And I won't help you to get a job, either. I won't give you any assistance at all. I told you four years ago, when you refused to listen to me, that I was through with you entirely, and I am going to show you that I meant exactly what I said."

"But I am penitent now and eager to carry out your wishes in every respect, Uncle Philip," pleaded the young man.

"You are too late—just four years too late," was the grim reply.

"But, uncle—"

"It is no use arguing, I tell you. It won't do you a particle of good and you are delaying me in my work. This is my busy hour. I must ask you to go now."

"Go? Where shall I go?" laughed the young man bitterly. "I haven't any place to go to. I haven't any place to sleep tonight."

"Go to the devil for all I care," growled the uncle.

The young man's eyes flashed.

"It seems to me that I came to the devil when I came here to *you*," he declared. "It is hard to believe that a fellow's own flesh and blood could treat him in this manner. I guess I was a fool, though, to expect anything different of you. You always were a hard, cross-grained old skinflint. I shall not bother you any more, no matter what happens to me; but I tell you now that some day you will be sorry for this."

He turned on his heel and strode angrily out of the office.

CHAPTER II.

HIS RIVAL.

It did not take Cowper Rousey long to discover the distressing fact that when a man is down and out he loses his friends.

Four years previously, before he had quarreled with his uncle, and while he had enjoyed a liberal monthly allowance from that wealthy relative, he had possessed friends in abundance.

Being a good-natured, generous, and rather dashing sort of fellow who had spent his money freely on "the bunch," he had been quite popular.

He had hoped that this popularity had not waned, despite his four years' absence and his greatly altered circumstances; and, having been turned down by his only relative, he determined to apply to some of his old friends for aid.

"It is a bitter pill to have to show myself to any of the fellows in my present condition," he reflected as he stood on the sidewalk deliberating what should be his next move. "But I'll have to put my pride in my pocket and brace somebody for the loan of a few dollars. I've got to get out of these rags and look like a gentleman again before many

hours have passed. I am heartily tired of appearing like a tramp."

As he arrived at this determination he suddenly espied a tall, slender, flashily-dressed youth strolling toward him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Here's a piece of luck! Here comes Reggie Dingwall—just the fellow I want. Reggie always carries plenty of money in his clothes and he was always willing to loan me cash in the old days, so this ought to be easy.

"Hallo, Reggie!" he exclaimed as the tall, languid youth was about to pass him by.

The latter started, and a scared look came to his face.

"You'd better go away," he said nervously. "I'll call a policeman if you attack me, you know. I haven't anything to give you."

Then he stopped short and uttered an exclamation of astonishment. "By Jove!" he exclaimed. "It's Cowper Rousey, isn't it?"

"Of course it is," replied the young man, with a smile. "Didn't you know me, Reggie?"

"No. 'Pon my honor, I didn't, old chap. If you'll excuse me for saying so, you look so much like a beggar, you know, that I didn't recognize you at all. I took you for a confounded panhandler and they're getting so bold and desperate nowadays that I was afraid you were going to hold me up."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Cowper with a rueful laugh. "Do I look quite as bad as that? So you took me for a highwayman, eh? Well, as a matter of fact, Reggie, old fellow, I *am* going to hold you up. I want to borrow a hundred or so for a few days."

The languid young man stiffened perceptibly.

"I'm sorry, my dear fellow; but really I haven't got a cent," he said. "I was cleaned out last night playing the wheel at Stanchfield's—really I was."

"That's too bad," rejoined Cowper, greatly disappointed. "Well, anyway, Reggie, you can take me to your tailor and vouch for me there. I've got to get out of these rags and into some decent clothes, and, judging by your present appearance, your tailor seems to know his business. I'll go with you now, old chap, and get fitted with a suit on your recommendation."

Reggie Dingwall's manner became even more distant.

"I'm sorry, my dear boy; but I can't do that, either," he said. "The fact is, I've stretched my credit at my tailor's to the bursting point, and the low fellow has actually begun to sue me. He wouldn't extend credit to a new customer on my recommendation. I'm afraid you'll have to try somebody else."

As though determined to put an end to a distasteful conversation, he hurried away without even a word of farewell, leaving the unfortunate Cowper rooted to the spot with amazement.

"Well, I'll be darned," he muttered. "This is indeed a surprise. I did not think Reggie would treat me in this fashion. I always supposed that he was a good friend of mine. I could tell by his manner that he was lying when he said that he didn't have any money. It was a cold and deliberate throw-down. I'm sorry now that I humiliated himself by approaching him at all."

But the experience did not dissuade him from seeking aid elsewhere.

Being desirous of emancipating himself from his rags and wretchedness as soon as possible, he proceeded to hunt up the addresses of past acquaintances, and humbled himself by braving the astonished stares of men who had known him in his days of prosperity and requesting their aid.

In each case he met with disappointment. His former boon companions offered him various ingenious excuses for failing to respond to his appeal. They also offered him much sympathy and plenty of advice. They appeared to be willing, in fact, to offer him anything except the practical aid he so sorely needed.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, it did not take him long to discover that when a man is down and out his friends abandon him like rats deserting a sinking ship.

The discovery hurt him so much that he walked the streets like a man in a trance, his head down, his feet dragging wearily, a vacant, dreamy look in his eyes.

In this condition he collided forcibly with a man, who cursed him roundly for his clumsiness and followed the imprecation by an exclamation of surprise.

"Gad!" cried the man, who wore a high silk hat, a frock coat, and was faultlessly attired in every detail. "Aren't you Cowper Rousey?"

Cowper looked at his interrogator and recognized Oscar Harmsworth, a young man whom he had greatly disliked in the old days, and who had disliked him equally as much.

Harmsworth was managing clerk of a big law firm. He was thirty years old, tall, swarthy, and very handsome—the kind of fellow whom women like, but who, for some reason, is not popular with his own sex.

He and Cowper had been rivals for the

love of Margaret Adair. That was one reason why the two men disliked each other.

Under the circumstances, it was especially painful to Cowper Rousey to be discovered by Harmsworth in his present wretched condition. He would gladly have tramped all around the globe to avoid such a meeting.

He would have turned away now without speaking, but Harmsworth adroitly blocked his path.

"You *are* Cowper Rousey, are you not?" he insisted. "Yes, I am sure that I recognize you. You have changed a whole lot since I last saw you, four years ago. I was in some doubt at first; but now I am sure that it is you."

"Yes, I am Cowper Rousey," growled the other. "What of it? What does that matter to you? Step aside and let me pass."

Harmsworth continued to block his path.

"Don't be so savage, old chap," he said pleasantly. "Why should you and I bear each other any ill will? After all, there is no real reason for it. Why not be friends?"

At these words Cowper was seized with a sudden qualm of apprehension. His rival's desire to be friendly seemed to him to be fraught with a most alarming significance.

The last time they had met, Harmsworth had not felt in this mood toward him. Then Margaret Adair, the girl they both loved, had evinced a decided preference for him—Cowper Rousey. The girl, in fact, had treated Harmsworth with a coldness which indicated dislike. At that time Harmsworth's attitude toward his successful rival had been openly bitter and hostile.

And now Harmsworth's manner toward him was cordial. The fellow wished to be friendly. Did this mean that, since Cowper's quarrel with Margaret and during his four years' absence from his native land, Harmsworth had stepped in and managed to win his way into her affections?

This disturbing thought caused Cowper to turn pale.

"It certainly looks as if this fellow has managed to cut me out," he mused. "Otherwise, why should he now feel any more friendly toward me than he did four years ago? His present mood is inspired by triumph, I fancy. It pleases him to extend the olive branch to a conquered foe—confound him."

"Come," went on Harmsworth, who apparently did not guess what was passing in the other man's mind. "Don't scowl at me in that ferocious manner, old fellow. What have I ever done to incur your dislike? I say, again, let's be friends."

Still Cowper did not make any reply. He half hoped that Harmsworth would proceed to break the news of his conquest to him. It would be galling, to be sure, to learn the bitter truth from his successful rival's own lips; but then, on the other hand, he desired to know his fate without delay.

"If you will pardon my mentioning it," continued Harmsworth, "you seem to have met with some reverses since I saw you last. Your present appearance indicates that you are up against it."

Cowper turned fiercely upon him, his face red with anger and humiliation.

"What business is that of yours?" he fairly shouted. "How dare you make any comments upon my personal appearance? Confound your impertinence! If you dare to say another word to me, I'll—"

He did not complete the threat in words; but the menacing manner in which he advanced upon Harmsworth caused the latter to recoil hastily.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "How hot-headed you have grown since we last met! I assure you I meant no harm. I did not intend to be impertinent. I merely wanted to tell you that, if you are broke or—er—temporarily embarrassed, it would give me much pleasure if you would permit me to help you."

He pulled from his pocket a substantial-looking roll of bills.

"There's a couple of hundred here," he said. "All or any part of it is yours for as long as you need it, my friend."

Cowper stared at him in incredulous astonishment. Then he swallowed hard, like a fish out of water.

It seemed to him that his apprehensions were now fully confirmed. Surely his rival's offer to loan him two hundred dollars could be accounted for only by the fact that Harmsworth had won the girl and therefore was disposed to be generous.

"Put your money away," he said huskily. "I don't want any of it."

"But I insist. Really, I can easily spare it. It won't inconvenience me in the slightest, and you can return it to me when you get on your feet again. You must take it, Cowper."

"I don't want it, I tell you," retorted the other fiercely. "Put it back in your pocket. It's like your confounded impudence to offer it to me. I've got plenty of money—more than I can use, in fact. I'm as rich as Crœsus, if you want to know."

"Well, you certainly don't *appear* to be prosperous," said Harmsworth incredulously.

"Perhaps not. But appearances are often

deceptive," retorted the other. "Maybe I'm wearing these rags to win a bet. It's no business of yours, anyway. I don't require your help, Mr. Oscar Harmsworth, and I don't want your friendship. I never liked you, and I don't like you now. You're not the sort that appeals to me at all."

Harmsworth shrugged his shoulders.

"You are very foolish," he said quietly. "There is really no reason why you should assume this attitude toward me. I desired to show you that I was willing to let bygones be bygones. I am really sorry that you won't have it that way. Since you are so churlish, I won't detain you any longer."

"You'd better not," replied Cowper. "I'm in an awful hurry, so I guess I'll be on my way."

He strode off rapidly, and when he had walked half a block glanced over his shoulder, and was pleased to see that Harmsworth did not appear to be following him.

"I'd rather starve than accept any money from him, even as a loan," he muttered. "I wonder if he really has won Margaret's love? If so, I am indeed an unhappy fellow."

CHAPTER III.

A GREAT SHOCK.

COWPER ROUSEY had been guilty of no exaggeration when he had told his Uncle Philip that it was a yearning to see Margaret Adair and to be restored to her good graces which had brought him back from Australia on a freight steamer, on which he had earned his passage by the sweat of his brow.

He and Margaret had been sweethearts since childhood. They were both orphans. Cowper was the son of Philip Rousey's only brother; Margaret was the daughter of Robert Adair, who had been Philip Rousey's business partner and best friend.

Cowper's parents had died before he was five years old; Margaret's father and mother were killed in a railway accident before she was two. Philip had become the guardian of the boy, and the girl had been reared by a maiden aunt.

Philip Rousey, himself a bachelor, had made up his mind that some day the orphan son of his only brother should marry the orphan daughter of his best friend.

It was this romantic arrangement which had really caused the breach between Margaret and Cowper. Left to make their own choice, the couple, in all probability, would have been glad to join hands in wedlock. The knowledge that by doing so they would be carrying out the wishes of another proved a disturbing factor.

Tell two young people that they have got to marry each other, that the match has been fully decided upon by more mature minds, and at least one of them is almost sure to rebel, no matter how much they may really love each other.

Margaret's maiden aunt thought well of Philip Rousey's plan, and was always dinning into her niece's ears the fact that some day she was destined to be the wife of Cowper Rousey.

As a result, when Cowper went to Margaret and asked her to be his wife, the girl proudly refused. She felt certain that Cowper had proposed to her out of a sense of duty.

The young man's vows that he loved her could not shake her opinion. She even fancied that she detected a jarring note of self-assurance in his tone when he proposed, and her proud nature rebelled.

They had had a bitter quarrel, and the young man, in his rage and disappointment, had said things which caused the indignant girl to declare that never again did she wish to see him.

This fact, and the additional one that his uncle had forbidden him to pursue a career of art, had caused the young man to sail for Australia, determined to erase all memory of Margaret from his mind, and also to show his uncle that he could get along without his help.

He had lost out in both endeavors. He had come back penniless and more in love with Margaret Adair than ever.

And now he had good cause to believe that during the four years of his absence Margaret, instead of mourning his loss, had consoled herself by encouraging the advances of his old-time rival, Oscar Harmsworth.

"It can't be so," he groaned, as he tramped the streets, a prey to the most profound gloom. "It must not be. I've got to win her back again. No matter how far this affair between Margaret and that fellow has gone, I'm going to enter the lists and cut him out. I'll not believe it.

"I feel sure that she loves me. Oh, what a blind fool I was not to have communicated with her even once during the past four years! That fellow, of course, has profited by my silence. He managed to make her like him. I know that she did not do so in the old days.

"She told me once that there was something about him which made her mistrust

him. He must have succeeded in overcoming her aversion. But, of course, she does not really love him. I'll not believe that Margaret loves Oscar Harmsworth until I hear it from her own lips.

"I must go to her right away. I must tell her that I have come back even more in love with her than when I went away, and beg for another chance. I must have a talk with her before this day is done."

As he walked along, muttering these disjointed sentences, he suddenly caught sight of his reflection in a mirror in a candy-store window.

"Heavens!" he groaned. "I can't go to her looking like this. I *must* get some decent clothes somehow. Was ever a fellow as unfortunate as I?"

He thought of the two hundred dollars which Harmsworth had offered him. He found himself half regretting that he had not accepted the loan.

"I could have fixed myself up in fine shape with that sum," he mused. "I could have gone to Margaret looking like a gentleman."

Then he fiercely reproached himself for entertaining such a thought.

"I'm getting to be a fine sort of fellow to think even for a minute of accepting help from a man I don't like!" he declared angrily. "And to use Harmsworth's money to make myself fit to go to Margaret and endeavor to win her away from him would have been a rank piece of treachery. Of course I could not be capable of such a dirty trick."

He must get the necessary money somewhere else, he told himself. But how? He had exhausted his list of friends. He could not recall another person to whom to turn in his hour of need.

He thought of returning to his uncle's office and once more pleading with the obdurate old man to come to his assistance; but he realized that such a step would be in vain.

Philip Rousey was the kind of man who, right or wrong, stuck to his word. Once he had said "no," that was the end of it.

Suddenly Cowper recollected the bulky package which he carried under his arm. This package contained rough pen-and-ink sketches which he had made during his travels.

Perhaps he could sell these to some newspaper or magazine. He did not entertain much hope of this, however, for he had already tried to find a market for the sketches in Australia and also in London, but without success.

Art editors and dealers had turned up their noses at his work, and had told him, with more or less bluntness, that the sketches were too crude and characterless to be available.

Nevertheless, spurred on by the courage of despair, he determined to make another effort to sell the pictures. If he could exchange the whole lot for the price of a suit of clothes and a shave he would be more than satisfied.

He tramped down-town to the newspaper offices and interviewed the heads of many art departments. At each place he was turned down.

The art editors took a cursory look at the collection of sketches and shook their heads with finality. One of them brutally remarked that he had a five-year-old boy at home who could draw much better.

Still hoping against hope, the unfortunate artist then tramped up-town and visited the offices of several illustrated magazines. He fared no better there.

After that he tried several picture-stores. Here the criticisms were even more harsh. Many of the dealers were rough, unsympathetic men, who lacked the courtesy and consideration which most of the editors had displayed.

They laughed in Cowper's face. Some of them were even angry that he should have insulted them by offering such rubbish.

"It vas a shame, mein friendt, to spoil such good cardboard mit such poor vork," declared one outspoken Teuton picture-seller.

This was the last straw. In a fit of rage, disgust, and despair, the unfortunate young man walked out of the store and threw the package of sketches into the gutter.

"I'll carry them no longer," he muttered. "I haven't any doubt but that they're quite as bad as those fellows pronounce them. As an artist I'm a rank failure, without any question. It begins to look as if I'll have to go to Margaret in these rags or not at all."

As he stood muttering on the sidewalk a carriage dashed by. It was a closed brougham drawn by two spirited horses. Inside the carriage was a young girl dressed all in white.

Cowper caught a glimpse of her as she drove past him. That glimpse caused his heart to beat faster and a queer little cry to escape his lips.

He needed only one glimpse to recognize that face. Such glorious blue eyes, such a dainty little mouth, such a wealth of copper-colored hair could belong to only one girl—Margaret Adair.

Without knowing what he did or why he did it, he started to run after that carriage.

He would not for worlds have had Margaret recognize him in his present condition; but he did not stop to reason or to weigh the consequences. For the moment he was quite insane.

That rapidly moving brougham drew him on as if the vehicle had been a magnet and he a fragment of steel. The attraction of the girl inside was stronger than centrifugal force. And so he ran.

He did not have to run far. The carriage came to a stop within a half block. Cowper noticed that it had halted outside a church.

The girl got out. A man came out of the church and offered her his arm. With stately tread she walked through the little crowd of curious spectators gathered on the sidewalk and entered the edifice.

Cowper, with a thrill of horror, suddenly realized that she was attired in bridal array.

A fit of dizziness overcame him. The buildings seemed to be spinning around. The sidewalk appeared to be oscillating like the deck of a ship in a storm.

Lurid spots danced before his eyes. He saw stars just as vividly as a man who had been hit on the head with a hammer.

As a matter of fact, no blow inflicted with a hammer could have crushed the unfortunate young man as completely as the blow which had just been dealt to him by Fate.

As he vainly strove to steady himself and master his emotion, another carriage drew up in front of the church.

Out of this carriage stepped Oscar Harmsworth. His high silk hat, frock coat, white tie, and the flower in his buttonhole were significant.

"Here comes the bridegroom!" exclaimed somebody in the crowd, and a shout of applause went up.

Harmsworth smiled and walked briskly into the church. Cowper Rousey uttered a deep groan.

"Too late!" he muttered. "Too late! I am the unhappiest man in all the world. Now I know why that fellow offered me that two hundred dollars and wanted to be friends. He could afford to be generous, confound him."

"Come, move along there!" exclaimed the rough voice of a big policeman. "You people will have to keep moving. Don't be blocking up the entrance to the church."

He gave Cowper a vigorous shove.

"Why don't you move when I tell you to?" he said irritably. "You're no better than anybody else. What are you gaping at, anyway? There's nothing to see. There ain't anything particularly wonderful about a couple of young fools gettin' married. Anyway, it ain't any concern of yours. Move along!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SURPRISING OFFER.

To stand outside a church while the girl one loves is being married to another man is, without doubt, a bitter experience.

But to be inside the church—to be an eyewitness to the ceremony which is dashing one's hopes to pieces is, without question, an even more agonizing ordeal. For this reason Cowper Rousey did not enter the sacred edifice.

If he had entertained the slightest hope that by going into the place he could have prevented that wedding from proceeding, wild horses could not have held him back.

He realized, however, that it was now too late to dream of intervening. He knew Margaret Adair's character too well to believe that she would have given herself in marriage to Harmsworth unless she really loved him.

And if Margaret loved Harmsworth, what could poor Cowper hope to achieve by revealing himself to the bride?

This wedding was sufficient proof that she did not care for himself, Cowper argued; therefore any appeal he might make to her would be in vain and doubtless would arouse her indignation and scorn.

He might rush into the church and forbid the marriage to proceed. That would be intensely melodramatic; but of course it would accomplish only a sensation.

He had no authority to forbid the bans. He could advance no just reason why the ceremony should not take place. The fact that Cowper himself loved the bride was scarcely calculated to cause the clergyman to refuse to proceed with the service.

Desperate though he was, Cowper had sense enough left to realize this. He told himself that all was lost, as far as he was concerned, so he gave heed to the policeman's command to "move along" and walked slowly away.

For three hours he tramped the streets without consciousness of where he was walking, his head bowed dejectedly, his eyes bloodshot, his fists clenched so tightly that the finger nails lacerated the flesh.

Thoughts chased each other through his befevered brain like clouds across a starry sky.

He thought of Margaret as she had been when a little girl. He thought of the only time he had ever kissed her and how angry she had been. He thought of their quarrel four years previously and of the angry words he had uttered? He thought of his efforts to forget her after he had gone to Australia and how miserably he had failed.

Once he laughed. The grim humor of the situation dawned upon him. He had worked his way across from Australia on a dirty freight steamer in order to see her again and he had arrived on the very day on which she was being wedded to his rival. Surely Fate was the greatest practical joker that ever was.

The sun went down and the night fell; but he was not conscious of the change. *His* sun had gone down three hours previously. He felt convinced that for him there would never be light again.

He ought to have been hungry; but his despair prevented him from noticing the gnawings of his neglected stomach. It was getting near bedtime; but he had no place to sleep, so there was no reason why he should not continue to tramp and to brood.

At length he came to a bridge, and he stood leaning against the rail and gazing at the smooth river beneath his feet.

A dark thought entered his head—the same thought which has entered the head of many a poor fellow who has been hit between the eyes by Fate.

"Why not?" he reflected. "I suppose it would be cowardly; but why shouldn't I be a coward? I'm down and out and I've lost my girl, so why struggle any longer?"

He stared down at the black waters hesitatingly. A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Better not," said a deep, pleasant voice; "the river is very wet to-night."

Cowper wheeled sharply. He discovered that the man who had spoken was a tall, thin fellow with a very long nose and the smallest eyes he had ever seen in a human being.

The man's hair was a vivid red. His ears were large and outstanding. His mouth stretched almost from ear to ear. He was certainly one of the homeliest men Cowper had ever beheld.

"I say that you'd better not try it," repeated the stranger with a grin. "You'd probably be sorry. You'd find the water very cold as well as wet."

"Confound you," exclaimed Cowper wonderingly. "You must be a mind-reader. How the deuce did you know what I was thinking of doing?"

"Oh, that is easy," laughed the other. "It doesn't take a mind-reader to assume that when a young man, shabbily dressed but with a look of refinement on his face, stands on a bridge at night gazing moodily down at the river, he's wondering just how big a splash he'd make if he dropped overboard."

"Well, I might as well admit that you've guessed right," said Cowper bitterly. "I was trying to make up my mind whether I should leap or not when you interrupted me. I don't suppose, though, that I should actually have done it, even if you had not interfered. I have always had considerable contempt for the man who commits suicide."

"Of course you have," replied the other cheerily. "All right-thinking men feel that way about it. Besides, at your age, life is too precious to be thrown away."

Cowper shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know about that," he said; "I can't say that mine is particularly precious to me, at this moment."

"Pooh. How foolish of you to talk that way," rejoined the stranger chidingly. "When a fellow is young his troubles are only transitory. You may feel blue to-night, but to-morrow or the next day your heart in all probability will be as light as a feather again."

"You are wrong," declared Cowper, with a sentimental sigh. "My heart will never be light again. I am sure of that."

"Yes, it will," the other insisted. "Excuse me; but I know better. This world is full of opportunities for a nice young fellow like you.

"Now, I take it that you are in a bad way financially. Money—or rather the lack of it—is generally at the bottom of all our troubles. You are broke, my friend, are you not?"

"Of course I am broke," replied Cowper impatiently. "I would not be wearing these rags if I weren't; but—"

"I thought so," exclaimed the stranger, without giving him time to finish. "Well, how would you like to earn five thousand dollars?"

Cowper stared at him in blank astonishment.

"What's the answer?" he inquired, after a pause.

"The answer is very simple," replied the other earnestly. "I know how you can make five thousand dollars within a few hours if you want to."

"Ah!" exclaimed Cowper, with an air of

disgust. "I've got you sized up right now. You puzzled me at first. You're one of those get-rich-quick schemers and you take me for a sucker. Well, my friend, you've come to the wrong shop. I haven't got a red cent, so you're only wasting your time with me. Go and sell your gold brick to somebody who has money."

"You do me an injustice," declared the man with dignity. "I am not trying to sell you a gold brick. I don't want to sell you anything. I realize that you are penniless. I want to tell you how you can make five thousand dollars within a few hours."

"Without spending a cent?" inquired Cowper incredulously.

"Without spending a cent," replied the man. "If I was looking for a fellow with money I would scarcely tackle a shabbily dressed young man standing on a bridge at night contemplating suicide, would I?"

"I should think not," Cowper agreed. "That's just where you've got me puzzled. I can't make you out at all. If you are really serious, I should be glad to have you explain."

"I intend to explain, of course. Let me begin by asking you a question. Are you a married man?"

"No," replied Cowper with a rueful smile.

"Good," said the other; "do you want to get married?"

"A few hours ago there was nothing I desired more. Now I would sooner be buried," was the bitter reply.

"Do you really mean that?"

"I do."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, because in order to earn that five thousand dollars you will have to get married."

Cowper laughed boisterously. "In that case you needn't bother to state your proposition," he said. "The girl I love is now the wife of another man, so of course I cannot marry her."

"Then, why not marry another girl?"

"For the reason that I don't love any other girl."

"That is no reason," said the man earnestly. "I am not suggesting that you marry for love. I am suggesting that you marry for —that five thousand dollars."

"Ah! The five thousand dollars is to come to him in the form of a dowry, eh?" sneered Cowper.

"You can call it that, if you like."

"And you, of course, are a marriage broker. I am on to your game now. You have been commissioned to find a husband for a certain young woman and therefore you have appealed to me. Is that the idea?"

The man nodded.

"Well, you have come to the wrong fellow," cried Cowper indignantly. "What do you take me for, anyway? Do you think I'd marry a girl just for her money? I'm not that kind of a man, I assure you. I've a good mind to punch your ugly head for suggesting it."

"Don't be hasty," said the man calmly. "You don't quite understand. When you have heard the conditions you may think better of the offer."

"I don't care what the conditions are," retorted Cowper with rising wrath. "Do you think I'd sell my liberty to a girl I've never seen, for five thousand dollars? Do you think I am so lacking in self-respect and manhood that for the sake of a little money I'd be willing to live the rest of my days with a woman I don't love? Go away from me before I lose my temper and throw you into the river."

"You would not be selling your liberty," persisted the man, unperturbed by this threat. "And you would not have to live for the rest of your days with a woman you don't love. The proposition I desire to make to you is a most unusual one. Let me explain."

"I tell you I don't care to hear any explanations," cried Cowper angrily.

The other paid no heed to this rebuff.

"I am commissioned to find a suitable young man and to offer him five thousand dollars in cash to accompany me blindfolded in a speedy automobile to a certain house situated many miles distant," he said.

"In that house a wedding party is now gathered—all in readiness for the ceremony except for the lack of a bridegroom.

"In order to earn the five thousand dollars the young man whom I take along with me must become the bridegroom at that wedding.

"During the ceremony the bandage will be removed from his eyes so that he will be able to see his bride.

"After the clergyman has said the words which make the couple man and wife, the young man will once more be blindfolded, led to the waiting automobile outside and brought back to our starting place.

"He will never again see the girl he married. He will never hear from her. He will never learn what her real name was. She will be as completely lost to him as if she had dropped dead at the ceremony."

Cowper, interested despite himself, listened to the terms of this proposition with growing astonishment.

"Say," he exclaimed incredulously, when the man had ceased talking. "What are you giving me? It sounds like a page out of the 'Arabian Nights.' Do you mean to tell me that if I accepted this offer and married this girl, I should never have to see my wife again?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "You wouldn't be able to see her after the ceremony even if you wanted to. After you have laid eyes on the young lady you probably will be most unwilling to part with her, for she is very good to look upon. But, nevertheless, after the service is performed you must part—never to meet again."

"But what is the reason for this queer arrangement?" demanded Cowper, his curiosity thoroughly aroused. "What is the game, anyway? If this young lady does not desire to retain her husband, what on earth does she want to get married for?"

The stranger shook his head.

"That is a question which I am not at liberty to answer, my friend," he replied. "I can give you no explanation. You can rest assured, though, that there is a thoroughly good reason for the carrying out of this unique plan. People don't throw away five thousand dollars for nothing, you know."

"It is the craziest proposition I have ever heard of," declared Cowper. "I don't understand it at all. Would you mind telling me why you have selected me for the rôle of bridegroom?"

"I happened to hit on you by chance, of course," answered the man. "I was walking around the neighborhood looking for a likely young fellow, and when I saw you standing on this bridge I saw at a glance that you were the very man for my purpose."

"But how do you know that I would be acceptable to the young lady?" inquired Cowper. "Perhaps she would not fancy me for a husband. I can't flatter myself that I am very good to look upon in my present circumstances."

"The young woman has left the choice of a husband entirely to me," was the astonishing reply. "You need not have any fears on that score, my friend. If you will consent to come with me I will assure you that you will be accepted and the five thousand dollars will be yours as soon as the ceremony is performed."

"But can't you give me some slight idea of what it all means?" asked Cowper, almost pleadingly. "Won't you tell me why my services as a bridegroom for a few minutes only should be worth five thousand dollars to anybody?"

"I have already told you that I cannot give you any explanations," replied the other firmly. "You have heard my proposition, my friend. What do you think of it? Are you willing to accept it and win that five thousand? It will be the easiest money you have ever earned in your life."

"I don't know," said Cowper hesitatingly. "Five thousand dollars would put me on Easy Street, of course. It would enable me to throw off these rags and lead a respectable life for a time; but after all, now that I have lost the girl I love, what does it matter to me whether I have rags or riches?"

"The money would enable you to brace up and be a man again," answered the stranger earnestly. "Surely you are not going to throw your life away because a girl has thrown you down. Be a man! Earn this five thousand dollars. Put good clothes on your back and plenty of cash in your purse and look the world bravely in the eye.

"Don't give the girl who has jilted you the satisfaction of seeing that you cannot get along without her. Have some pride! Show her that you don't care. Show her that you can be happy without her. That is the way to treat a girl like that."

"By George! You are right," exclaimed Cowper with sudden enthusiasm. "It wouldn't do to let her and that fellow see how hard they have hit me. I ought to make a bluff of not caring. You speak the truth.

"I believe I'll accept your offer. I think I'll go with you and earn that five thousand dollars. It will be the craziest adventure I have ever undertaken: but I am desperate enough to go into anything."

"Good!" exclaimed the man, his little beady eyes sparkling with satisfaction. "I am sure that you will have no cause to regret your decision."

"But I can't get married in these rags," objected Cowper with sudden consternation. "I'm a pretty looking fellow to fill the rôle of a bridegroom."

"Your clothes won't make any difference," the man assured him; "anybody can see that you are a gentleman despite the shabbiness of your attire. Besides, there is no time for you to make a change. We must start at once."

"How can we start?" inquired Cowper, greatly puzzled. "I don't see that automobile you spoke of."

"Wait here on this bridge a few minutes. I will go to summon it," said the man. "It is not far away."

He disappeared and a few minutes later Cowper heard the *chug-chug* of an approaching motor.

A black touring car came to the edge of the bridge and stopped. A fur-clad chauffeur sat at the wheel, his face concealed by a pair of automobile goggles.

The strange man who had made this amazing proposition sat in the machine and beckoned to the young man to join him.

As Cowper climbed aboard the other took from his pocket a piece of white cloth.

"I shall have to tie this over your eyes," he said; "as I have already informed you, it is necessary to blindfold you during our journey."

Cowper shrugged his shoulders and nodded. The strange man adjusted the bandage.

Then he called to the chauffeur:

"Drive to our destination as fast as you can go," he commanded.

CHAPTER V.

A MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY.

THE automobile started off at a lively rate of speed.

Despite the bandage over his eyes, Cowper was made aware of the fact that they were moving very quickly by the swift rush of cool air past his cheeks and the swaying motion of the car.

"Isn't your chauffeur afraid of being arrested by some bicycle policeman for violating the speed law?" he inquired of the man seated beside him.

"We must run that risk," replied the latter. "We have quite some distance to travel and I desire to reach our destination as soon as possible. Besides, at the rate we are going there isn't much chance of any policeman being able to overtake us."

"Why have you blindfolded me?" Cowper asked a little later. "I assure you it isn't pleasant riding in such a swiftly moving machine without being able to see. I feel every second as if we were going to smash into something. Can't you remove this bandage from my eyes?"

"No, that wouldn't do at all," was the reply; "I am sorry if it annoys you; but it is absolutely necessary that you be blindfolded on the way both to and from the house."

"Why?" Cowper persisted.

"I should think the reason would be obvious enough. It is very necessary that you should not have the slightest idea of the route we are taking. We don't want you to be able afterwards to find the house in which the marriage occurred."

"Why not?"

"Because if you succeeded in finding the house you might be able to trace the girl you marry. I have already informed you that after the ceremony you are never to see her again."

"It is certainly a most extraordinary arrangement," exclaimed Cowper. "I can't for the life of me imagine what it all means. Can't you give me some slight idea why, after the wedding, I am never to see the girl again?"

"No. I have already told you that I cannot explain that."

"Well, there is one thing I must insist upon knowing," said the young man, seized with a sudden suspicion. "I want to know whether the young lady is a willing party to this crazy plan or whether she is being forced to take part in it against her wish. If you won't answer that question you had better stop this automobile and let me out. I am not going to take any part in a villainous conspiracy to dupe or force an unfortunate girl into contracting a marriage. I wouldn't do that for fifty times five thousand dollars."

"You won't have to do it," replied the other calmly. "Don't worry about that. I can assure you that the young woman is a perfectly willing party to these proceedings. You need have no fears on that score."

"I hope not," replied Cowper with considerable heat. "I trust you are telling me the truth. I won't stand for any crooked work, I warn you. I believe you told me that this confounded bandage would be removed from my eyes during the wedding ceremony, did you not?"

"Yes. You will not be blindfolded then."

"I am glad of that. I shall be able to see the face of the bride, and if its expression conveys any hint of unhappiness or coercion I shall refuse to go ahead with the ceremony. I warn you of that in advance."

"That's all right," replied Cowper's companion, with an easy laugh. "You will not find any such expression on your bride's face. She is perfectly happy and is entering into this marriage of her own free will. You will probably find her face wreathed in smiles.

"Perhaps she will be under hypnotic influence," suggested Cowper, still suspecting

that villainy was at the bottom of this queer adventure. "Shall I be allowed to talk with her?"

"Well, I don't suppose there will be any objection to your exchanging a few words with her *before* the ceremony," answered the other, after a thoughtful pause. "You will not be allowed to talk with her, though, after the marriage."

"I shall ask her whether she is entering into this thing of her own free will," declared Cowper, "I think I shall be able to tell, by the intonation of her voice, whether or not she is under hypnotic control. If my suspicions are aroused on that score you—you will have to find another bridegroom."

"Your suspicions will not be aroused," replied the other confidently. "The young lady is not under hypnotic influence or any other kind of influence? Everything will be perfectly straight, I assure you. Aside from the unconventional manner of obtaining a bridegroom, there will be nothing at all irregular about this wedding."

Cowper found it difficult to believe that the fellow was speaking the truth. He felt very positive that there was mischief of some sort afoot.

For the next hour he was silent. He was deep in thought, endeavoring to supply an answer to this perplexing problem.

It occurred to him that this whole affair might be nothing but a ruse to lure him to some lonely spot where he might be kept a prisoner or even murdered.

This alarming thought, however, did not fill him with great terror nor cause him to shrink from going ahead with the adventure.

His life was not of much value to him, anyway, now that Margaret Adair was lost to him. If anybody wished to take it from him, they were welcome—although he would put up a good fight just for the sake of fighting, he told himself grimly.

But on the other hand why should anybody conspire against his life or liberty? He could not think of any reason why this queer man, with the shock of red hair and the little beady eyes, should harbor murderous intentions towards him.

Perhaps the fellow was insane, he reflected. Certainly the offer of five thousand dollars and the astonishing marriage plan the man had described sounded like the conception of a crazy man.

True, he spoke quietly and appeared to be perfectly self-contained; but, then, Cowper had often heard that such qualities were often to be found in the most dangerous maniacs.

He would not have been at all surprised if at any minute the man had hurled himself upon him with a savage cry, and under the circumstances it was not exactly agreeable to be blindfolded.

But even this disquieting thought did not terrify Cowper to the extent of causing him to urge his companion to stop the automobile and let him out.

He felt listless and reckless enough to go ahead with the adventure let come what might.

The man beside him appeared to read his thoughts, for he suddenly remarked, with a laugh: "I suppose you are wondering whether or not I am sane, eh, my friend?"

Cowper started as if he had been pricked with a needle.

"Holy smoke! You really must be a mind-reader," he exclaimed.

"Well, I don't make a specialty of the art," was the chuckling response, "but it isn't difficult to read your thoughts, my boy. I realize that the terms of my proposition must strike you as so decidedly queer that you could easily question my sanity. You need not be alarmed, though. I assure you that I am not crazy, nor is my offer of five thousand dollars a spurious one.

"I give you my word of honor that you will get the money as soon as you have earned it."

"It seems to me that you ought to pay me part of it in advance," said Cowper. "After I have married this mysterious young woman and thus fulfilled my part of the bargain, I shall be entirely at your mercy. Should you desire to welch I should not be able to prevent you. You ought to pay me some of that five thousand now as a guarantee of good faith."

He made this demand mainly with the object of testing the sincerity of his strange companion. He still entertained strong suspicions as to the genuineness of the latter's proposition and he expected that the fellow would refuse to pay him a cent in advance.

Greatly to his surprise, however, the latter said, without a moment's hesitation: "Your contention is very just, my friend. It is scarcely fair to ask you to carry out your part of the bargain without any guarantee that I mean to keep to mine.

"To show you that I have no intention of deceiving you, I am willing to hand you the five thousand dollars now—not part of it; but the entire amount."

He slipped a big roll into Cowper's right hand.

"Here is the money," he said. "You will find, in that roll, forty one-hundred-dollar bills, and fifty twenties, making five thousand in all. I hope that you are now satisfied."

"But with this bandage over my eyes I cannot see the money," argued Cowper. "How do I know that you have not handed me a roll of blank paper."

"You are certainly a suspicious young man," chuckled the other, "but of course I don't blame you for being so. In a little while we will come to a road through some thick woods, and as I don't think there will be any chance of you recognizing your surroundings in the darkness, I guess it will be safe to remove the bandage from your eyes for a few seconds to enable you to count the money and satisfy yourself as to its genuineness."

"Woods!" exclaimed Cowper in surprise. "Are we in the country?"

"Sure. We have left the city limits behind us long ago. I should think you could have told that by the fragrance of the atmosphere."

The man was as good as his word. A few minutes later he shouted a command to the chauffeur, and the automobile slowed down.

Cowper's companion untied the bandage which covered the young man's eyes.

"Now examine that roll of bills," he said. "Hurry up; because we have no time to lose. I will light a match so that you can get a good look at the money."

As soon as the bandage was removed Cowper cast a hurried and curious glance around him. He saw nothing but big trees on both sides of the car and he realized that the man was right in assuming that he would not be able to identify this wild spot afterward.

His companion struck a match and he glanced at the roll in his hand. The bills had every appearance of being genuine.

"Count them," advised the red-haired man, striking another match and holding it in front of Cowper's eyes. "Convince yourself that it is all there."

Cowper rapidly counted the money and then nodded his head.

"There's five thousand dollars here, all right," he reported.

"Good! Put the roll in your pocket and let me adjust the bandage over your eyes again. We must be on our way."

The man blindfolded Cowper once more and shouted to the chauffeur to go ahead. The automobile dashed off through the woods.

An hour later the machine once more came to a stop and Cowper's companion tapped him on the shoulder.

"Come," he said. "We are at the end of our journey now. Let me assist you to alight. I cannot remove the bandage until you are inside the house."

Cowper got down from the car with his companion's aid and allowed the latter to lead him a few steps along a gravel path.

"Careful now; there's a step here," said his guide. "Be careful you don't stumble!"

Cowper obediently stepped upward and, groping with his right hand, found that he was passing through a doorway.

A second later he heard the slamming of a door and the bandage was suddenly torn from his eyes.

(To be continued.)

BATTLEDORE AND SHUTTLECOCK.

WITHOUT we heard the north wind roar,
The night we played at battledore;

Without we heard the north wind mock,
The night we played at shuttlecock.

And more and more, and more and more—
The night we played at battledore,

I felt my heart with every shock
Tossed like the smitten shuttlecock.

And since that night my heart is sore—
The night we played at battledore;

And since that night I take no stock
In battledore and shuttlecock.

Clinton Scollard.

The Man Who Came Back to Jail.

BY R. K. THOMPSON.

What Was Wrong with the Prison System, and How It Came to Be Found Out.

"IT'S the cleanest escape that was ever pulled off in this jail," said the warden, touching the flame of his match to the half-smoked cigar between his lips.

"Or any other," supplemented the turnkey with a wise shake of his head.

"That"—and the warden threw away the match—"I can't say. But I'm dead certain that there never was, and never will be again, a case of jailbreaking on the records of Aminta prison to equal this of Number 117."

"It's the slickest getaway I ever heard of!" remarked the other.

"Slick is no name for it!"

"Regular vanishing act," suggested the turnkey with a second head-shake.

"That's more like it!" assented the warden ruefully.

For a moment there was silence between the two uniformed men in the little lamp-lighted room.

Then the warden broke the pause.

"I'd give a month's salary right now," he said, "to know how he did it!"

"It's a brain-teaser!" nodded the jailer.

"Not a bar of his cell sawed or monkeyed with in any way," continued the first officer of the prison. "Not a single trace left behind to show how he got away. Seems as though he simply got up and walked out without a bit of bother—vanishing into thin air!"

He knit his heavy brows and peered beneath them at his companion in the small office.

"Do you suppose," he went on, "that is to say, you're sure, are you, that none of the guards under you were approachable?"

The turnkey shook his head.

"Now, chief!" he protested. "You know as well as I do that there's not a trusty nor a regular in this whole jail that can be bought—no matter what the price. And it's a lead-pipe cinch that Number 117 didn't have nothing that he could buy his freedom with."

"You're right there!" said the warden.

He walked to his desk at the other end of the room and brought back a box of cigars other than that from which had come the cigar he had just been smoking.

"He never got anything that was sent in to him by his friends outside," he remarked, setting down the box on the table near the turnkey. "So I agree with you that no money could have been smuggled in to him with which to bribe his way out."

He paused to open the cigar-box.

"This is a little present for Number 117 that I carelessly forgot to deliver to him," he said grimly. "Have one? They're good—so good that they give me a headache in the morning if I smoke more than one."

"Thanks!" said the jailer.

"Here—light up!" The warden held out a match. "We'll smoke a toast to the jail-breaker at his own expense—good riddance to him!"

"Then you've given up hope of catching him?"

"Yes," replied the warden. "I called in the boys to-night. What good was there in keeping them out any longer?"

"But he's only been gone a day and a half—"

"Yes, and what clue to his whereabouts have we found in that time?" interrupted the other. "Thirty-six hours he's been away—and have any of the guards, scouring the country continually during that time, seen hide or hair of him?

"No, sir; and they never would catch him, if they stayed out hunting his trail from now till doomsday, in my opinion.

"A man who could get out of this prison as easily as he did—as though the walls were green cheese—is clever enough to get clean away beyond ever capturing."

The warden crackled a match along the under side of the table-ledge, and let the flaming bit of wood fall from his fingers to the floor.

He stumbled out of his chair with awkward haste, and stood staring, wild-eyed, toward the door across the room.

Wheeling in his seat, the turnkey looked in the direction of his chief's startled gaze.

And, with a gasp of amazement, he, too, leaped to his feet.

A man stood in the doorway, and the man was Number 117!

"Don't move!"

The warden's words hissed into the tense silence of the tiny room with almost the same sound as that of a hot iron being plunged into a pail of cold water.

"Don't move!" he repeated, looking down the gleaming muzzle of the revolver in his hand, "or I'll pump you full!"

The escaped prisoner glanced from the weapon in the grip of the warden to the pistol in the firm-aimed hold of the turnkey.

"Put 'em up, friends," he said, his voice hoarse with the strain of lowering his tone to one out of keeping with his usual fearsome growl. "I ain't goin' to give you no cause to use them guns. So hide 'em—put 'em up!"

Slowly the warden returned his pistol to his jacket-pocket. And, at a signal from him, the jailer lowered his weapon to his side, standing at attention beside the table.

"So you've come back?" said the warden slowly, wonderingly. "Why?"

"By jinks!" murmured the turnkey. "By jinks!" he repeated incredulously, "*he's come back!*"

"Walk in here!" ordered the warden. "Sit down!" and he bobbed his head toward a chair by the table. "Now give an account of yourself!"

The returned prisoner sat down gingerly on the edge of the chair. He looked up defiantly at the grim-faced officer standing before him, and twisted his bull-neck around to flash a glance at the turnkey. Then his eyes dropped to his hands, clasped in his lap, and as his fingers began twisting together, his head sank down upon his chest.

There was silence for a moment while the two uniformed prison authorities surveyed the dejected attitude into which the man sitting before them had fallen.

"This—" began the warden, and stopped. "this—this—" he stuttered with sudden explosiveness—"this is the limit!"

The convict stirred uneasily. He did not lift his eyes.

"Here you break out of jail," continued the warden, "get clean away, leaving no trace behind that we can follow. We can't find how you got out. We can't discover a single clue to track you down. We give up the case, decide you can't be caught—and here you come back yourself!"

Again there was silence, broken only by the turnkey's appreciation of the unique situation in his murmured gasp: "By jinks!"

The prisoner looked up lowerингly.

"Well," he croaked, "is there any reason why I shouldn't come back if I happen to want to?"

The warden scratched his ear.

"None," he said laconically. "As a matter of fact, we're delighted to see you—it's a most pleasant surprise, I assure you. In fact, I can say to you, as I've already explained, what is sometimes said to a tardy guest—we'd about given you up!"

The returned convict grunted and gave his undivided attention to watching the rubbing together of his two thumbs on his knees.

"Then that's all there is to it!" he growled. "I've come back—and, so long as there ain't no law against my returnin', we're all satisfied."

The officer watched him.

"But why, man?" he broke out finally. "Why under the name of the sun, when you got away, did you come back of your own accord?"

The convict's eyes shifted from his lap to the floor, thence to the wall, half-way up its plastered surface, and swiftly across to the warden's puzzled face, and as swiftly away again.

"It's a long story!" he muttered, moving uneasily in his seat.

The officer kicked a chair out from the wall with his foot, hooked around its leg, and sat down.

"Spit it out!" he said gruffly.

"I came back," went on the prisoner, "because I couldn't stay away."

There was a muffled thud as the turnkey dropped heavily back in his chair.

"Well, by jinks!" he exclaimed. "Well, by *jinks!*"

A smile was twitching at the ends of the warden's mustache.

"Treated you so well here, did we," he asked jocularly, "that you got homesick away from us?"

The man before him flashed a second, evasive glance into his face.

"Don't kid me!" he snarled. "I didn't come back here to listen to no jokes like them!"

The officer scowled in turn.

"Go on!" he commanded. "Let's hear what you've got to tell."

The convict sat still further forward on his chair, pulled his feet in under it, and continued:

"The first place I headed for when I got

out was the river. I used to think that, if I ever got away, a sail down the bay was the one thing I'd do first of all. I alwuz did love the water!" and he paused to sniff.

"So, soon as I landed in the city, I got on board an excursion-boat. I was goin' to enjoy myself right off in the way I wanted to most."

He stopped again and sighed heavily.

"I got on at the up-town pier," he went on more quickly, "and got off at the next stop, a mile farther down.

"I was standin' by the rail when the boat started. I looked behind me for somethin'. And then I see, printed on a bit of enamel nailed up to the side of the cabin, the word "Aminta."

He looked at the warden.

"The name of this prison that I'd just escaped from was starin' me straight in the face, see? And I tell you it give me a bad turn—as you'd understand if you was to be in my place. I beat it away, quick, around to the other side of the boat.

"And there, painted on the bow of a lifeboat, was another one of them 'Aminta's'!

"That was enough. I see then that the excursion-barge I was on was named after the jail I'd broken out of. I didn't want to stay on board it no longer than I could help. Bein' a passenger there was too much like bein' a prisoner here. So, as I say, I went ashore at the next stop.

"Then I was goin' to do the second thing I'd laid in my cell night-times dreamin' of doin' when once I was free again. I was goin' to a theater.

"It was two in the afternoon, and I was just in time fer the matinée. I bought my ticket. I had the stub tore off by the guy at the gate. The usher took it and paraded me down the aisle.

"And then I got a worse shock than I did when I was on the boat.

"That feller in the tuxedo suit slams down my seat and says to me:

"Here y' are, 117!"

"Right then he could have knocked me out with a tap on the wrist. I nearly dropped in my tracks at hearin' him call me by the number that was mine here in jail.

"And then I see that I'd bought a ticket with that same number on it. And the usher hadn't meant nothin' by what he said.

"But I was too shook up by this second jolt to my nerves to stay and see the show. Instead, I ducked out of the theater, and took shock number three on the sidewalk outside.

"A big guy was standin' by the side of a carriage that was pulled up in front of the playhouse. And, at sight of him, I pretty nearly passed in my checks.

"He was wearin' the same uniform as the guards of this prison!

"'They're after me!' thinks I. 'They've tracked me here to this joint. I'm pinched!'

"And then the feller in the blue uniform with the red stripe on the coat-sleeve and trouser-leg turns around, and I see in a minute that I'd made a mistake. He wasn't nobody but the carriage-starter. And he was wearin' the livery of the theater, which happened to look like the Aminta jailer's clothes from behind.

"By this time my nerve was about gone. I'd been scared good and stiff three times in the last hour. And I had to admit that escapin' from prison wasn't so much good for you, after all—if you had to have the life frightened out of you every minute you were out lookin' for a good time.

"'Aw, buck up!' I tells myself. 'What you need to get you back your nerve and all is a good meal. When I get a swell feed inside me,' I thinks, 'I'll be twict the man I am now. Livin' on prison fare's made me weak in the knees and easy scared. I'll buy myself a good, big dinner and come around all right!'

"So I looks up a hotel that I remembers as bein' the best eatin'-place in town. I sits down to a table and orders up a twelve-course banquet fer myself—one just like them I used to think I'd eat as soon as I got out into the open air again.

"But I didn't eat that dinner.

"No. I was just goin' to begin on the first course—had my fork all up in the air to spear an oyster—when I somersaulted over the table, fell out of the door, and ran to the railroad station for the first train back to jail.

"Just as I was goin' to begin eatin', a bell-hop comes through the dining-room and gives me my fourth and last shock by yellin':

"'Call fer 117!'

"He was pagin' somebody, and the somebody had the same number on his hotel door as was over my cell in the prison I'd broke out of.

"That was enough. It showed me that there wasn't to be no peace in life fer me.

"So that," finished the convict, as his head sank down upon his chest again, "that's why I came back!"

The warden rose hastily, turned his back, and wiped away the smile from his lips. Then he faced the prisoner once more.

"Well," he said coolly, "you got what you deserved for breaking jail. And, now that you're back, suppose you tell us how you got out as smoothly as you did."

The man straightened in his chair. He looked firmly—for the first time—into the officer's eyes.

"That's my business, bo!" he said determinedly. "It ain't goin' to be none of yours."

"You won't tell, eh?" demanded the warden gruffly.

"Right!" laconically assented the convict. "It's a secret you won't find out from me."

"Um!" grunted the officer thoughtfully. "Well"— he signaled the turnkey to rise and take the returned prisoner in charge— "well, we'll see about that. Perhaps, when you've gone without your meals for three or four days, you'll feel like talking for your dinner! Take him back and lock him in his cell!"

Five minutes later the jailer returned.

"Well, we're in luck!" he grinned at his friend.

"Looks that way!" assented the warden.

"We've got him back again—which nothing but luck could have done for us. Here," he passed a handful of cigars from the box before him to the turnkey; "we ought to celebrate this event. Pass these around to the boys with Number 117's compliments!"

The turnkey left the room.

"We don't have to swipe our smokes from the warden to-night!" he chuckled. "We get 'em as a gift!"

II.

It was half-past five the next morning, and Aminta prison was in an uproar.

Guards swarmed from tier to tier of the jail. The sound of iron-barred cell doors slamming vacantly to and fro echoed through the granite building. Above this banging racket sounded, now and then, the booming of the big signal-cannon on the wall outside the prison yard.

"Every one of 'em has gone!" the turnkey who had sat with the warden the night before was yelling into the ear of that pallid-faced officer. "The whole twenty-eight prisoners we had have got away!"

"Including—?" gasped the warden.

"Including Number 117!" the jailer answered his timidly half-spoken question. "Here—he left this note behind for you!"

A scrap of dirty, finger-marked wrapping-paper changed hands. And the warden bent his head to read these ill-written words which swam before his eyes in a dizzy mist:

> It wuz tu ezy. I had to cum back and let the rest of them out. You wil hold-up things that is sent in to us wil you? Wel, be shure nex time that the cegars you "fergit" to giv the prisoners frum their friens is o. k. before you smoak them. Mine had six pills of morphin in each one whitch was smugelled in to me by my pals who new I had the dope habit. You and youre gang of crooks got knocked out frum smoakin' them. That's how, when you wuz al asleap, I got out. Then I cum back to clean out youre jail to git even on you fer robbin me. So long. No. 117.

The rudely-scrawled note slipped from the warden's hand. He sank down in a chair. His lips opened convulsively to speak, but no words descriptive of his fuddled state of mind escaped them.

The turnkey came to his aid.

"Well—by—jinks!" he muttered.

THE ART TO PLEASE.

You may boast the wealth of Crœsus, you may have a Cæsar's power,
And the fame that wins the future may be your easy dower;
But if one modest quality you cannot add to these,
Your case is poor and pitiful: I mean the art to please.

'Tis tact that parries eloquence, a famous poet said,
For it's not the wisest intellect that always gets ahead;
There is a mild persuasion which plays so well its part,
It baffles pompous phrases and defies the speaker's art.

Since life is full of friction, and our paths are sore beset
By obstacles that hinder us, 'tis better not to fret,
But try the gentle manner, whatever comes to tease,
And practise with a kindly heart the helpful art to please.

Joel Benton.

MIND OVER MATTER.*

BY BROOKS STEVENS.

A Story of Strange Goings-On in a Country Town Wherein the Hero Does Not Appear for the Space of Several Chapters.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE small New England town of Swazey is much excited over the advent of a certain Professor Gray, who announces himself on a sign in front of the Widow Brown's as "the World-Renowned Medium." A man named Blake arrives at about the same time, calls on the professor, and amazes the latter by announcing himself as a bank burglar. He proposes that the professor shall help him rob the Swazey bank by calling on a deceased pal of his, one "Stubby Martin," as control, and after some demur the professor consents. He takes the widow's cat along, and, as it is raining, the animal's cries to be let in out of the wet attract the night watchman to the window, where the professor calls upon him to be submissive to his will and open the door. This is done, and then, bidding the man sleep on for two hours, the professor and Blake penetrate into the interior of the bank.

The next morning Albert Benner, cashier of the bank, is horror-stricken to discover the dead body of a man lying in front of the safe, a bag of gold clutched in his hand. He proves to be Professor Gray. The president of the bank and the chief of police are summoned, and the time-lock having been set for nine o'clock, all stand eagerly awaiting what may be found when the doors swing open. What they see when this takes place arouses exclamations of horror and surprise.

CHAPTER XII.

SUSPICIONS CLOSING IN.

ON the floor of the big safe lay the body of Blake.

The discovery of the professor had been sufficiently exciting to upset the employees of the bank for some time to come; but when a second ghastly find was made, several of the young men almost turned faint.

Some one rushed out into the principal street shouting the news, and all Swazey was thrilled.

It was necessary to close the doors of the bank in order to keep out the curiosity-seekers. A great crowd collected in front of the building, eager for details.

"And to think that we were hoodwinked so by that Professor Gray!" said Seth Holcomb.

"Oh, he was a good medium all right," remarked some one. "How were we to know that he was just as good a burglar?"

While the hubbub in the street was at its height, an investigation was being conducted within the bank.

The chief of police assumed charge of affairs and cast a glance around the interior of the safe.

"First we will examine this man," he announced as he bent over the body. "He's been dead some time—I should say seven or eight hours. There's no doubt about the way he died. He was suffocated in the safe."

Everybody agreed that he was right. With the big door closed, it was easy to see how a man could not breathe.

"It is evident that he had come into the safe for money," continued the chief, "for here on the floor is a bag of gold which he must have dropped when he was overcome. Therefore, he was helping the other one."

All listened in rapt attention.

"Now, the question is, who is this man? Does any one know him?"

Nick Brown again came forward and looked at the burglar.

"I don't know who he is," he said, "only he was at our house all yesterday afternoon, talking to the professor about his dead wife, so the professor said; but I heard 'em planning a trip somewhere. I thought it was funny, when the professor had just come."

"This was the trip, evidently," remarked the chief wisely. "Well, they got all that was coming to 'em."

"This man came to town right after the professor did," said Nick. "Nobody knew him."

The chief dragged the prostrate form out of the safe to the floor of the vault.

"Now, the next thing is, how much money is missing?" he continued.

It was strange, but up to that moment no-

body had thought of suggesting a count of the money.

"By all means, let us see how much has disappeared," said the president of the bank.

The cashier and his assistant soon got busy, while the president anxiously awaited the result.

"Every penny is here, sir," reported the cashier presently.

His assistant agreed with him.

All the money was checked off properly, and, upon examination, the counts tallied exactly.

"A most remarkable affair," commented the president.

"It's got me going," added the chief with a shake of the head.

"The question now is, how did these two men get into the bank," broke out the president, "and who killed the medium?"

Every one at once started to examine the huge door.

"There ain't a mark on it, sir," insisted the chief, at the conclusion of a careful survey.

No one could find so much as a pin scratch on the highly polished surface of the great safe which had been the pride and comfort of the moneymakers of Swazey.

"It's almost unbelievable," declared the president. "One man is found outside, the other shut within. How did they get there? There must be an explanation of all this."

"Before we answer that," said the chief, "we must first find out how they got inside the building. Maybe the night watchman can throw some light on this matter," with a significant glance at the president.

"A good idea. Where is the watchman?" demanded that gentleman.

"Keeping guard at the front door," replied the cashier.

"Call him."

The president then asked all to withdraw with the exception of the cashier, his assistant, and the chief of police.

The watchman entered the vault.

"You know what has happened?" began the president.

"I have heard about it," answered the watchman.

"In what condition was the building this morning when the cashier appeared?" asked the chief.

"The same as it always has been, sir, since I have been in charge here. It was as safe and sound as when it was first locked up."

"Come with me," said the chief.

The party made the rounds of the building. Every part of it was carefully examined.

"It is locked up as tight as a drum," declared the chief. "This beats me. How did those men get inside?"

"Did anything occur at all last night to arouse your suspicion that an attempt might be made to break into the bank?" inquired the president.

The watchman shook his head.

"No, sir. I swear by the memory of my only child nothing at all occurred."

All were greatly impressed by the watchman's earnestness. The party then returned to the safe.

"Look at these men," ordered the president, indicating the two bodies. "Have you ever seen either of them before."

Miller did as requested.

"No, sir," he said; "never."

"What occurred last evening during your watch?"

"Nothing more than usual. The only thing I can remember was hearing a cat cry. I opened the window and took it in. It was a strange cat, and I felt sorry for it. And I was lonesome."

"How long was the window open?"

"Only a moment. It was the one with the heavy bars. They haven't been tampered with."

"You took the cat in?"

"Yes, sir. After that, nothing happened."

"Where is the cat now, Miller?"

"I don't know, sir. I looked for her this morning, but she had disappeared."

"A strange story," declared the chief.

Still, he did not doubt the watchman's word. Honesty was written all over the man's face, and there was nothing to indicate a fear of the most rigid cross-examination. Besides, Miller was a man known to be of simple nature, with little education and certainly no cleverness.

Although circumstances were suspicious, no one thought of connecting him with the crime.

"I believe your story, Miller," said the chief. "If you could only produce that cat now, it might be a good witness for you."

At this moment a plaintiff meow was heard, and into view came the Widow Brown's cat, stretching itself as if from a good sleep.

"Well, I'll be—" began the chief, but he didn't finish.

Nick Brown, who had managed to remain with the party, called out:

"That's our cat! How did she ever get this far from home?"

While every one was wondering at the presence of the cat, Nick continued:

"The professor took an awful shine to her. Kept her in his room from the time he came to our house."

"Then the cat followed the professor here," said the chief. "We know how the cat got in; but how did the medium gain entrance? That's the question."

"He didn't come past me, that's sure, so help me God!" solemnly declared the watchman. "Chief, you know me. You know what I am. I wouldn't do anybody harm. I would give my life to protect the bank. That's what I'm here for. I don't know anything about the trouble."

"I believe you, Miller," said the chief, as he watched the big tears drop down the simple fellow's cheeks.

"I think he's honest, too," added the president. "There is, however, one conclusion to be drawn from all our observations in regard to the attempted robbery, and that is—"

"And that is," interposed the chief with emphasis, "that the two burglars had inside assistance."

"I agree with you," said the president. "And if the watchman did not aid these men, who did?"

"Ah, that's it," assented the chief. "Somebody did. That's plain. But who was it? Who had access to the building at all hours?"

"There was no dynamite used in opening this safe," continued the chief. "It was opened by someone who knew how, who knew the combination."

"Yes," said the president, "there is only one conclusion to be drawn. Since the window was not touched, since the doors had not been tampered with, since the watchman says he saw no one, there is only one answer. The safe was opened by one who knew it well. Who could that person be?"

No one replied. Yet each man felt the same name burning in his brain.

At last the chief put an end to the embarrassing silence.

"Mr. Benner," he said in a cold, significant tone of voice, "will you kindly step into the inner office?"

CHAPTER XIII.

BENNER GETS IN BAD.

"WHAT does this mean, chief?" demanded Benner in indignant tones.

"You can take it for what it is worth," replied the head of Swazey's police department.

"Then am I to understand that I am under suspicion in this affair?" went on the cashier.

"It looks like it, Mr. Benner. I hate to see you dragged in, but what are we going to do about it?"

Benner did not reply. He seemed overcome.

"Circumstantial evidence is too strong against you," went on the chief.

"You did not seem to find circumstantial evidence of sufficient importance in the case of the watchman," said Benner. Why should you use it against me?"

"Oh, you want to put the crime on the watchman, do you?" exclaimed the chief.

"I beg your pardon," said the cashier, "I want to do nothing of the sort. I believe in Miller's innocence as firmly as you seem to, but why should you attempt to fasten this charge on me when you exonerate him?"

"Because he hasn't got brain enough to try to rob a bank," coolly replied the chief. "You have. That makes the difference."

"Oh, thank you," retorted Benner. "I must say you flatter me by your comparison."

"I am sorry, Benner," continued the police official. "You have always had the respect and esteem of everybody in town. It makes me feel bad, honest it does, to see you in bad this way. But what else is there for us to think? You could handle the combination. Nobody else could! Certainly the night-watchman didn't know it. And if he had been a party to the crime, do you suppose he would have been here this morning, after last night's tragedy. Nothing like it. He wouldn't have sense enough to face the music and try to throw off suspicion. You would."

Benner said nothing. He began to become conscious of the seriousness of his own position.

"If these men had only gained admittance to the bank and then made an attempt to blow up the safe or to tamper with it in some way, things would have looked different for you," continued the chief. "But the burglars actually got into the safe without injuring it."

"I can't understand how they did," remarked the cashier, with a puzzled look.

"That's what we want you to tell us right now, before we go any further. You do know, now, don't you?"

"I tell you, I know nothing about the wretched affair," angrily replied Benner. "I am as much in the dark as you are."

"Yes, I know you say so. But how are you going to prove it?"

Benner did not reply.

"Saying and proving are entirely different," persisted the chief. "The most notorious crook I ever tackled insisted he knew nothing about the crime, even to the time he died, thirty years later in jail, but he was guilty just the same. Now you can help us a bit, if you make up your mind to do so."

"I will do all I can," replied the cashier.

"That's the way to talk," and the chief gave him an encouraging slap on the back.

The president entered at this juncture with Adams, the assistant cashier.

"This young man," began the head of the bank, "says that Benner made no effort to summon assistance this morning when he went to the safe, and was the first to discover the man on the floor. He tells me that Benner appeared to be in a dazed condition."

"So I was," replied the cashier.

"Why should you have been dazed?" inquired the chief. "There should have been nothing to worry *you*. Your first impulse ought to have been to notify the others without delay."

"I couldn't think of that just then," answered Benner.

"He admits that he didn't do the right thing," said the chief in exultation, as if he had gained an important point.

"Adams says that the cashier's manner was most peculiar," continued the president.

Benner gave a searching glance at the countenance of his assistant whom he had never especially liked, but had not previously distrusted. He had always known that the fellow was envious of his own position in having secured the place as cashier, and that he stood ready at any moment to step into his shoes. Still, this knowledge never bothered him seriously.

"So much so," continued the president, "that he himself wondered at the cause of it, before the direct finger of suspicion had been pointed at his superior."

"So," muttered Benner, "I have found you out, have I?"

"Is it true," went on the president, addressing Benner, "that you intimated to your assistant yesterday afternoon that 'something would doubtless happen before the morning that would set the whole town talking?'"

All waited for the cashier's response.

Benner's face became a bright red. He hung his head and appeared confused for the moment.

"You also told him, did you not, that you would show Swazey a thing or two, or something to that effect."

Benner made no reply for an instant, then, "you traitor," he broke out at last. "I said nothing of the kind, I merely remarked, that some day I would surprise everybody."

"Oh, he admits he said that, Mr. President," remarked the chief of police. "What more can he say?"

"A dangerous admission certainly," assented the president.

"Couldn't be worse," agreed the chief.

"Kindly tell us, Mr. Benner, how you had planned to surprise everybody, for that is what you admit having said. We are not asking you to explain anything of which you are ignorant."

"I did say that," said Benner. Then he refused to talk further.

"But you must go on," insisted the chief. "You've got yourself in a tight place now, by your own say-so, and it's up to you to get yourself out again. Go on. We're listening."

Still the cashier would not speak.

"Do you wish us to believe, after that remark," continued the chief, "that you are innocent of this crime?"

"I am," declared Benner

"Well, of all the concentrated nerve," declared the chief, "this takes the medal. You're a wonder, Benner. If you hadn't lived here all your life I would say you were an old hand at the business. You certainly know how to play the game at a cross-examination as well as any crook I ever met."

"Come now, Benner," urged the president, "tell us all about it. It will be much easier in the end for you."

"There's nothing to tell," persisted the cashier.

"Now, see here, Benner," persisted the chief, "any fool can see that this job could never have been tackled without inside assistance. Nobody could manage the combination but yourself. The watchman didn't know it. Come, confess."

But Bennett still shook his head.

The chief suddenly got up from his chair and placing a hand on each of the cashier's shoulders, went on:

"Benner, I know where you were between twelve and two last night."

"How do you know that?" demanded the cashier, for once taken completely off his guard.

"Because you were followed," asserted the chief in tones of firmness which left no doubt regarding some hitherto unrevealed knowledge in his possession.

"I didn't think anybody knew about that?" remarked Benner.

"But you see, I did,"

Something in the police official's tone told the cashier that a trick was being played on him.

"I was at home in bed at that time," he said.

"You were not at home between twelve and two," insisted the chief. "That stands."

"Well, if I was not, it's none of your business," said Benner.

"Then you refuse to tell where you were at that time," went on the the chief.

"I do," emphatically replied the cashier.

"You see," said the chief triumphantly to the president. "He admits he was not at home. If he wasn't there, where was he?"

Turning to Benner again, he went on:

"Mr. Benner, your landlady is here to prove that you left the house just before twelve o'clock and you returned after two. Now, it looks suspicious that a man like yourself, knowing the combination of the safe, should for the first time in years leave your room at such an hour and stay out such a length of time—the exact time during which we all agree the crime must have been committed."

"I can't help that," declared Benner. "I have no explanation to make."

At this moment the president invited a newcomer to enter the room.

"Chief," he said, "this gentleman is the inventor of our new safe."

"Just the man I've been waiting for," exclaimed the police official. "I want to ask you just one question, then I will trouble you no further. Is it possible for this safe to have been opened by any other agency," but a powerful explosive, or human hands?"

"Certainly not," replied the inventor without hesitation.

"Thank you," said the chief.

Turning to Benner he went on:

"That settles it! Mr. Benner, I have a disagreeable duty to perform. You are under arrest, charged with being an accomplice in the robbing of the National Bank of Swazey."

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE.

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself, Benner?" asked the chief.

"Nothing more than I have said already," replied the cashier.

"You refuse to make an explanation, then?"

"I have told you there is none to make," answered the young man.

The president now came over to the cashier.

"Benner," he said laying a kindly hand on the young man's shoulder and looking him straight in the eyes. "I am very sorry for you. I never would have believed it, only facts are so dead against you. I couldn't feel more deeply affected were you my own son who had fallen into this terrible disgrace. Come, my boy, be honest now, and tell us all about it."

Benner, however, refused to be persuaded by kind words. He was touched by the advance made by his superior, but he merely shook his head.

"You won't talk, then?" persisted the president.

"Certainly he won't," interrupted the chief. "They always behave like that. Can't say that I blame 'em very much. It's better to keep a still tongue in your head until you are sure of your story. The trouble with so many crooks who are just beginning is they haven't learned that little lesson. Mr. Benner, here, as I remarked before, is a bit wiser than most amateurs."

Benner glanced contemptuously at him.

"If you would only own up, right now," continued the chief, paying no attention to his look, "it would be so much easier for you. You would get off with a lighter sentence, although, goodness knows, as it is, you'll have plenty of time in which to plan your next robbery."

"I can't realize it," said the president. "It is too awful for words. Why, Benner, I've known you since you were a little fellow, and now, to have you turn out this way! Too bad, too bad!"

"Mr. Benner could help us all a whole lot if he would only tell where he was last night between twelve and two," suggested the chief.

The young man made no response.

"Seems to me that's easy enough," continued the head of the police. "Come, now, where were you?"

The cashier did not deign to reply.

"Your landlady tells a pretty straight story," went on the chief. "She says she heard you creep softly out of the house just before twelve. She wouldn't have known anything about the matter if you hadn't stumbled against the hat-rack."

He studied the cashier's face attentively as he spoke, hoping to make him betray himself by some change of color or expression.

"Mr. Benner, why did you leave your lodgings, carrying a large valise?"

"I—" began Benner as his face flushed crimson—"I—"

Then he stopped short.

"You see, Mr. President," said the chief, "he can't deny that he went out in the dead of night, and had with him a valise. Mrs. Watson saw him. Now, I ask, why did he take a valise with him at such an hour? The thing's as plain as two and two."

The president looked both amazed and grieved.

"This is a startling feature," he remarked.

"It's proof positive of his intentions," said the chief. "What would an honest fellow be doing at that time of night, stealing forth in the darkness—in the rain, too—taking with him a bag, unless he had something unusual on foot?"

"Where is the valise now?" asked the president. "What became of it?"

"That's the most remarkable feature of all," went on the chief. "When he returned to his house about two o'clock he brought the satchel back with him. Mrs. Watson found it this morning. It was all spattered with mud and spotted with the rain. One moment, please."

He left the room for a second, and quickly returned, carrying a leather valise.

"Do you recognize this?" he asked Benner.

"Yes; it is mine. I don't deny it."

"Much good it would do you if you did," sneered the chief. "Can you imagine what it contained?" he demanded of the president.

"I presume it was empty."

"Now, that's exactly what I supposed. I figured it out when I first heard about it that he took the satchel in order to carry away the money. Much to my amazement, it was used for an altogether different purpose."

"And what was that?" asked the president eagerly.

"It was full of wearing apparel," replied the chief impressively—"enough to last him some days."

"I can't believe it!" exclaimed the president.

"His landlady opened the satchel before my very eyes. She hadn't touched a thing. It was exactly as it had been packed by Benner himself. Now do you wonder that I felt so sure of my man?"

"Then, you were really leaving Swazey in the dead of the night, Benner?" asked the president.

The cashier flushed again, and looked down on the floor.

"Now, Mr. President, why should he be leaving with a good supply of clothes at such a time if he had nothing to do with this bank robbery?"

"I *had* nothing to do with it," said Benner.

"Why did you have your wearing apparel with you, then, when you so mysteriously left your lodgings?"

But to this the cashier declined to make reply.

"It does look dangerously conclusive, chief," said the president. "There is only one peculiar feature about his midnight expedition. If he left Mrs. Watson's with the intention of not returning, why *did* he return? I can't understand that. The two men found dead in the bank this morning had secured the money, and were ready to fly with it, when something happened. Now, what that something was we will never know unless Mr. Benner decides to clear up the mystery."

"Maybe the three of 'em had a tussle, and that accounts for the dead man in front of the safe," suggested the chief. "Thieves sometimes do have fallings out at the last moment and fall on each other, with the result that somebody gets it in the neck. However, that never seems to bother the survivors. The money goes farther with two than it goes with three," he added wisely.

"Yes; but why didn't Benner take his share and leave Swazey, as he had planned to do?"

"That's one of them riddles that only the sweat-box and the third degree will ever make him tell," replied the chief.

"To be a bank robber is a serious enough crime," remarked the president, looking sadly at Benner, "but to be a murderer also is too terrible for words. I can't believe that you are a murderer, Benner."

"But you believe me to be a burglar," interrupted the young man bitterly. "It doesn't matter much to me if you add another crime to my record. I might as well be two things as one."

"Well, of all the concentrated gall," remarked the chief, gazing at the cashier in astonishment. "Say, Benner, you're all right. There's nothing like having the courage of your convictions. Now, if you would only clear up a little matter or two for us it would simplify the affair greatly. Just explain why you shut one fellow up inside the safe."

While he waited for an answer a rap came at the door.

It was the office-boy.

"I beg pardon, sir," he said, "but the mail has just been sorted. Mr. Burns thought as how it might have something important."

"Thank you, James," said the president as he took the several letters marked personal. He glanced casually at them, and was about to put them down, when one attracted his attention.

"What's this?" he asked. "It looks like your writing, Benner."

The cashier started from his chair. His face became red and white by turns.

"It's written on the bank paper," commented the president as he prepared to open the envelope. "And is stamped at six this morning. How strange!"

"Must have been dropped into the box pretty late to be stamped so early," remarked the chief.

Benner seemed greatly agitated.

"I beg you not to read that letter, sir," he said.

The president looked keenly at him.

"How's that?" he demanded in cold tones. "You send me a letter marked 'personal' last night, and this morning you request me not to read it. Your conduct is becoming more and more incriminating, Benner. If I had the slightest belief in you at the beginning of this wretched affair, I assure you there is almost none left now. Perhaps this letter will shed some light on the subject," and he spread the sheet of paper before him and glanced over the handwriting.

"What's this?" he exclaimed in tones of the greatest surprise as he read aloud the contents:

> Am leaving unexpectedly on the early train. Please do not condemn me too harshly when you learn the news. There was no other way. Adams can take care of everything.

"Well, this does settle it!" exclaimed the president.

"I guess we've got about all we are looking for to make a conviction," coolly remarked the chief. "The State will make short work of this case."

Benner threw himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

(To be continued.)

BEVERLY'S NEW JOB.

BY VANCE MAYNARD.

The Awful State of Mind in Which a Telephone Message and a Letter Left the Fiancee of a Young Man Who Had Gone to Town to Better Himself.

ELSIE BRYANT braided the last thin wisp of her hair, doubled the end back, bound it with a rubber band, and then encircled her shapely head with the braid.

"Oh, I do wish Jack would come!" she pouted, jabbing a hair-pin through the rubber band, and thus impaling the braid firmly to the nape of her neck. A black velvet ribbon followed, covering the band.

She looked out of the window. It was a perfect spring day. The sun poured in through the casement, lighting up the dainty interior of her boudoir.

Down the quiet street of the little country town the trees rustled their green gowns, arching across the roadway as if they were touching finger-tips languidly. Checkered shadows trembled idly on the lawns.

As she sat, drinking in the beauty of the picture, a young man turned the corner and headed toward the Bryant house at a speed indicating either fear or eagerness.

"There he is now," cried the young lady, and proceeded to don such afternoon investiture as is calculated to leave young men stranded helpless on the coast of love.

The door-bell rang furiously.

After due deliberation, Elsie answered it herself.

"You little darling," cried the young man impulsively, and, getting a perfectly good half-Nelson hold on the vision before him, he kissed her with due deliberation and ardor.

"Now, just because we're engaged you mustn't eat me alive," remarked the vision, breaking the hold deftly.

"Say, Elsie, I've got the very best of news for you," remarked Jack, ignoring this comment. "Come in and sit down. I want to tell you all about it."

"Oh, Jack, you haven't got that position, have you?" The blue eyes were shining with anticipation.

"That's just the story exactly, dear. You

remember Mr. Alden promised to see what he could do for me when he got back to the city?"

"Well, read this letter."

He took it from his pocket. She read:

> Come up by Wednesday morning. I have a good opportunity for you. Tell you more later. In haste, etc.

"That means I leave to-night, so I can call at his office to-morrow bright and early. Isn't that bully?"

"Ye-e-e-s," hesitatingly.

"Aren't you glad, dear?" he asked.

"But you'll have to go away from me, Jack." Tears sparkled in the two sunny azure skies that made the daylight for Jack Beverly.

"Yes, but it won't be for long. Cheer up. As soon as I get the job and find out what it is, I'll telephone you. Besides, I'll probably be able to run down pretty often. Let's wait and see what turns up before we borrow misery. Now, let's go out for a walk. It's such a day as was specially made for the happiness of engaged people."

Jack Beverly had been graduated from college the better part of a year. He had started in his father's store, the finest one in Wauseka; but found that the dry-goods business was dry in more senses than one.

Mr. Alden, a friend of Mr. Beverly, noting what a good-looking, energetic chap Jack was, had promised to see what he could do for him in the city. Mr. Beverly had no objection if the change would work for the benefit of his son.

"I hope this chance will give me an opportunity to disabuse your father's mind of his prejudice of me," said Jack as the couple strolled out of the village and down the country road.

"I hope so too, dear," replied Elsie fervently. "What he can have against you I don't know."

"Oh, I suppose he thinks I ought to be better than a dry-goods clerk, even if the business will be mine some day. But I wish he would take me more philosophically as a son-in-law. However, I'm going to do my best to show him that I've got the goods."

Mr. Bryant's disapproval of the young man was not severe enough to interfere with the consummation of Elsie's happiness, but it was the only cloud that darkened an absolutely perfect glimpse of heaven for the two young people.

"I just know Mr. Alden will have a perfectly splendid opening for you," Elsie said reassuringly, and there the matter dropped.

That night Jack Beverly took the nine o'clock train for the city, fifty miles away. Elsie kissed him good-by, and smiled up at him bravely. When the train was gone she wept softly as she walked home with her father.

"Well, I hope he does something worth while now that he's fallen in with the chance," remarked Mr. Bryant crisply as they turned into the front walk of the Bryant home.

That night Elsie sat in the warm darkness by her window for a long time, dreaming dreams and seeing visions, into the depths of which, let us hope, we have all gazed on like occasions.

When she went to bed she was very happy.

Her dreams were of those enchanted days in which she had lived in childhood's fancy with herself as the beautiful princess and her own Jack Beverly as the noble knight. Awaking, the sweet fancies were still with her as day-dreams.

"Oh, I do wish Jack would phone!" she murmured.

It was nine o'clock the next morning.

Just then the telephone-bell rang. Elsie hurried down-stairs and picked up the receiver.

"Oh, Jack! Yes, of course I do—with all my heart. And I'm sending you one over the wire, too.

"You've got a fine job? I'm so glad. What? I didn't get that. No, nor that time, either. Carting, did you say? In the street?

"And there's good chance for promotion? It sounds like an odd sort of work for you, but you know what's best. Yes, do come down the first night you can get away. I want to know more about your work. Be a good boy. Good-by!"

She slowly hung up the receiver. She could not understand why Jack should take a job of carting. In the street, too.

The only picture she could recall to fit the occupation was that of dirty individuals in dirtier white suits in the principal streets, driving bob-tailed wagons to the city dumping-grounds.

"But Jack wouldn't do anything like that," she told herself. "I know he's done the right thing, and I need never be ashamed of him."

Yet the thought bothered her. She tried to reason out some other kind of work that would cause Jack to drive a cart through the city streets. But her imagination was not equal to the task.

"I surely didn't misunderstand him over the phone, because I made him repeat it over twice. And that's what he said, 'Carting in the street.'"

"Well, even if he is doing that to start with," she maintained stoutly to herself, "there must be a good reason for it. I know he has done splendidly, and I'm proud of him for being able to fill the position."

She jerked her head up proudly.

And with this determination she decided to face the world.

The family was all through breakfast when she appeared at the table, all except her young brother Sam. Sam was at that period of life when inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness are synonymous.

"Heard from your best fellow, did you, sis?" he began when she had taken her place. "What did he have to say?"

"Never mind, Sam. Go on and finish those griddle-cakes."

"Afraid to tell me what he said, are you?" pursued her inquisitor.

"No, of course not."

"Well, what's he doing? I bet he got a job digging a ditch or driving an express wagon."

"Sam, you are entirely too curious. It doesn't concern you at all. If you are finished with those cakes, please leave the table."

Sam wiped his mouth deliberately, dismounted from his chair, and vanished out of the door, delivering this parting shot:

"Looks to me as if you were *afraid* to tell what he's up to."

His sister sniffed contemptuously. But the shot had reached its mark.

"Nothing of the kind," she told herself. Yet she wasn't so sure of her ground.

"Even if I had told him what Jack is doing, he would not have understood it or seen it in its true light."

Mrs. Bryant came in at the moment and interrupted Elsie's none too pleasant reflections.

"Elsie," she said, "I want you to do the marketing for me this morning, dear. Here's the list of things to get. Please go at once."

At the grocery-store Elsie encountered Mrs. Brooks, the most celebrated gossip in town.

"Oh, how are you, my dear?" babbled Mrs. Brooks. "I've just heard that Jack Beverly went to the city. Was it anything in particular, or just a flying trip?"

"I think he has gone up to stay—that is, at least for a time," said Elsie, mustering her sweetest smile.

"Oh, then he's gone up on business?"

"Yes, that is—yes, on business."

"In connection with the dry-goods store, I suppose."

"It wasn't about the dry-goods store, Mrs. Brooks," said Elsie desperately.

Why was she hesitating about disclosing what she felt sure was Jack's proudest achievement?

"No?" inquired the tormentor, elevating her eyebrows and scenting something of interest to the community at large.

"Jack has taken a position in the city through the kindness of Mr. Alden."

"Really? You don't mean it. How splendid!" gushed Mrs. Brooks, keen on the trail. "What kind of a position is it?"

"I—I—I am not quite sure what it is," stammered Elsie miserably, "but he has a very fine chance of promotion. He—"

"Yes."

"He is—er—oh, I beg your pardon, I see a clerk that is not busy. Now I can give my order. Good-by!"

After leaving the grocer's Elsie made a stop at the butcher's, and then started for home.

When nearly there she turned the corner and brought up with a thud against the manly bosom of Professor Berend, principal of the high school.

"Ah! Good morning, my dear. And so Jack has left you and gone to the city? The rascal! I couldn't have done it if I had been as fortunate as he was."

"How nice of you!" cried Elsie roguishly, at the same time edging over to the outside of the walk in an attempt to get by.

"I understand he has gone to take up his life-work there. Oh, he'll make good. Don't you worry your head about that."

"I'm not," lied Elsie, thinking of white suits of clothes and garbage-carts.

"There's a young man with principle," went on the unsuspecting pedagogue. "His ideals are high. He would consider no occupation, however menial, beneath him, if it were free of all taint."

"Taint," thought Elsie, her mind again recurring to the picture of a moment before.

"Well may you be proud of Jack," concluded the professor in his finest oratorical manner.

"Oh, I am," cried the girl, trying to look the part. "It's awfully nice of you to speak so highly of Jack. I appreciate it. Good morning," and she skipped lightly by.

"I never found out what the boy was doing, after all," commented the professor to himself as he resumed his meditative way.

"Well, I didn't have to tell *him*," thought Elsie as she resumed hers.

Suddenly she stopped. What mental treachery was this she had expressed?

In spite of herself she was afraid to meet people, afraid to have them ask her about her *fiancé*.

The realization of her state of mind was anything but pleasant. She had deliberately gone back on what she had believed only a few hours before.

Now she was stammering and blushing in a panic when anybody that knew Jack came in sight.

"Why, one would think the boy had done something wrong," she told herself angrily, as she mounted the front steps to her home.

As she entered the hall she gave a cry of joy, and, rushing to the little table, picked up an envelope and eagerly ripped it open.

"Here's a letter from him. Now he'll explain all about it. The dear boy, to write so soon!"

Elsie felt vastly relieved, and began the perusal of the hastily scrawled pages.

At the bottom of one she stopped. Then she reread the last sentence and went on to the next page. Again she stopped, wrinkled her brow and went over the words carefully.

"That's what it looks like," she finally announced dubiously.

"Just what he told me over the 'phone. 'Carting in the street' and then there's a blot. I don't know whether it's an accident or to cross out a word."

None of the rest of the letter cast any light on the subject. It was almost altogether taken up with a description of the light opera he had seen the night before.

"Of course I don't know what the job will bring forth," he went on, "but I do know that I like it, and that I am working with a fine bunch of men. The fellows in the office of the company are mostly young college chaps like myself, and several of us are starting at about the same time. As soon as I get a better idea of my work I will let you know."

And that was all.

Elsie puzzled over the letter several times, but remained just as much as ever at sea in regard to the exact employment of her *fiancé*.

Then she went up-stairs. She found her mother in the sewing-room.

"Mother, will you read part of Jack's letter and see what you can make of it?" she said as she entered.

Mrs. Bryant took the letter and cast her eyes over the portion of it that had caused her daughter so much perplexity.

"I'm not sure what he means," she finally admitted, "but it looks to me as if Jack said 'carting in the street!'"

Mrs. Bryant looked at her daughter.

"Is that what you read?" she asked.

"Yes, mother. But why do you look so displeased?"

"I suppose I oughtn't to pass judgment before we are sure what Jack meant, but I don't think I would publish this news to the town at large if I were you."

"Why not?"

Elsie flew to quick defense of her lover.

"Do you suppose that Jack would do anything unworthy of himself or of me?" she went on. "Whatever he means in that letter is sure to be right."

"I have no doubt about that, my dear," said Mrs. Bryant soothingly, observing that her daughter was on the verge of tears. "But I wouldn't mention this to your father if I were you, until you have more definite word from Jack. You know how he feels in the matter."

"Very well, I won't, if you don't think it best, but I want you to know that I am proud of Jack, whether he is president of a bank at this minute, or is a waiter in a Bowery restaurant."

"Of course, dear," remarked the diplomatic Mrs. Bryant. "Meantime, let's have lunch."

Elsie weathered the meal somehow, in spite of the persecution of Sam, who felt divinely appointed to conduct a third degree inquisition on the subject of Jack.

After lunch, Elsie flew to her room, seized pen, paper, and ink, and scratched off a very brief but vehement note to a certain young gentleman in the city.

"Please, please," she wrote, "explain to me in detail just what you have to do. Everybody is just crazy to know about your work, and I don't know enough about it to give them an intelligent answer. I never knew I could take such an interest in your business affairs. Aren't you proud of me?"

She sealed and stamped the envelope, addressed it, and got down-stairs just in time to give it to the postman who was delivering the afternoon mail.

"I feel better now that the letter is on its way," she sighed with a great feeling of relief as the mail-man went down the front walk.

She looked over what he had left. There was nothing for her from Jack, and she turned away with a slight feeling of disappointment.

"I *do* wish I could find out more about this matter," she said to herself, picturing the round of inquirers she would have to stave off until she heard from Jack.

"Oh, I know," she cried, suddenly struck with a brilliant idea.

She ran to the phone.

"Hello, Mrs. Beverly?" she queried, a moment later.

"Yes," answered a sweet, feminine voice.

"This is Elsie. Do tell me what Jack is doing, what kind of work, I mean, in his new capacity. You must have heard from him by this time."

"Do you believe in telepathy?" asked Mrs. Beverly, laughing. "I was just this minute coming to the phone to call you up and ask you the same question."

"Why?" began Elsie.

"We have had absolutely no word from Jack, so far. Even the afternoon mail brought none. I am getting quite worried."

"Oh, I heard from Jack this morning," said Elsie reassuringly, and then bit her lip in vexation at having so easily laid herself open to further questioning.

"Oh, then he's well. But surely, he must have told you what he was to be engaged in. Didn't he?"

And then Elsie launched forth into a voluble explanation that lasted five minutes and led nowhere, so far as information was concerned.

But finally she had to out with that hateful "carting in the street."

Mrs. Beverly stiffened perceptibly as she heard the words.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "that's quite impossible. My boy would never lower himself to such an extent as to do the work of an Italian laborer. You certainly have misunderstood him."

"But he said the same thing over the phone and in his letter," almost wailed Elsie.

"Really, my dear, you must be mistaken. If you respect my wishes you will keep this as quiet as possible until we know more about it. I am coming over to call to-night and we can go over the letter together then. Good-by."

Elsie hung up the receiver in a daze.

She could not understand this attitude.

Even Jack's mother had gone back on him. If she would not place faith in his word, who would?

Elsie sat down, oppressed with a feeling of absolute hopelessness. Why should she be called upon to bear the burden of this worry all alone? Why should she be the one person of whom every curiosity-seeker should inquire?

The tears welled up in her eyes. But she bit her lip determinedly to keep them back.

"Let everybody in the world hold Jack up to shame if they will," she announced to herself. "I am going to stick by what he has said and written until he tells me otherwise.

"And I'm not going to be ashamed of it, either. Let them think what they will. I know Jack better than any of them and I trust him absolutely. So there!"

Elsie went up-stairs, washed her eyes, put on her hat and started for the regular meeting of the girls' club.

Just as she was about to leave the house, the telephone-bell rang.

"This is the editor of the *Gazette* talking. Is Miss Bryant there?"

"This is Miss Bryant."

"I heard this morning from Mrs. Brooks that Jack Beverly had secured employment in the city. I could not quite make out from her words what he is doing. I have just finished talking with Mrs. Beverly, and she does not know anything at all on the matter. Can't you give me a little item for the paper this afternoon?"

"Why, certainly," said Elsie, and proceeded bravely to tell the story over again.

"Pardon me," interrupted the editor when she was almost through, "did you say 'carting in the street'?"

"I did," replied Elsie crisply.

"Can you explain that a little better?"

"Don't you know the meaning of that phrase?" said Elsie sweetly, replying, Yankee-wise, to one question by propounding another. "Surely you ought to know that expression."

"Why, yes—er, that is, of course," replied the editor, rallying bravely to his guns.

"Well, then, you won't have any trouble writing up the notice, will you? Thank you so much for calling me up. Good-by."

Little did Elsie realize the fact that a very much bewildered editor spent half the time before going to press trying to find the etymology, derivation, gender, and meaning of the four words "carting in the street," and then inserted the notice without any elucidation whatever. Also, that he left word with the office-boy that he refused absolutely to answer any questions about "that Jack Beverly item."

At the girls' club, Elsie found ten hungry pairs of ears. She fed them with the information at her command in regard to Jack, and then closed the subject abruptly.

"If you girls aren't up on what that expression means," she said, after many importunities, "it is not my fault. Ask your fathers to-night at supper. They can tell you, beyond a doubt. And, meantime, did we come here to probe the affairs of my future husband or play cards? Deal, Jessie."

Elsie was fast losing her equanimity over the subject of carting in the street. Her usual good-nature was a departed virtue.

She hated the sight of anybody that was a mutual friend of Jack and herself. She vowed to avoid all such people if she could.

Yet, when the card game was finished and the girls all went down to the drug-store for soda, she ran into Jack's chum, and had to tell him all about it. She retaliated by making him pay for her soda.

The girls went their various ways after leaving the soda-fountain; yet, before she reached home, Elsie had encountered the minister. As she left him she saw the oily Professor Berend on the horizon.

She promptly turned down another street to avoid him, and ran plump into Ann Abel, the one girl who had coveted Jack Beverly, and had wooed him desperately.

This ordeal was the worst of the lot. Elsie fairly boiled at the half-sneering smile that curled the thin lips of the defeated one.

Elsie could almost hear her say to herself:

"Elsie Bryant must be proud to have a cart-driver for a husband. Quite a lucky escape I had, after all."

The two girls parted, icily courteous; but Elsie felt very keenly the slight that she knew was being cast upon her and the man she was to wed.

Yet, out of decency, she had to answer the coldly civil queries that were put to her.

When she reached home, just before supper, she was in a state that threatened to become hysteria or collapse, or both.

"I shall simply *die* if that miserable subject is brought up again by anybody anywhere. Oh, I *wish* I would hear from Jack. If he knew what I have suffered to-day for his sake, he would be more careful what he says and writes in the future."

At the supper-table, Elsie prayed that her father would not bring the matter up. Elsie knew that her mother would probably say nothing, knowing as she did the opinion that Mr. Bryant had of Jack.

At first Elsie shivered with apprehension whenever her father addressed a remark to her. But as the meal wore away and he got no nearer the subject of her *fiancé*, she began to pick up hope.

By the end of the meal she was quite cheerful.

"I'll surely get a letter to-morrow that will explain everything, but until that time I think father had best remain in ignorance," she told herself as the family rose from the table.

Sam passed Elsie on the way to the library, and remarked, *en route:*

"Been playin' Jacks to-day, sis?"

"Samuel," snapped Mrs. Bryant, "you go right in the library and study your lessons. Stop teasing sister."

"Umph," grunted Mr. Bryant, altogether in sympathy with his son.

At half past eight the Bryant family sat perfectly happy, reading in the library.

Suddenly the door-bell rang, rather viciously.

"Wonder who that can be?" thought Elsie, as she rose to respond.

She had a sudden, wild hope that it might be Jack. She threw open the door.

Her hope died a violent death.

"Come in, Mrs. Beverly," wavered the girl, trying to be cordial, yet with a sinking heart.

"Now father will hear all about Jack—will want to see the letter and—oh, I don't know *what* I'll do," she thought, as Jack's mother took off her things.

In the library the Bryant family rose as one, greeted their future relative-in-law, and resumed their chairs when Mrs. Beverly had been safely ensconced in one of sufficient depth and latitude.

"You haven't heard anything further from Jack, have you, Elsie?" queried the guest at once.

"No, Mrs. Beverly," answered the girl with a sinking heart.

Mr. Bryant laid down his paper.

"What's this?" he inquired. "Have you had word from Jack?"

His penetrating gaze sought his daughter's face. She blushed and moved uneasily in her chair.

"Elsie had a phone message and a letter from my son to-day. Oh, by the way, will you get the letter, Elsie? She evidently misunderstood what kind of work he is doing, and I want to verify her words from the letter."

Elsie ran up to her room, took the missive from her writing-table, and entered the library just in time to hear Mrs. Beverly conclude:

"I don't believe my son would be carting in the street, whatever that means."

"Well, I should hope not," retorted Mr. Bryant with considerable fervor. "Carting in the street means only a few things, and any one of them is enough to queer your family and mine. Let us hope he is doing nothing of the sort."

Mrs. Beverly eyed him belligerently, framed a fitting reply, and then changed her mind.

"Show us the part in the letter, Elsie, in which Jack describes his work," was her remark.

The girl indicated the passages that had puzzled her. Mrs. Beverly studied them carefully, and then shook her head dubiously.

"See what you make of this," she said, passing the pages to Mr. Bryant.

He scanned them closely several times.

"I guess Elsie is right about it," he announced at length. "That reads 'carting in the street,' as near as I can make out."

"What did he say to you over the telephone?" he went on, turning to Elsie. There was displeasure and disapproval in his tone.

Elsie repeated the conversation accurately in so far as the business part of it was concerned.

When she finished Mr. Bryant turned to the visitor.

"I am sorry to hear this about Jack," he said coldly. "I thought the boy had higher ambitions than these."

Mrs. Beverly was plainly perturbed.

"I don't know what to think," she said slowly; "but I do know that there is no reason for speaking so harshly of my son, Mr. Bryant. I feel that it is unjust."

"And so do I," burst out Elsie. Here, at last, was some one who would help her defend Jack.

Her father turned on her.

"What impertinence is this?" he roared.

His hands gripped the arms of his chair. The veins in his forehead stood out.

"This just about ends this nonsense. I've been against this match all along, until that boy proves himself a man. I'm not going to have my daughter marry a soulless driver of a garbage-wagon—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Beverly.

"Or an ambulance for dead horses—"

"Oh!" wailed Elsie.

"Or—or—or—" Mr. Bryant's voice trailed off into nothing, and his eyes were fixed on the library door.

Everybody turned, as if by signal, and watched it open.

"Jack!" fairly screamed the chorus in unison.

"How did you get in?" snarled Mr. Bryant, recovering his mental equilibrium.

"The maid, of course," retorted Jack, not liking the tone.

Then he looked at the circle of open mouths before him.

"I'm no dentist, but this is an awful lot of big cavities I see before me. What's the fuss—Elsie—mother?"

"What kind of carting are you doing in the street?" cried Mrs. Bryant.

"You *don't* drive a garbage wagon, do you?" pleaded his mother.

"You don't really have to cart dead horses around, do you, dear?" wailed Elsie.

"Did you bring your 'white-wings' suit with you?" growled Mr. Bryant in his turn.

Jack Beverly picked out the largest and easiest chair he could see and dropped into it.

Then he doubled up with uncontrolled mirth. At the end of five minutes he sat up, wiped his eyes, took a full breath, and said:

"Will some one please tell me what I've done to deserve this assault and battery? Now, Elsie, tell me all about it."

And Elsie did.

"Why, you poor little kid," he exclaimed when she had finished, "and you, too, mother. I don't blame you for worrying your heads off about me. But that's the funniest coincidence I ever heard of.

"I didn't say 'carting in the street' over the phone. I said 'carding in the street-cars'—only you missed one word.

"And in this letter"—he picked it up and pointed to the bottom of the page in dispute—"you will see that what you thought was a cross on the t in 'carting' is only the hyphen between the syllables of the word when I carried it over to the next page.

"Now, let me explain what I'm doing. The fact of the matter is I'm a solicitor for a street-car advertising company. They make it a rule that all new men, before they go out on the road, must spend a day or two putting up cards in the cars. This is so they will know how to do the work if they are ever called upon for such service when the regular carder is sick or has quit the job.

"When I wrote and phoned you, Elsie, that was all I knew about my work. The day after to-morrow I go out to sell space.

"I am down here to get more clothes for my work on the road. It's a splendid opportunity for me, and it beats the dry-goods business all hollow. But you all looked so ludicrous—"

And again Jack Beverly doubled up in the big chair.

The Worst Is Yet To Come.

BY GERALD N. COE,

Author of "The Clown's Mate."

This Summer's Tale of the Comedy Happenings in a Unique Boarding-House Is Streaked with the Possibilities of Tragedy.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MRS. HARVEY HARTLEY'S uncle leaves her a twelve-room furnished dwelling at Outwood, and her husband suggests that they start a summer boarding-house for people who wish to do as they please. The house is soon filled with a queer lot of people, including a girl who rides a motor-cycle, and a barber with his invention of a flute with mouth-organ attachment. Just before they retire on the opening night they discover a pale young man in the upper hall. He admits he is a new boarder after Hartley suggests it, but the next morning the Hartleys are horrified to read in the paper that a dangerous lunatic has escaped from an asylum in their neighborhood. They telephone the asylum that a man who seems to answer the description has turned up at their house, but when a party of policemen arrive the Hartleys discover that the man has not stayed at their place at all. But the officers insist on searching the house, and take away with them the barber, who is certainly queer enough.

The Hartleys try to make their boarders believe that all the excitement is over an escaped hippopotamus, fearing to let them know the truth lest they take fright and leave. Meantime, while Hartley is at the lunatic asylum in a futile attempt to secure the musical barber's release, a stranger appears at the house, and Mrs. Hartley, fearing him to be the real lunatic, tells him that this is the lunatic asylum, and sends him along to the real asylum as being the boarding-house of which he is in search. On Hartley's return he has reason to suspect that this is the other boarder expected, so that now there are two of their inmates incarcerated at the lunatic asylum.

But this other man, whose name is Dunham, an aspiring playwright, contrives to escape from Dr. Cummings at the asylum and returns to the Hartleys. Meantime, the latter have a telephone message to the effect that Barone, the barber, is wanted at once at the barber-shop where he works, otherwise he will lose his job. The asylum attendants arrive with the police and demand that Dunham be given up. This Hartley refuses to do. However, he makes an arrangement with the asylum over the telephone to give up Dunham in exchange for the barber, and hopes to persuade the playwright to go back as a means of obtaining an experience he can use in one of his dramas. Dunham at first consents, but when the asylum attendants call for him he claims he has changed his mind, and Hartley is again at his wits' end.

CHAPTER XV.

A SWITCH OF RESENTMENT.

HARTLEY was suddenly forced from the door against which he was weakly leaning by a compact bundle of fury which bounded into the room.

"Where is he? Where is he?" cried the newcomer.

It was the barber, brought back from the asylum.

His eyes glinted as they encountered those of Hartley. It was evident that he had come for his revenge.

In one wild bound he reached Hartley and sprang at his throat like a vicious animal, with a low hiss of rage.

Hartley braced himself and threw off the clutching fingers, but Barone's blood was up.

"Here" he cried to Dunham, whom he recognized from having seen him at the asylum. "Help me! Lend a hand! He's betrayed us. He's sold us into bondage for a mess of pottage."

With that he gave a wild spring and leaped upon Hartley's back, while Dunham, swaying with emotional excitement, made a rush toward Hartley.

"Help! Help!" cried the proprietor of the "Do-as-you-please House," dodging the attack of the sympathetic playwright and trying to fling off the enraged barber, who now had his smooth, strong fingers entangled in Hartley's hair.

A rush of feet on the stairs told that Hartley's cry for assistance had been heard. The pair of boarders had managed to drag him to the floor and were endeavoring to hold him there when through the door burst three asylum attendants, headed by the pale-faced young fellow who had been such a frequent caller at Hartley's.

They pounced upon the combatants and quickly roped the hands of the playwright

Then they shoved the barber into a corner and pulled Hartley to his feet.

"That's your man!" cried the latter, breathing heavily as he pointed to the playwright.

"He the man Dr. Cummings wants?" asked the pale-faced attendant who headed the party.

"Yes," answered Hartley, turning with a glare to the barber and wondering whether or not it would be a good idea to have him sent back to the asylum, too.

But an idea occurred to him and he decided to say nothing about this.

The little party soon filed down the stairs with the struggling playwright, who, having been pulled from his drama, was like a man suddenly awakened from sleep, and tried to fight back in a heavy, awkward manner.

When Hartley and the barber were again alone in the room, the former noticed that Barone had been cowed by the presence of the asylum men. He had a dazed, frightened look and Hartley took advantage of his condition to further a certain point that had been bothering him.

"I could have you arrested for assault, Mr. Barone," he said seriously.

The other looked up in a very humbled manner.

"But you have given me a lot of trouble," he declared.

"Not intentionally," Hartley hastened to assure him. "It was only by accident that they carried you off, and you must admit that I did all in my power to have you removed from the institution. It is Dr. Cummings who is responsible for your trouble."

Hartley was lucky to hit upon the name which had became so abhorrent to the little barber.

"Dr. Cummings!" cried Barone. "Yes, he is one old fool. I would like to punch him."

"You might sue him for damages," suggested Hartley, thinking of the job the barber had lost through being carried off to the asylum, and hardly knowing how to break the disagreeable news.

"Good idea!" enthused the barber. "But how much could I get on a charge against him? I have lost nothing through being examined by the doctor."

It was Hartley's chance. The thing must come out some time. He had concealed it long enough.

"Yes, you have," he assured the man.

"How? What have I lost?" cried the little barber, frantically searching his pockets and bringing out his precious flute with a happy smile.

"You have lost your job."

The news came as a great shock to the poor fellow.

"My job!" he cried, throwing his hands to his head and grasping his hair as if for support.

"That's it."

"But how? When have I lost my job?"

Hartley quickly gave him the details. He felt that luck had suddenly played into his hands, for the barber seemed to look upon Hartley as a benefactor in suggesting the suit against Dr. Cummings, against whom all his anger was directed.

"I'll sue him for ten thousand dollars!" he cried. "Will you help me?"

"Yes," Hartley answered readily.

"There is no chance to get my job back," cried the barber. "The boss is a very hard man. If he says six o'clock to-night, it is six o'clock to-night. If I get there later he will not take me back again at all."

"Then you think there is no use in trying to get back your position?"

"None at all. I will sue Dr. Cummings."

"But it takes money to sue people. What if you haven't enough?"

"I have five hundred dollars saved away to go back to Italy on," answered Barone. "I will spend that and get ten thousand dollars instead."

This statement took a great load off Hartley's mind. He had feared that he would be held responsible for Barone's troubles.

They were still talking about the suit when a timid knock came on the door.

"Come in," said Hartley.

In answer the door was cautiously opened and Miss Perkins peeked in, Rob Roy on her shoulder as usual.

"Ah, I see Mr. Barone has returned. I thought I heard your voice," she said.

"Polly put the kettle on. Polly put the kettle on," was Rob Roy's addition to the remark.

Barone, always amiable in the presence of ladies—outside of Polly Washburn—drew his heels together, clicked them in military style and indulged in a bay rum smile, all for Miss Perkins.

"We have missed you so much," Miss Perkins went on.

"That is good of you," smiled Barone.

"Where have you been all this time?" she continued.

Hartley gave Barone a fierce look and muttered under his breath as the barber began

to tell the story of his trouble: "You've been staying with a friend."

"I've been staying with a fr—a fr—" Barone stuck at the "friend." "I have been staying with an enemy," he finished in fine style, realizing that Hartley's caution must have something to do with the suit he intended instituting and not wishing to imperil his chances of winning.

"A queer kind of person to stay with," remarked Miss Perkins.

"Yes, yes, indeed," answered Barone, his tongue rattling on between closed lips, for it was hard for him to refrain from telling the sympathetic lady all his troubles.

"But it doesn't matter as long as you are with us once again. We are so glad to see you. Will you come in now and play for Rob Roy? He's been so anxious for your music."

"A true lover of music. A true musician," enthused the little barber, looking appreciatively at the parrot.

"The deuce you say! The deuce you say!" reiterated Rob Roy in a very pert manner.

"You see," interpreted Miss Perkins, "he's trying to tell you the great appreciation he has for you and your music."

"Oh, thank you," murmured the barber, bowing repeatedly.

"Can you play for us now?"

"With pleasure."

Barone turned to Hartley and received his hurried caution not to say anything at all regarding the insane asylum, for fear of jeopardizing his suit.

"I won't say a word," Barone told him and left the room with a happy little skip, following Miss Perkins and her parrot with his flute tucked under his arm and a joyful smile beaming from his oily countenance.

As soon as he was gone Hartley drew a long breath of relief.

His wife, having heard the barber go out, now entered the room. The look on his face interested her; she studied it for a moment, then broke into a half smile.

"Rather relieved at getting rid of the barber?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Hartley. "It was easier than I expected. I managed to explain to him about his job, too; and he seems to blame Dr. Cummings for all his troubles."

"But you're still worried about the playwright?" she went on quickly, translating the other half of his expression.

"Of course I am. I have a notion, from that young man's manner, that he has a lot more money and power than poor Barone, and he could certainly make it hot for me if he chose."

"But you are not as much to blame as Dr. Cummings, anyway," his wife hastened to assure him.

"No, I'm not; but it might be hard to convince some people of that fact."

"I was scared to death when they attacked you in the room here. It was lucky the attendants from the asylum were on hand."

"Yes; and I'm glad you didn't rush into the room. It made things easier."

"I felt like throttling that little barber myself," she remarked.

"I hope I do as well with the playwright as I have with the barber."

"Can't you use Barone's threat to sue Dr. Cummings as a sort of lever to get him to release Mr. Dunham?" his wife suggested suddenly.

"That's pretty good," replied Hartley, "but Dr. Cummings is not easily scared, and I suppose he has right behind him."

"But you might try it, anyway."

"It wouldn't do any harm," agreed Hartley. "Besides, I'm a good deal worried about that playwright. I wouldn't wonder if he were the son of some millionaire. I think I'll hear more from him for letting him fall into Dr. Cummings's hands again."

"But you couldn't help it. Why don't you call up Dr. Cummings and tell him about the proposed suit by the barber. Maybe that will help you in getting back the other man."

"I will," and Hartley went at once to the phone.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SMALL TORNADO.

An hour later the Hartleys were preparing for bed. Hartley's conversation with Dr. Cummings over the phone had not been very successful.

The doctor refused to be bluffed, and said he would only return Dunham when he was entirely satisfied as to his sanity.

"Well," said Hartley to his wife, "if I ever get out of this mess I'll never touch a boarding-house proposition again as long as I live. I'll find a job as a clerk at fifteen dollars a week. It's a whole lot safer and just about as profitable."

"Cheer up," replied Mrs. Hartley, who had recovered somewhat from the gloom that had settled over the little household after the distressing evening.

"I can't cheer up," said Hartley. Then he looked quickly toward the door and cried: "Who's that?"

His senses had become acute on account of all the trouble, and he anticipated the knock at the door.

"It's only me—Jane," was the reply.

"What is it, Jane?"

Hartley stepped to the door and opened it a crack. The frightened face of the cook unnerved him.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded in a strained tone which brought his wife to his side in an instant.

"Please, sir," said Jane in a wabbly tone, "it's a tramp or something at the back door. He was here about an hour ago."

"A tramp," repeated Hartley. "Well, what did he want?"

"Says is there a new boarder here, sir, answerin' to the name of Durham or Dunharm, or Done—something—" replied the cook.

"Dunham?" and Hartley turned to his wife with a quick look of dismay.

"Yes; that was the name."

"Well, what did you tell him?" Mrs. Hartley put in quickly.

"Told him I didn't know, of course. He tried to shove a dollar-bill into my hand, and told me not to say nothing to whoever runs the house. I didn't take the money, an' I wouldn't have said nothing about it if he hadn't come back the second time just now."

"Is he still here?" asked Hartley anxiously.

"No, sir: he went directly after I slammed the door in his face."

"What did he say this time?" demanded Hartley.

"He says: 'Are you sure there ain't no Dunham here?'"

"And what did you reply?"

"That there weren't, an' that I would tell you about him if he came back."

"But he didn't come back again?"

"No; but I didn't like his looks, an' I was afraid to go to bed without tellin' you. He might do something. I didn't want to be responsible for no robbery."

"That's quite right, Jane. Thanks for telling me," said Hartley, starting to close the door.

But Mrs. Hartley was not satisfied.

"Didn't he say anything else?"

"Well, no'm"—the girl twisted about a little uneasily—"except that I was good-lookin', an' he'd like for me to go to an entertainment with him some night. But he looked too much like a tramp to suit my taste."

"Sure that's all?" queried Mrs. Hartley sharply.

"Yes'm."

"All right. Let us know if he comes back again."

"I will," answered Jane, going on to her own room at the back of the house.

"Well, what do you make of it?" Hartley broke the silence and looked over at his wife.

"Couldn't it have been one of the men from the asylum? Or maybe Dr. Cummings hired somebody to try to find out through the kitchen if Dunham was in the house."

"No; that's impossible. The man returned just a few minutes ago, and the asylum authorities have had Dunham for over an hour. It's something more serious than that, Helen."

She looked at him sharply. "What do you mean?"

"There's something about that man Dunham that makes me nervous. We must get him out of Dr. Cummings's as soon as possible."

"But we don't want him back here if he's that kind of a man," Mrs. Hartley assured her husband in a startled voice.

"I'd feel a whole lot safer if I had him where I could keep my eye on him," answered her spouse. "He's going to make trouble. I can see it in his eyes and his calm, languid manner."

"Except when he's excited," his wife put in, remembering the time she had encountered him alone, and the trouble he had made when the asylum attendants carried him away.

"Have you got any other theory about who the tramplike fellow at the back door could have been?" asked Hartley.

"Maybe it was the escaped lunatic, after all."

"Impossible. He is quite another man. You must remember that our new boarder has been seen by Dr. Cummings, and he would have been recognized quickly had he been the escaped lunatic."

"Oh, of course! How silly of me!" Mrs. Hartley laughed in a nervous manner.

"Well, I've got to find out who this tramp person is," sighed Hartley. "It makes things twice as hard, just when it was a bit clearer on account of the barber's return."

"You think the fellow who came to the back door is a detective, then?"

"Well, I don't know," admitted Hartley, "but whoever he is, he's certainly very much interested in Dunham or he wouldn't be going around offering dollar-bills to cooks just to find out if Dunham is in the house."

"Maybe it's some other man he's looking for. Cook wasn't sure about the name, you remember."

"No. It's Dunham, all right," answered Hartley. "I've been feeling this thing coming."

"Won't you explain?" cried his excited wife. "I'm all worked up over it."

"I can't explain any more than to tell you that I don't like this chap Dunham's looks, and I think he has escaped to my place here for some reason or other in which the tramp at the back door is involved."

They went to bed after that, and were awakened in the morning by a thunderous knock on the door. It was followed by a small tornado of hammerings, and suddenly the unlocked door flew open and in burst a fiery red-faced form with eyes the size of oysters.

"What in the world is the matter, Jane?" cried Mrs. Hartley, stiffening up in bed and staring at the cook, who looked as though she were bereft of her senses.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am!" cried Jane, turning quickly and looking behind her like a skittish horse, as she shied away from the open door and placed her broad back against it.

She was so out of breath that she could not finish.

"What is it?" demanded Hartley, throwing on a bath-robe and leaping to the floor.

"It's that tramp again," came in a pent-up gasp of breath from the cook. "I was out getting the water, and splitting some wood for the fire, when he came along and scared the life out of me. 'Dunham is in that house, isn't he?' he asked, and he looked at me so ugly that I just turned an' ran."

She stopped for breath, and then rushed on in a hectic flow of words:

"He caught my dress as I slipped on the back stairs and started to pull me back; but I got away from him and ran right up here to tell you. I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I just had to bust in without waiting for you to say 'Come!' I was that scared."

"What became of the tramp?" queried Hartley, rushing to a bedroom window which overlooked the back lawn.

"I didn't stop to see," was the breathless response.

Hartley stared out of the window and gave a short, startled cry as he looked steadily through the pane, his eyes focused on a point some distance away.

"What is it, Harvey?" cried his wife.

He did not turn from the window, but replied, "Nothing."

Cook went on adding details to the story of her scare.

"He won't bother you any more," said Hartley, turning from the window abruptly. "Don't mention this to anybody else, cook. I'll promise he won't be back again."

"If he does come back, I'll throw up my job here!" cried Jane in terror.

"He won't. He's just some loafing tramp. There's no boarder here by the name of Dunham, and the tramp was just attracted by your good looks and wanted to become acquainted," he assured her.

"Well, so long's he don't come back, I don't care," replied Jane, bowing herself out of the room with repeated apologies at having taken the liberty to come in without knocking.

"What did you see out of the window, Harvey?" asked his wife the moment Jane had gone.

"The tramp," he answered with a curious expression. "I'm going out and find him as soon as I get dressed. He was just disappearing in the woods over on the bluff."

CHAPTER XVII.

A SECRET INTERVIEW.

It was perhaps three hours later that Hartley returned. He had gone off early, not waiting for breakfast, and Mrs. Hartley had watched him penetrate the wood into which the tramp disappeared.

She rushed out eagerly to meet him and learn the result of his search.

His face was drawn, and there was a weary, worried look at the corners of his lips.

"I wish we'd never gone into this business, Helen," he began in a hollow voice.

"What on earth is the matter? Did you find the tramp?" she cried.

"Yes," he answered with a slow nod.

"Well, what did he say?"

"I can't tell you now. The story is too long."

"Was he really a tramp?"

"No."

"Did you tell him Dunham was here?"

"I can't answer that or any other questions at present."

"But why not. Has anything happened?"

"No. But something is going to happen."

"Has it anything to do with this tramp person?"

"Yes," he cut her off again. "But please don't ask me any more questions now, Helen. I will tell you the whole thing as soon as I

get the time. Just now I'm famished, and a little breakfast would be in order."

This appeal effectually stopped her for the time being; but as soon as Hartley was seated at table she took a place opposite him and began a line of rapid questioning.

"Don't bother me now, Helen," he pleaded. "I've got to figure this thing out."

"But tell me about this tramp. Did you have a fight with him, or what?"

"No, I didn't fight with him," Hartley answered mechanically, and looked quickly about the room as though he were in fear of being overheard. Then he beckoned to his wife, and when she came to his side he pulled her head down and whispered one sentence into her ear.

"Good gracious!" she cried, throwing up her hands and staring at him as though something terrible had happened. "What are we going to do now?"

An expressive shake of his shoulders was the only answer she received.

"It's simply dreadful. I'm afraid we'll be bothered by that escaped lunatic, too."

Mrs. Hartley was in a startling frame of mind.

"One thing at a time is enough. This conversation I had with the man who has been bothering Jane is far more important to worry about than anything concerning the escaped lunatic."

"Well, I should say so," breathed Mrs. Hartley. "It's simply awful."

"But there's one good feature in it," said Hartley.

"What's that?"

"I can go to Dr. Cummings this morning and tell him what I have learned. He'll be glad enough then to give Dunham back to me. It is fortunate in that way."

"But we don't want Dunham back!" cried Mrs. Hartley.

"The worst of it is, we've got to have him. He'll make all sorts of trouble for us if we don't. Remember what the man told me this morning, and he certainly knows all there is to know about this Dunham."

"I can't believe it," said his wife incredulously.

"Well, I know it's a fact, and you wait and see how it acts on Dr. Cummings."

Having finished his breakfast, Hartley took his hat and hurried over to the insane asylum.

He was admitted to Dr. Cummings at once, and asked if the examination of young Dunham had been completed.

"No," replied the superintendent, "and we don't expect to get through with him before to-morrow. I can't, under any possible circumstances, allow him to go a minute before, even if he proves sane."

Hartley indulged in a smile, and leaned toward the doctor in a confidential manner. He drew the other's head close to him and whispered several quick sentences in his ear.

The doctor looked up in surprise and shook his head in a very worried manner.

"Where did you learn this?" he asked sharply, a moment later.

"From a man who has been scaring our cook by asking to find out if Dunham is staying with us."

"What would you advise under the circumstances?" and Dr. Cummings became quite meek in his bearing.

"That you hand him over to me at once," answered Hartley, "and I will do what I can to straighten out matters with him and the others."

"But he may be insane!" cried Dr. Cummings, returning to thoughts of his duty.

"If you think for a minute of what I told you, you will know that he is not insane," replied Hartley.

"Oh, to be sure. I had forgotten that."

"Then you will return him to my boarding-house?"

"At once. It seems to be the only way out of it."

"Be sure to send him in a closed carriage, so nobody will know about it."

"Trust that to me," replied the doctor in a tone which showed that he was a little frightened for fear something would happen which would give his institution objectionable publicity.

Hartley grinned grimly to himself as he walked home alone. His interview with the person Jane had called a tramp had placed him in a very strange situation.

It gave him the power to get Dr. Cummings to release Dunham, and at the same time put him in a very hazardous position by again having the playwright under his care.

But Hartley had figured the thing out carefully, and had done what seemed wisest to him.

When Dunham returned from the asylum, shortly after Hartley reached home, the question came up as to whether or not he would tell the new boarder all he knew.

Deciding that it would depend upon his actions, Hartley went up to his room and found the young fellow was again at work on his play.

"How are you?" he said pleasantly

enough, looking up at Hartley as though he had forgotten all the trouble.

"Have you been working steadily since you have been away?" asked Hartley, surprised that the other should prove so amiable, and wondering whether or not to spring the surprise that he knew Dunham's secret.

"Yes, mostly," was the rather vague reply. Then he looked at Hartley keenly. "Why, you were the fellow who suggested that I go back to the hospital for the insane and write up the experiences I had there?"

"Yes, I suggested that," said Hartley, happy to find his new boarder in such a pleasant frame of mind.

"Well, it came out nicely," enthused Dunham. "You see, I used the scene I had with the doctor, and put it in my play. It is almost finished."

"Well, that's good. Then you weren't annoyed at all?" asked Hartley.

"Not a bit of it."

For a moment Hartley wished that he hadn't gone to the trouble of getting the young fellow back; it had been merely to talk him around so that he would make no trouble.

So he now assumed a matter-of-fact manner, and remarked:

"Have you met our other guests yet?"

"No, don't believe I have. I say: Are there any girls among them?"

"There's one fine girl staying here," enthused Hartley, wishing to please.

"Good. May I have the pleasure of meeting her? I'm through working on my play for a while. I'd like some one to read it to," was the reply.

Hartley's face sobered down a little at this last. He didn't know just how Polly would like the idea of having to sit through the reading of a long play. But he must make things pleasant for Dunham at all risks, particularly after what he had learned from the trampish person in the woods.

"I will introduce you to her right away," he went on. "Her name is Polly Washburn. She is quite delightful."

"That's nice," smiled Dunham. "Have I seen her here?"

"No, she's usually out on her motorcycle."

"Motorcycle! Why, what an unusual girl she must be?"

"Oh, she is, I can assure you."

He took Dunham down-stairs and introduced him to the inventor, who was hard at work. Dunham seemed greatly amused by the peculiar machine and Dr. Honeycomb's excitement over it.

"What's the invention for?" Dunham inquired.

"You shall know very soon. It is almost completed." Dr. Honeycomb's voice wavered with excitement.

"But why do you object to telling a man what it's to be used for?" insisted Dunham.

"Because, one never knows who is a friend and who is an enemy; you might try to steal my patent."

Dunham coaxed him further, being much interested, and finally the old inventor snapped:

"It's a crime detector. That's what it is."

"A crime detector!" repeated Dunham. "What a rum idea. How does it work?"

"You won't know that till I have it completed," answered the old fellow with a wise shake of his head.

"Well, I guess we have the patience to wait," smiled Dunham, as he sighted Miss Washburn on her motorcycle.

Hartley introduced the two and they became friends at once. Before the day was over Hartley found Miss Washburn cozily seated in the hammock, while Dunham was stretched out at her feet, reading his play.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WHOLESALE ALARM.

Two days passed in quiet and peace at the "Do-as-you-please House." It was the first restful period since the beginning of the venture and the Hartleys enjoyed it to the full.

Nothing further was heard from Dr. Cummings. The boarders did not quarrel and the tramp who had scared Jane did not put in an appearance.

"It's almost too good to be true," remarked Hartley, at the opening of the third peaceful day.

"It can't last," his wife hastened to assure him.

"No, I feel that way myself. But we're certainly lucky to have a breathing spell between alarms."

"We might as well make the most of them," agreed his wife, with a trembly smile.

"What do you think of the romance developing between Dunham and Miss Washburn?" asked her husband, changing the subject abruptly.

"I think it is very beautiful," replied Mrs. Hartley. "It keeps both of them engaged. Miss Washburn hasn't had time to

fight with the barber since Dunham began reading his plays to her."

"I don't see how she can stand them."

"A woman can stand anything from the man she loves," answered Mrs. Hartley.

"But surely a lover shouldn't ask his girl to listen to his plays," Hartley objected.

"She seems to like them better than her motorcycle."

"Well, it's a mystery to me what they see in each other," admitted Hartley.

"It's not so strange as the way Miss Perkins and Dr. Honeycomb have been carrying on over his invention. She is very enthusiastic about it and occasionally forgets Rob Roy in her interest."

"I've noticed it."

"The poor barber is the only one who doesn't seem wholly happy," suggested Mrs. Hartley.

"Oh, I think he's been getting on nicely. Since he converted Jane to listening to his mouth-organ flute he seems to take a little more interest in things in general."

"I wonder if he'll sue Dr. Cummings?" remarked Hartley.

"He seems to be almost over his worry on that score. I heard him telling Dr. Honeycomb last night that he thought he needed a change of work anyway. He said he probably would never go back to barbering."

"What's he going to do?" asked Hartley with interest.

"Said he was going to start an orchestra of his own."

"Did the inventor suggest it to him?"

"No, he merely agreed that it would be a very good thing and offered to invent some new musical instruments for the use of the orchestra."

"It will be a peach if they get together on it," smiled Hartley.

At the supper all of the boarders appeared and a very pleasant evening was passed; Dunham talking plays to Miss Washburn in one corner and smiling benignly at the general conversation in the room. The inventor was telling Miss Perkins about his great crime detector and she was playing with Rob Roy, while the barber strolled back and forth, fondling his instrument and breaking into the separate conversations at will.

Things were so strangely peaceful that Mrs. Hartley became worried.

"Oh," she whispered to her husband, "I wish something would happen."

"Don't, Helen! Can't you be satisfied to have things running smoothly for a minute?"

"But it's unnatural. It can't last. If only the barber and Miss Washburn would have a little fight, or something to break the monotony."

"You can't mean it."

"But I do," she assured him. "I wish some small trouble would come up to make me forget that this is only a quiet lapse before the worst happening that we can imagine."

"But don't think of the worst."

"I can't help it. I feel it coming."

"Your woman's intuition, I suppose?" Hartley smiled cynically.

"Yes, it is just that and the unnaturalness of things at present. It's an impossible condition in such a house as this."

"Maybe they've all reformed and quit scrapping," suggested her husband.

"No, that's impossible and, besides Dr. Cummings has kept so silent lately. Really, Harvey, I'm afraid to wake up mornings for fear the house will be on fire or something dreadful like that."

"Nonsense. Forget it," he said and went to bed without further discussion.

In the morning, as though in answer to Mrs. Hartley's fears, trouble came. Trouble never comes alone: it always brings a lot of little troubles along by the hand.

It started in this manner.

At breakfast Miss Perkins was the first one to dash in. Her face was crimson and she started talking the moment she entered the room.

The burden of her wo was that somebody had tried to steal Rob Roy during the night. She had heard him call out, and was sure that some thief had attempted to take him from her.

Hartley endeavored to laugh at her fears, but just as he was almost succeeding in quieting her down the barber danced into the room in apparent agony. He tried to splutter out words for a full minute; then Miss Washburn tripped in and he rushed up to her with a wild cry.

"You stole my flute. What did you do with my flute?" he cried.

Miss Washburn protested her innocence and became enraged. Hartley managed to quiet the barber when Dunham suddenly entered with the demand:

"Where's my play? My precious play! Somebody has stolen it."

He looked around from one to the other, his eyes open wide and his manner accusing.

The inventor slipped in and took his place without a word. He had not heard the trou-

bled voices and bowed politely to Miss Perkins.

"Doctor," exclaimed the latter, "can you find out who tried to steal Rob Roy last night?" "With pleasure," he replied, looking up at her anxiously.

Then all the stories came out, and during the babble of sounds Polly Washburn slipped out of the room and came back in a minute with an agonizing shriek.

"Who stole my motorcycle?" she cried.

"Good Heavens! Is that gone, too!" shouted Hartley, jumping from his seat and striding back and forth, his hands clutched behind him and his brow knotted.

It was inexplicable. The barber's flute had been taken, Polly's motorcycle, Dunham's play, and some one had tried to make off with Rob Roy. It was frightful.

Turning quickly to Dr. Honeycomb, Hartley suggested: "Here's a chance for your crime detector, doctor."

"Exactly. I was just thinking of that," cried the old fellow, with a pleased smile, as he hopped from his chair and rushed upstairs for his precious box.

Meantime many theories were advanced. It was certainly strange that nothing had been stolen except the pet possessions of the boarders. Aunt Gertie made a hurried search of the Hartleys' property and found that nothing of theirs was missing.

There was a great to-do in the dining-room that morning.

Mrs. Hartley, with chalky face, glanced over to her husband with a horrified expression: "I told you so," she said.

"Gentlemen and ladies," cried Hartley, jumping up and endeavoring to calm the howling quartet. "Pray be quiet a moment. You have each lost a precious possession. But that does not necessarily mean that you can't get it back. I shall do all in my power to hunt down the miscreant who has done this. If you will be patient until Dr. Honeycomb returns with his crime detector, we will then have something to work upon and work with. I have great faith in the doctor's prowess, and I am sure we will catch the offender."

"Hear, hear!" cried the barber, excited.

Miss Perkins and Miss Washburn were in tears, the one over the fear of a possible loss and the other over a real trouble, the disappearance of her beloved motorcycle.

Hartley had no faith in the doctor's invention, yet he knew that the boarders stood somewhat in awe of it, and he thought this would have the proper effect upon them.

"If you will only be patient," he went on, "until the doctor returns with his machine, we will hold a test right here and find out conclusively who is the culprit, and if he is not one of us, we will run him down outside. Here comes the doctor with his machine now," he finished as he heard the inventor's step in the hall.

At that moment, Dr. Honeycomb's form swayed through the door.

His agonized eyes were glassy and he surveyed the anxious circle with one hopeless glance. Then his hands dropped limply at his sides and he exclaimed:

"The invention has been stolen too."

Hartley gasped. Now he was up against it. He swayed in his chair and saw ruin staring him in the eyes.

It was up to him alone to solve the mystery!

(To be continued.)

A SONG IN DOUBT.

Is it lover or friend that she holds me?
I know not, but know
That she shapes me and molds me
As sculptor the pliable clay;
My longing, it floods and enfolds me
As does earth the snow,
Or as, at the lapse of the thrush song, the darkness the day.

Her eyes are as skies at their fairest,
Unfathomably blue;
Her lips are as rarest
Anemones touched by the sun.
Ah, heart of my heart, if thou carest,
Then give me the clue
That shall point out the radiant pathway to paradise won!

Sennett Stephens.

HER BID FOR FAME.

BY LEE BERTRAND.

This Young Woman's Thirst for Glory Had Nothing to Do with Art or Literature, and It Was Assuaged in Dire Dilemma.

MRS. BELLA ATKINS PARKINSON, the famous English suffragette, regarded her audience with severity.

"I am sorry to have to say that you women of the United States are sadly behind the times," she cried. "You are at least ten years behind my own brave countrywomen, in the great struggle for the emancipation of our sex.

"While you are merely talking about your rights over here, we are fighting for them in England. While you are making speeches and writing articles for the magazines, we are horsewhipping cabinet ministers and going to prison for the great cause.

"I had looked for a different state of affairs in this land of progress and opportunity. I am grievously disappointed in you, my American sisters."

As the speaker delivered herself of this scathing arraignment, her eyes flashed and her bosom heaved with emotion.

Her audience, it was plain to see, was greatly stirred by her words. It was a large gathering, consisting mostly of women. A majority of those present were ardent suffragettes.

These women looked sheepishly at one another and whispered: "She is right. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. What have we done, over here? What have we suffered for the cause? Nothing."

In the center of the hall sat Jessie Milburn, gazing at the woman orator with admiring eyes, and listening intently to her words.

Jessie was young and impressionable. She had read a whole lot about Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson, who had spent six months in an English prison for throwing an overripe tomato into the austere countenance of the British prime minister.

In the opinion of Jessie, Mrs. Parkinson was a great and heroic character. She deemed it a rare privilege to be able to gaze upon her in the flesh and to be permitted to hear her speak.

"Isn't she fine?" the girl whispered enthusiastically to her companion, one of the few men in the audience. "Isn't she perfectly lovely, Dick?"

"Lovely?" snorted the young man. "I should say not indeed. She's horribly fat and she has an ingrowing face. Maybe she wouldn't look quite so bad if she wore her hair long and didn't dress quite so freakishly; but, as it is, I think she's one of the homeliest old—"

"That will do, Dick," broke in the girl indignantly. "There are other kinds of loveliness besides the purely physical. There is such a thing as loveliness of soul, you know. I didn't bring you here to gazez on a pretty face—"

"Well, that's the main reason why I came here," declared the young man, looking at Jessie ardently.

"Don't be stupid, please. I want you to pay attention to what that distinguished woman is saying. I am sure it will do you a lot of good."

"I don't think so," declared Dick. "In my opinion, she is talking a lot of rot. Take what he just said, for instance. I'm proud to think that my countrywomen have got too much sense and too much good breeding to imitate their aggressive English sisters by horsewhipping inoffensive cabinet ministers and chaining themselves to lamp-posts. I consider such conduct exceedingly unladylike."

"Well, I thoroughly agree with what she says," retorted Jessie warmly. "I think the women of this country have been too meek and gentle hitherto, in their demand for the ballot. We ought to cease talking and start in to do things, as Mrs. Parkinson says. I consider it high time that we suffragettes—"

"*We* suffragettes!" gasped Dick. "Holy smoke, Jessie, my dear little girl, you don't mean to say that you have become one of those things?"

"Yes, I have joined the ranks of the suffragettes—if that is what you mean."

"Since when? You didn't have any such idea in your head yesterday, to the best of my knowledge," protested the young man.

"No, the idea came to me rather suddenly, I must admit. You see, Linda Harrington called on me last night and spoke so convincingly on the subject that she made a convert of me. Linda is an ardent worker for the cause, you know. It was she who gave me the tickets for this meeting."

"Linda Harrington would be doing much better if she stayed at home and mended her husband's clothes," averred Dick with a frown. "I met Harrington down-town yesterday and I noticed that there were three buttons missing on his waistcoat."

"Really, Dick Henderson, it seems to me that that is entirely Linda's own business," said the girl haughtily.

"Of course it is," he assented. "That is why I think she ought to attend to it instead of spending all her time raving about the rights of women.

"Can't you see, my dear little girl," he went on earnestly, "that you are much too pretty and sweet and young to be mixed up with a lot of frumpish women such as these here."

"Nonsense," retorted his companion. "These women are all sincere and earnest workers in a noble cause. I respect them from the bottom of my heart for their devotion to our downtrodden sex."

"Your sex isn't downtrodden, my dear girl," argued Dick. "You don't—"

He did not finish the sentence. He was brought to a stop in a startling manner.

While he and Jessie had been holding the above conversation in an undertone, Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson had been going right on with her speech.

So intent were the young man and the girl in their discussion, that they did not realize that they were disturbing those around them, and annoying the speaker on the platform.

The latter suddenly came to a dead stop and glared at the interrupting couple.

"When that ill-mannered young man, over there, sees fit to stop talking, I shall be glad to proceed with my remarks," she cried angrily, pointing an accusing finger at Dick.

"That young man" wriggled uncomfortably in his chair, painfully conscious of the fact that a hundred pair of eyes were flashing scorn and indignation at him.

"Put him out," shouted a long-jawed woman in the rear of the hall. "They always put *us* out when we disturb *their* meetings. Put the rascal out!"

Several other women expressed their approval of this suggestion. It looked like a good opportunity to teach a lesson to arrogant mankind. A large, massive female usher moved determinedly toward Dick.

The latter was wondering uneasily whether he would be permitted to walk out, or whether he would be thrown out bodily by this lady, when Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson intervened.

"No, my friends, don't put him out, I beg," she cried, "let him remain with us. Leave it to me to deal with him, please.

"Will the young man kindly stand up so that everybody can see him?" she added.

"Go on, Dick," whispered Jessie. "Do as she says."

"I'll be hanged if I will," he muttered. "I'm not going to be made a fool of before all these women."

"With the cowardice characteristic of his sex, he is afraid to show himself, I perceive," sneered Mrs. Parkinson. "Very well, we will let him remain seated if he wishes; but I am going to ask him a few questions. Listen carefully, my friends, to his answers.

"Young man," she cried, "do you believe in the right of women to vote?"

"Answer 'yes,' Dick," whispered Jessie entreatingly.

"I won't," he muttered doggedly. "Why should I tell a lie?"

Mrs. Parkinson repeated her question. Dick remained silent. A storm of hisses came from the audience.

"He is opposed to woman suffrage, of course; but he is afraid to declare himself," cried the English suffragette. "It is always the way, my sisters. Show me a man who would deprive our sex of its rights, and I will show you a coward every time.

"We will now leave this worthless young man and turn to his companion. Will that young woman please rise?"

"Don't you do it, Jessie," whispered Dick. "She's got no right to make a show of us in this manner. I never heard of such a thing being done before. It's an outrage. Keep your seat and take no notice of her."

But Jessie paid no heed to what he said. Her face had turned very red, and she could not help trembling a little at the prospect of having every eye in the hall focused on her; but, nevertheless, she rose to her feet obediently at the command of the revered leader.

"My child," cried Mrs. Parkinson in a kindlier tone, "are you with us in our fight to obtain justice for our deeply-wronged sex?"

"I am," replied Jessie very earnestly.

At this answer the audience broke out into loud applause. Mrs. Parkinson beamed affectionately at the girl.

"I am glad to hear you say that, my dear," she went on. "It shows that you are a young woman of sense and principle. Now, let me ask you another question. Is that young man beside you a relative of yours?"

"No," replied the girl faintly, her face turning to a deeper crimson.

"Is it possible that you are betrothed to him?" demanded the English suffragette mercilessly. "Come, my child, be frank with me."

"Ye gods!" muttered Dick savagely. "This is intolerable. For downright nerve, that nosey old woman is the very limit."

Everybody was looking at Jessie with eager expectancy. The poor girl's eyes were downcast; she was a pitiful picture of embarrassment.

Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson smiled comprehendingly.

"I perceive that I have guessed right," she cried. "Now, my dear, I am going to ask you to do something for the cause.

"You say that you are with us in our struggle. Well, here is a splendid chance to prove your loyalty. As I have said, our great fight cannot be won by words alone. You women of the United States must be willing to make sacrifices—real sacrifices—in order to achieve success.

"I call upon you now, my sister, in the name of our sacred cause, to renounce this young man, who does not believe in woman suffrage. I ask you as a true suffragette to send this enemy of our sex about his business. Refuse to speak another word to him or to see him again.

"If you will do this, you will be doing something really worth while. Hundreds of young women will follow your example. The young men of this land will be taught a lesson. When they realize that we will not be their wives unless we can vote with them, they will quickly come to terms.

"Now, my dear girl, are you prepared to make this sacrifice? Will you renounce that misguided young man?"

"I will," replied the girl steadily, a look of determination in her eyes.

"Jessie," whispered Dick plaintively, tugging at her dress, "what are you saying?"

She paid no heed to his protest. She did not even turn her head in his direction. She was too much carried away by Mrs. Parkinson's words to give one thought to Dick's feelings in the matter.

The audience cheered her decision wildly. The newspaper reporters seated at the press-table in front of the platform began to write rapidly. Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson, her face aglow with joy and triumph, led the applause.

"My sister," she cried when the hubbub had subsided, "I congratulate you on what you have done. You are a true and valiant suffragette, and we are all proud of you. Come up here and take a seat of honor on the platform."

A committee of smiling suffragettes escorted Jessie to the platform. The girl went with them, despite Dick Henderson's indignant protests.

That young man, feeling that there was nothing to be gained by his staying longer at the meeting, rose from his chair and sullenly left the hall, the audience jeering and hissing him as he made his way toward the door.

"Of all the awful experiences I've ever been through that was about the worst," he growled, as he stood on the sidewalk. "I gave Jessie credit for having better sense. The idea of her making such a fool of herself. I must read her a good lecture and drive all this suffragette nonsense out of her head. Of course, she can't really be serious about breaking our engagement."

He waited around outside the building until the meeting was over with the intention of escorting Jessie home.

Greatly to his chagrin, the girl came out arm in arm with Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson and entered that militant lady's taxicab without deigning to notice him, although he called her by name as she hurriedly brushed past him.

Flushing angrily at this slight, he stood scowling at the taxicab until it was out of sight. A group of young men approached him.

"I beg your pardon," said one, acting as spokesman for the rest, "we are the newspaper men who covered that suffragette meeting in there, and we would like to have some of your latest photographs."

"You go to the deuce!" growled Dick, and strode away in a fine rage.

Ten minutes later an alarming thought occurred to him. Those reporters had asked him for his pictures, but they had not asked him to tell them his name. That probably meant that they had already interviewed Jessie, and that she had supplied them with all the information they needed.

The papers would publish a full account

of the affair, and he would be "guyed" unmercifully by the fellows down-town. He shuddered at the prospect of what he might expect.

That evening he called at Jessie's home, determined to come to an understanding with her.

He felt confident that by this time the girl must have repented of her foolishness and would be glad to see him and beg his forgiveness.

He promised himself that he would be very stern and unrelenting with her at first. That would teach her a lesson she would not soon forget.

It was a great shock to him to be told by the maid who answered his ring that Miss Milburn was "not at home."

"Not at home," he repeated blankly. "Then, where is she, Mary?"

"I couldn't say, sir. Wait a minute and I'll go up-stairs and ask her."

She came down a minute later with a sympathetic look on her good-natured countenance.

"Miss Jessie's up-stairs, sir; but she told me to tell you that she ain't at home to you this evening and never will be at home to you no more."

"The deuce!" muttered Dick with a frown, "I wonder how long she intends to keep up this ridiculous nonsense. What can she mean?"

He went away in a very bitter frame of mind, resolved that he would make no further efforts to effect a reconciliation. It was up to Jessie to take the next step in that direction, he told himself.

The next morning a messenger-boy brought a letter and a package to his office. They were from Jessie. The letter read:

MR. RICHARD HENDERSON:

DEAR SIR—In accordance with the decision made yesterday, I am sending you back your ring and the various presents you made to me during the period of our engagement. I also return your letters.

Your portrait, which you gave me last week, I will send to you later. I cannot return it to you herewith as I have taken the liberty of lending it to the *Daily Sphere*. A *Sphere* reporter called at the house last night and begged so hard for my picture and yours that I gave them to him on his solemn promise to return them in good condition.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaimed Dick. "That girl must have gone crazy. The nerve of her, to hand my picture to that newspaper! Those confounded suffragettes have already destroyed her sense of delicacy."

A postscript to the letter read:

DEAR DICK:

If you were to join our club and become a suffragette I guess everything would be all right between us again. Why don't you do this?

"I'll be hanged if I will," he growled, scowling at the letter. "I'm more opposed to woman suffrage now than I ever was. I'd like to see myself joining their fool club."

He sent out his office-boy for the morning papers. When he looked through them he found, as he had feared, that every one contained a sensational account of the part he had played at the suffragette meeting of the preceding day.

The *Sphere's* narrative was the most exasperating of all. At the top of the page appeared his picture and Jessie's, side by side, and surrounded by a mixed border of weeping cupids and ballot-boxes. The article was headed:

MRS. PARKINSON PARTS A PAIR.

Militant British Suffragette Persuades Girl to Jilt Her Young Man at "Votes for Women" Meeting.

Of course his name was prominently mentioned in all the articles. The result of this publicity was maddening. His telephone-bell began to ring early, and throughout the day was probably the busiest wire in that part of the town.

His friends called up to let him know that they had seen the newspapers, and to chaff him or sympathize with him, according to their natures. Strangers, impelled by curiosity, telephoned him to inquire whether the newspapers stories were really true.

The Sunday editor of a very yellow sheet offered him two hundred dollars to write a signed article to be entitled: "How it feels to be jilted by a suffragette." Three women writers for evening papers called to interview him. Newspaper artists came to sketch him in charateristic poses.

A man representing a matrimonial agency turned up with an offer to supply him with a wife who did not believe in woman suffrage. This man assured him that his agency had several such young women on its books, and, just before Dick kicked him out of his office, urged the latter to cheer up, as there were "just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught."

The unfortunate object of all this atten-

tion was frantic with rage and humiliation. To add to his horror, when he went to a quick-lunch restaurant to get his midday meal, one of the diners who was reading a *Sphere* recognized him from his picture in the paper and eagerly pointed him out to everybody in the place.

The same thing happened on the Elevated train when Dick was on his way home that evening. Several persons who were reading *Spheres* recognized him simultaneously by means of the very good portrait of himself with which Jessie had supplied that newspaper. Their attention became so unbearable that he was obliged to leave the train.

He boarded a surface car, breathing a fervent prayer that there would not be anybody on board who would recognize him.

This prayer was granted. Greatly to his relief he was allowed to complete his homeward journey in peace.

At Ninetieth Street he alighted, and was about to proceed when his way was barred by a parade that was marching up the thoroughfare with a noisy brass band at its head.

The parade consisted of a hundred determined-looking women, each of whom wore a large purple sash, on which was inscribed "Votes For Women."

In the center of this throng marched Jessie, her head raised proudly, her pretty face flushed with enthusiasm.

She, too, wore a purple sash bearing the legend: "Votes For Women," and in addition, carried a big purple silk banner on which was embroidered in gold letters:

WOMEN VOTE IN COLORADO AND WYOMING—WHY NOT IN NEW YORK?

A mob of jeering men and boys followed and flanked the paraders. A drunken man yelled "look at the peach carrying the banner! She can have my vote and the votes of my seven sons."

"Good Heavens!" groaned Dick. "To think that Jessie has come to this already—my Jessie who used to be a model of modesty and maidenly reserve! Good Heavens!"

Jessie Milburn was so enthusiastic about the cause of "Women's rights," and so busy with her work, which she solemnly regarded as her sacred mission in life, that she had no time to think of her fractured love affair.

She was a girl who always put her whole soul into everything she undertook. It was not in her nature to do anything in a half-hearted way. Consequently, having enlisted in the ranks of the suffragettes, she became one of the most ardent and active workers for the cause.

She spoke at meetings; she stood on soap-boxes and addressed street crowds; she marched in parades, she invaded the business section down-town, and went from office to office distributing handbills containing arguments as to why women should have the right to vote.

Her youth, enthusiasm, and courage, soon made her very popular with the other members of the equal rights club she had joined. She was appointed to serve on a couple of committees; the president of the club invited her to her home, several of the older members, veterans in the fight for the rights of their sex, paid her a flattering amount of attention.

But what pleased and gratified her most of all was the interest which the great Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson manifested in her.

The famous British suffragette had taken a great fancy to the new recruit. She invited Jessie to take tea with her on several occasions, took her around with her to the various meetings she addressed, gave the girl permission to call her by her Christian name, and declared that if Jessie ever came to England she must be sure to visit her.

"And you can rest assured, my dear," said Mrs. Parkinson, "that I shall not forget you after I return to my native land. I shall continue to keep a watchful eye on your career.

"I don't mind telling you that I confidently expect big things of you some day. I believe I am a pretty good judge of character and I shall be grievously disappointed, my young American friend, if you don't turn out to be a great heroine of the cause, later on.

"You are destined to make a great name for yourself—a name that will go down into history. I feel it."

Jessie's eyes sparkled at this prophecy and praise, and a responsive thrill of enthusiasm and ambition shot through her.

What chance had Dick Henderson of winning her back after that? Much as she had once cared for that young man, what did the loss of him amount to compared with the alluring prospect of undying fame which Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson had presented before her eager young eyes?

From that day on Jessie was obsessed with but one desire—the ambition to make a great name for herself as a champion of woman's rights; to do something big which

would prove her worthy of the distinguished Mrs. Parkinson's confidence.

She had only one regret, and that was that she did not live in England instead of in the United States.

England, it seemed to her, was the real land of opportunity for an ambitious suffragette. It was so easy to become a martyr over there. One had to do scarcely anything in order to be sent to prison.

The New York judges, on the contrary, were not at all accommodating in this respect. They couldn't be prevailed upon to give a poor girl a chance to become a martyr by sentencing her to six months' hard labor. A paltry fine was the heaviest penalty they ever imposed on workers for the cause—and there was nothing at all heroic about being fined a few weeks' pin-money.

This discouraging leniency of the local bench exasperated Jessie. She tried to persuade her parents to move to London, but her father could not be prevailed upon to abandon a flourishing New York wholesale egg and butter business even to accommodate an adored daughter.

Jessie derived some comfort from the thought that, after all, the New York judges had not yet had a fair chance. They had not been properly aroused. No American cabinet minister or public official had been horsewhipped by a heroic suffragette. Perhaps such a deed might be productive of the desired result—even in New York.

She seriously thought of putting this theory to a test, and with this object in view she attended a political meeting at which the Governor of the State was to be the chief speaker, and carried a rawhide whip concealed in her shirt-waist.

Her intention, of course, was to horsewhip the Governor and thus force the authorities to give her and her cause proper recognition.

But she did not carry out this intention. The Governor proved to be such a nice looking, inoffensive man, with such delightful fatherly chin whiskers that Jessie did not have the heart to cause him pain.

She would have to find some other means of acquiring glory, she told herself with a regretful sigh.

The very next day an exceptional opportunity presented itself, or rather (to be more accurate) was presented to Jessie by her friend Linda Harrington.

Mrs. Harrington called at Jessie's home with a very wobegone expression on her round, fat face.

"My dear," she said, "I've had some bad news. I've got to start to-morrow for San Francisco to be at the bedside of a very rich aunt who is dying."

Jessie expressed her sympathy.

"Cheer up, Linda," she added. "Perhaps when you get out there you'll find that your aunt's condition isn't really so serious, after all. While there is life there is always hope, you know."

"Oh, that isn't what's worrying me," declared Mrs. Harrington, who was noted among her friends for her candor. "The old lady is in her dotage and she's going to leave me all her money when she dies, so I'm really not at all depressed at the thought of a funeral in the family."

"Why then, are you so sad?" inquired Jessie curiously.

"Because it is a great disappointment to me to have to leave New York at this time," replied Mrs. Harrington, almost tearfully. "I wanted to be here for the election."

"For the election!" repeated Jessie. "To what election do you refer, Linda?"

"The mayoralty election, of course. Don't you know that it is only three weeks off. The chances are I won't be able to get back in time to vote and, anyway, I sha'n't be here to register, and they won't let you vote unless you do."

"Unless you do *what?*"

"Unless you register. If I'm not here to register I won't be permitted to cast a vote, of course."

"What *are* you talking about, Linda?" demanded Jessie impatiently. "They wouldn't let you register even if you were here, and they certainly wouldn't let you vote. Have you taken leave of your senses? Can it be possible that you imagine that the suffrage is going to be extended to our sex this year?"

"Not to all our sex," replied Mrs. Harrington. "But I fully intended to vote if I could have been here on election day. It was a great idea of mine, Jessie—a most daring and original idea.

"I intended to have my name go down into history as the first woman that ever cast a vote for a mayor of New York. Just think of the glory of such a distinction as that! Do you wonder that I am terribly distressed at the thought of having to give up such an opportunity to win undying fame?"

"But I don't understand," protested Jessie. "I can't see how you would have managed it. Surely they wouldn't allow a woman cast a vote under any circumstances.

"Yes, they would, my dear. They wouldn't have been able to help themselves in my case. You see, I intended to fool them into allowing me to vote. It was a great idea—a truly brilliant idea, if I do say so myself. I could almost cry to think that I shall not be able to carry it out.

"Jessie!" she exclaimed after a long pause, "you and I have been friends for a long time and I think a great deal of you, dear. Inasmuch as I cannot use this plan myself, I shall give it to you.

"I've simply got to start for 'Frisco tomorrow morning, you see. If I don't go, that aunt of mine will probably cut me out of her will and leave all her money to California charities. I can't afford to give up all that cash, even for the sake of being the first woman in New York to cast a vote.

"Of course, I might keep my idea a secret for a year and use it myself at the next election; but I am afraid to wait that long. Some other woman may think of the same thing—it's such a simple plan, that it's a wonder to me that other suffragettes have not already thought of it and carried it out—and besides, maybe by next year the suffrage will be granted to all our sex and my idea wasted.

"I think, therefore, that I had better not wait. I had better give my idea to you. My loss shall be your gain, dear. I will tell you my plan and you shall be the first woman to cast a vote for mayor of New York. Doesn't your heart beat faster at the thought of such a distinction as that?"

"Yes," gasped Jessie excitedly. "Tell me all about it please, Linda."

"It is very simple. All that you have to do is to dress up in man's clothes and, thus attired, go and register and vote just as if you were a man."

"Oh, is that all?" exclaimed Jessie blankly. "Do you think that would work?"

"Of course it would. I don't see how the plan could possibly fail. You'll have to cut your hair short, of course, and you must practise how to walk with a man's stride. You must look the part so thoroughly that nobody will suspect that you are a girl.

"All a man has to do in order to qualify as a voter, is to walk into the registry place, give his name, address, and age to the clerks and state how long he has been living in the election district. These particulars are entered in a book, and then the would-be voter puts his signature in the book.

"Of course my first name would give me away if I signed myself Linda Harrington; but I intended to overcome that difficulty by signing myself Lind A. Harrington.

"You won't have any trouble on that score, though, because 'Jessie' is also a man's name except for the letter 'I,' which you can leave out of your signature.

"Having thus registered without arousing any suspicion, all you will have to do in order to cast a vote will be to dress yourself in masculine attire again on election day and go around to the same place. They will hand you a ballot without a word, and you will cast your vote for mayor—the first vote ever cast by a woman in this State.

"After the election is over you will boldly announce to the world what you have done and prove it by the registration-books, and your fame will extend throughout the land—"

"Oh, what a splendid plan, and how perfectly dear of you to turn it over to me!" cried Jessie joyously, throwing her arms impulsively around her friend's neck. "I shall never forget your kindness, dear Linda."

"Don't mention it," replied Mrs. Harrington. "I thought you'd like it. I wish you success, Jessie, with all my heart. I really don't see how you can fail if you are cautious. Of course, you must be very careful to keep the matter a secret until after the election is over. If the fact that you are a woman is discovered after you have registered, they will not allow you to vote, you know."

"You can rest assured that I shall be most careful," declared Jessie. "And what do you think they will do to me, Linda, after election, and when I proudly disclose what I have done? Will they send me to prison, do you suppose?"

"No, I don't think so," replied her friend, and, noting the look of disappointment on Jessie's face, she added: "Still, my dear, there will be glory enough for you in the fact that you have actually voted. It will be a great victory for us suffragettes, too. It will demonstrate to the world, that even though one of our sex has cast a vote, the country had not been ruined thereby.

"It will make the enemies of our cause look ridiculous. The newspapers will doubtless take the matter up editorially and will publish cartoons on the subject. Really, I shouldn't be a bit surprised if it resulted in the suffrage being granted to our sex in the near future."

Jessie clapped her hands delightedly at this prospect.

"It's a bully idea," she cried, "simply bully. It'll be even a greater achievement

than horsewhipping a cabinet minister. Oh, won't the other girls be jealous!"

"Father," said Jessie, at the breakfast-table on the first day of registration, "are you going to register to-day?"

"Of course I am, my dear. I haven't missed a vote since I was twenty-one, and I always make it a point to register on the first day. I intend to drop in on my way down-town and get the business over with."

"Where do you register, father?" inquired Jessie, striving hard to keep her voice from sounding eager.

"Right around the corner, in Malucci's barber-shop. The board of registry of this district sits there every year. Why do you ask, my child?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just curious to know, that's all," she replied.

An hour later she visited her hairdresser, and ordered the latter to cut off her hair "as short as a man's."

"*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle," exclaimed the horrified "artiste," who had always admired Jessie's luxuriant tresses, "surely you must be jokeeng. You cannot seriously intend to part with such beautiful hair. It would be a sin."

"Cut it off," commanded Jessie firmly. "I'm perfectly serious, I assure you, Mme. Gascon, and moreover, I'm in a great hurry. Kindly be as quick as you can about it, and remember I want it as short as a man's."

With many sighs and deprecatory gestures, the horrified hairdresser proceeded to carry out this order. She was too good a business woman to keep up an argument when she saw that a customer was as determined as this one.

Fifteen minutes later Jessie looked in the mirror and scarcely recognized herself. Her golden locks had been cropped close to her pretty head. If it had not been for her feminine attire, she would easily have passed for a handsome boy.

With the object of exchanging the garb of her sex for clothes which would make her disguise complete, Jessie visited a big Broadway clothing-store.

"I want to buy a suit," she said, a trifle nervously, to the good-looking young salesman who came forward.

"Yes, miss. Kindly take that elevator to the third floor. You'll find our ladies' cloak and suit department up there."

"But I don't want a lady's suit," protested Jessie. "I—I want to buy a man's suit."

"Certainly, miss," exclaimed the salesman, trying hard to conceal his surprise, "but—er—don't you think you had better bring the gentleman along with you? Our suits come in different sizes, you know. It will be impossible to get a fit unless the party comes here to be measured."

"Give me one—er—about my size," stammered Jessie, blushing vividly and feeling very uncomfortable.

"Your size, miss!" gasped the astonished young man. "Well, you know, there is quite a difference between—er—"

He did not finish the sentence because his prospective customer abruptly left the store before he could get any further.

Jessie's nerve had suddenly deserted her. She had not imagined that the purchase of a man's outfit would be such an embarrassing procedure. She had detected a broad grin on the faces of some of the other salesmen who had been standing near enough to overhear the conversation, and, suddenly seized with panic, she turned and fled.

But after she had reached the street she sternly upbraided herself for her cowardice.

"Remember you are a suffragette and you are doing this for the cause," she repeated fiercely, and fortified herself by conjuring up a mental picture of how her ideal, Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson, would have acted under the circumstances.

With renewed courage she was about to return to the store, when it occurred to her that it might be a good idea to go to some other clothing-shop—some place which was not so large and pretentious, and where, consequently, the salesmen would not be so conscientious and painstaking in the matter of measurements.

She walked over to Seventh Avenue, and there found a store which appeared suitable for her purpose.

It was a little bit of a shop and exceedingly dingy in appearance. All sorts of suits hung in the window, and there were big pasteboard signs attached to them, calling attention to their cheapness and worth.

Jessie's eyes fell on a suit in the window which was marked: "Very nobby—a great bargain."

The trousers of this suit were not of the same pattern as the coat and vest; but the outfit appeared to be just about her size, and therefore she decided to take it.

"How much is that light one over there in the left-hand corner of the window?" she inquired boldly of the bearded storekeeper.

"Ten dollar, and very cheap."

"I'll take it," declared Jessie.

Much to her relief, the man made the sale

without asking any questions, or even suggesting that the suit might not fit the person who was destined to wear it. That was the difference between the selling methods of Seventh Avenue and Broadway.

Jessie found that she could also purchase the other necessary articles of men's apparel in this store. She left the place, bearing a complete masculine outfit under her arm, and hurried to her home to don her disguise and see how she looked.

Half an hour later she seized an opportunity to sneak out of the house unobserved by her mother and the servants, and, assuming the stride of a member of the other sex, which she had been assiduously practising for several days, she walked boldly into the barber-shop of Tony Malucci around the corner, where the local board of registry was in session.

The place was filled with men, who gave Jessie a casual glance as she entered, and then paid no further attention to her—to her great relief.

At a long, unvarnished table sat several men, with big books spread out in front of them. A policeman lolled in the doorway. He stared hard at Jessie as she entered, and the girl was afraid that the sharp eyes of the law might detect her disguise; but, much to her relief, the bluecoat said "Good morning, sir," very affably and went on with his task of devouring a cheese sandwich which a friend had brought him from the saloon next door.

"What name, sir?" cried a fat man who sat at one of the long tables, looking at Jessie and dipping his pen in the ink.

"Jessie Milburn," she replied in a tone as masculine as she could make it.

"J-e-s-s-e, of course," he spelled, in a take-it-for-granted manner.

She nodded. The man made the entry in his book; the other men at the table, each with a book in front of him, made similar entries.

"Your address, Mr. Milburn, please?" requested the stout man.

Jessie told it to him, and once more the pens of the registration board went scratching across the ledgers.

"Age next, Mr. Milburn?"

"Twenty-one," replied Jessie.

"Ah, your first vote, I see! Thought I didn't remember seeing you here last year."

"No, I've never been here before," said Jessie.

"Not even to get a shave?" laughed the man.

"No, not even for that," replied Jessie, and added audaciously: "I always shave myself."

There followed several other formal questions, which Jessie answered readily, and which were entered in the books of the board. Then Jessie was told to sign her name in the register, which she did with an unfaltering hand.

"That's all, sir," said the chairman of the board. "Next gent, please."

Jessie heaved a great sigh of relief as she stepped out of the barber-shop. It was done—and it had been so very easy, too. The danger was over. She now enjoyed the proud distinction of being the first woman to register in the State of New York, and, having succeeded thus far, it would be an easy matter to complete her triumph, twenty days later, by returning to this same place and casting her vote for mayor.

She was feeling very jubilant as she walked slowly up the street. It was, therefore, a great shock to her to feel a heavy hand laid suddenly on her shoulder and to hear a deep masculine voice exclaim: "One minute there, young fellow. Before you go another step I want to know where you got those trousers?"

"What do you mean, sir?" gasped Jessie, nervously confronting the speaker, a red-faced, rough-looking man.

"I mean," declared the latter, "that I am very strongly inclined to believe that those trousers you are wearing belong to me, and that you are a sneak-thief."

"You are mistaken," faltered Jessie, her face very red.

It was certainly an embarrassing situation, even for a suffragette.

"I think not," retorted the man. "They're a very distinctive pattern, and I'd know them anywhere. I feel sure they're the pair that were stolen from my room yesterday while I was away."

"I'm quite sure they're not," gasped Jessie, ready to cry with shame and fear, for several men and boys had gathered around, attracted by the man's loud voice.

"Well, we can easily settle it," declared he confidently. "I recollect that mine had a tiny moth-hole near the bottom of the left leg."

Everybody in the small crowd glanced at the bottom of the left leg of the trousers which poor Jessie wore. There, sure enough, was a small round hole, so tiny that it would not have been noticed unless attention had been called to it.

"You see, they *are* mine!" declared the man, turning triumphantly to the bystanders.

"They're not," protested Jessie. "They can't be yours. I bought them to-day in a store on Seventh Avenue. We can go there and prove it."

"Then you bought stolen goods," affirmed her accuser. "They are my property, no matter where you got them, and I intend to have them."

"That's right, brother," exclaimed a burly man in the crowd. "Insist on getting them. You've got a right to what belongs to you. Why don't you give the man his trousers, young feller, and avoid a whole lot of trouble?"

The crowd had grown considerably bigger. It was the kind of incident which street idlers thoroughly enjoy.

In a state of panic, poor Jessie tried to get away, but her accuser seized her roughly by the shoulder.

"No, you don't," he growled. "You stay right here. You're a thief and I'm going to have you pinched. Will somebody go get a cop, please?"

Now, much as Jessie had yearned to be placed under arrest and sent to prison for the cause of women's rights, she had no desire to be punished by the law on the shameful and distressing charge of stealing a man's nether garments. That was an entirely different matter.

"Oh, please don't have me arrested!" she implored. "I'll pay you what the—what they are worth."

"I don't want your money," declared the man. "All I want is my trousers, and I intend to have them, too. Won't somebody please go for a cop? I'll have this fellow sent up for stealing."

Jessie was on the verge of fainting. She was not familiar with police procedure and she was under the impression that when she was taken to the station-house her accuser's property would be taken from her by force and handed over to him.

This prospect was so terrifying, that suddenly she broke down completely and began to weep.

Believing her to be of the sterner sex, the crowd greeted this display of weakness with jeers.

At this juncture a tall, broad-shouldered young man shoved his way through the throng. As she caught sight of him, Jessie rushed toward him and threw her arms around his neck.

"Dick! Dick!" she sobbed. "Save me! Save me! It is I—Jessie. Oh, I shall die of shame."

Dick Henderson gasped with astonishment as he recognized the familiar voice of his sweetheart, who was blushing furiously.

"Jessie," he groaned. "And in those clothes! Good Heavens! Has it come to this so soon?"

"Save me!" implored the terrified girl. "Don't let that horrid man have me arrested, Dick."

"Arrested for what?" he demanded.

"For stealing my trousers," explained the man. "The trousers that young man is wearing are my property and I want them. He says he bought them to-day on Seventh Avenue, but I don't believe him. I believe he stole them from my room yesterday, and I'm going to have him arrested."

"Help me, Dick!" pleaded Jessie, in an imploring whisper.

"No, I absolutely refuse to help a suffragette," he answered firmly.

"I'm not a suffragette, Dick—at least I promise that I won't be one any more if you'll only get me out of this terrible situation," she sobbed.

"I'll do my best, on that condition," he said, and turned to Jessie's accuser. "Can I have a word with you alone?" he asked the latter.

A ten-dollar bill and Dick's promise that his property would be returned to him later, finally induced the man to allow Jessie to go free.

This concession was secured only just in time, for the tall figure of a policeman was seen coming swiftly around the corner as Dick led Jessie through the crowd.

He escorted the trembling girl to the door of her father's house. When he called on her an hour later she was wearing the habiliments of her own sex.

She and Dick "kissed and made up," and soon afterward visited Mme. Gascon and bought a wig to hide her cropped hair.

Even though she had registered, Jessie did not go to the polls on election day to cast her vote for mayor.

She spent that entire day in her home addressing many envelopes and enclosing square engraved cards therein.

Dick helped her with this task. One of these wedding invitations was addressed to Mrs. Bella Atkins Parkinson, London, England.

Dick addressed that envelope himself and he dropped it in the mail-box with considerable satisfaction.

Juggling the "Bow-Wow."*

BY CASPER CARSON,

Author of "From Stripes to Shoulder-Straps," "A Gentleman of Leisure," "When Reuben Came to Town," etc.

Ted Corey's Thoughtless Invitations When He Forgot That He Was Down and Out, and How He Made Good.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

At his graduating Columbia Class Day Ted Corey, as related by his friend Weldon, meets Nellie, daughter of the railroad magnate, Jabez Perley. Ted vows that she is the girl he will propose to within three months, but simultaneously his father, living out in Berkley, is juggled out of his narrow-gage railroad, familiarly known as the Bow-Wow, by this very same Jabez Perley, the same to be used as a connecting link in the great Pansy Leaf system, on which Weldon secures employment. The two young men go out to Berkley together, chancing to take the same train as Mrs. and Nellie Perley, and are invited into the magnate's private-car. Dazzled by the presence of his divinity Ted makes all sorts of extravagant plans for her entertainment, the family having arranged to spend the summer in Berkley. Indeed, they have bought the home that formerly belonged to the Coreys, the latter being reduced to living in what is little better than a shanty. Arrived here with Weldon, who is to board with them, Ted is horror stricken to discover that things are much worse than he had supposed. Asking for the bathroom, so that they may get rid of the travel stains, he is told by his mother that they will be obliged to use the washtub, after heating on the stove water Ted must bring in a pail from the spring.

CHAPTER VIII.

LETTING OFF STEAM.

THE accommodations at my new boarding-house did not improve upon better acquaintance. In fact, like a trip to the north pole, the farther one advanced, the worse things got.

Our supper that night—the *pièce de resistance* being, as I have previously indicated, fried pork, greasy and underdone, for Mrs. Corey was but an indifferent cook—was hardly what you might call an enlivening occasion.

The builder of the "Bow-Wow" stumped in heavily, and, except for a few words of grumpy welcome to us, consumed his food in stolid silence.

He was evidently a broken man, dead to ambition and hope, nursing only a sense of injury and disappointment.

The mother, too, nervously hot and harassed from her unaccustomed household tasks, had little to say; as for Ted, he sat like one in a daze, answering only when he was directly addressed, and then in the briefest of monosyllables.

I tried, it is true, to act as though I noticed nothing out of the way, and made some futile efforts to relieve the prevailing gloom; but, finding I elicited no response, gave over my weak attempts, and likewise subsided into self-communion.

It wasn't any too cheerful self-communion, either, as may well be imagined when I reflected that I was in for a whole summer of this sort of thing.

Yet I couldn't desert a comrade in distress; and I felt, too, that it would be almost brutal to Mrs. Corey to hunt other quarters after my agreement to stay with them; for I gathered from her air of anxious deference toward me, and one or two little things she let drop, that the modest stipend I had arranged to pay was a pretty important addition to her slender resources.

The dismal meal over, I announced that I would take a stroll about the place, supposing that Ted wanted an opportunity for a private confab with his folks; but I hadn't gone far before I heard a hail, and, turning, saw him come pelting after me.

When he caught up he didn't say a word, but merely threw himself down full length upon the ground and buried his face in his arms.

For a long time he lay there so, giving no sign of what he was passing through, beyond a slight occasional quiver of the shoulders; while I sat miserably by, full of sympathy,

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but unable to think of anything I could do or say to give him comfort.

The twilight faded into dusk, and the stars began to come out; but still he lay there, dumbly brooding.

At last, though, he roused up of a sudden, and turned to me.

"Weldon," he said fiercely, "you thought to-day, when I wouldn't say the old railroad builder was my dad, that it was because I was ashamed of him, didn't you?

"Well," he went on, without waiting for my answer, "you were wrong. I had my own reasons for not enlightening those people just then, but being ashamed of dad wasn't one of them.

"But," his voice lowered, "you wouldn't be wrong if you thought it of me now, Weldon. I *am* ashamed, bitterly ashamed that he can sit down to such a life as this, and be doing absolutely nothing to regain what he has lost. More than that, he seems utterly indifferent to the fact that mother has to endure it with him.

"He has no plans to better our condition," the boy railed passionately; "but thinks that possibly if he and I get work on the railroad we may be able to pay off an overdue mortgage on this wretched pig-sty and keep it for a home.

"He loses no chance to curse and abuse Perley as the cause of all his misfortunes; yet he is perfectly willing to go cringing to him and beg for favors. He even suggested when I happened to mention we came through with Perley's wife and daughter to-day, that possibly I could get them to speak a good word for me.

"Faugh!" Ted broke out disgustedly. "When he sprang that one on me, I couldn't stand it any longer and came away."

"But your father is an old man," I interposed palliatingly. "And besides, you must remember he had a bad knockout."

"Knockout?" he demanded. "What's a knockout more or less? Other men have had 'em, and only got up to fight on harder than ever. Didn't I hear Mrs. Perley tell you to-day that no longer than five years ago they had old Jabez hanging over the ropes; yet look where he is to-day. Did he sit down to growl and whine over how he'd been treated, and stick his wife and daughter up in a mountain cabin? No; he braced up and slammed back at his enemies for as good as they gave him, and now his family rides in private cars. And as for age, Perley isn't a day younger than my father.

"No wonder that his wife's eyes shone when she spoke to you about him," he concluded, tearing up great handfuls of grass and tossing them ruthlessly about. "That is the kind of man one can be proud of. He plays the game, and plays it for all he is worth."

I couldn't help showing some surprise at this unexpected tribute.

"Oh," he smiled, "do you imagine from what I've said about him in the last day or two, that I think him the Old Boy himself with horns and a tail? Well, I don't. I merely think he works under a wrong rule. He believes honestly in the creed, 'Business is business,' and that whatever he does inside the pale of the law is justifiable. He doesn't deem himself under any obligations to look out for folks like dad who are too careless or incompetent to protect themselves. If they stand in the path of the steam-roller, they'll get run over, is his motto.

"I believe, on the other hand," Ted went on, "that there is a sort of Divine Justice which squares up every transaction at some time or another. A man may fancy he has gained an advantage by fraud or cunning; but some day somehow, when the books are balanced, whatever was wrongfully obtained will have to be paid back with interest.

"And that is what I am going to prove to Perley," he averred emphatically. "I have no quarrel with him as a man. In fact, I admire him immensely. But I have a quarrel with his creed, and I intend to show him where it is wrong. He believes that he has got the 'Bow-Wow' for little or nothing, doesn't he? Well, let him keep that delusion, if he wants to; but I shall eventually demonstrate to him how, by stirring me up, he has had to pay three times the price he could have bought it for from dad at open sale."

The idle vaunting of a kid, I know it sounds like, as I set it down here, especially when one considers the relative positions of Ted Corey and the big financier; and I remember that instead of being impressed, I only yawned and ventured to suggest that perhaps we had better go in to bed.

I don't suppose, come to think of it, that even his closest pal took much stock in David and his little sling, when the latter confided what he intended doing to Goliath of Gath.

CHAPTER IX.

A NIGHT OF HORROR.

TED'S angry outburst up there on the hillside, if it did nothing else, at least relieved

his surcharged feelings, and brought him to something more nearly resembling his normal state.

He arose amiably enough at my intimation that I was ready to retire, and prepared to accompany me back to the house; but we had sauntered only a few steps when he halted suddenly, and drew a little note-book from his pocket.

"Wait a minute," he said; "speaking of Perley, there is something I want to attend to before I forget it. To keep the account absolutely straight between us, I am going to charge off from what he owes me the price of two parlor-car seats out from New York."

I laughed.

"Aren't you over-generous?" I bantered. "I'm perfectly willing to regard my seat as a free gift from the Pansy Leaf."

But Ted was in dead earnest.

"Perhaps you are right," he said; "but it is better to err that way than the other, and then, too, the accommodations of a private-car ought to be worth more than just an every-day Pullman. I guess I will let it go, as I said."

Accordingly he duly made the entry, and then resuming his place at my side, strolled on toward the cottage.

Mrs. Corey was still up and waiting for us.

"I have the water on the stove, boys," she announced, "for the bath you said you were wanting; but please be careful and not make any more noise than you can help. Mr. Corey has already gone to bed, and he sleeps so poorly nowadays that if once awakened, he may not drop off again all night.

It was very kind of her to get ready for us; but I can hardly aver that that bath was a howling success.

Indeed, if I had to take many more of the same kind, I should seriously consider joining that band of political martyrs who have heroically resolved to abstain from all such indulgences until Bryan is elected President.

In the first place, a single wash-boiler full of hot water is no very generous allowance for two husky six-footers, and when you consider, in addition, that the kitchen when closed up was as hot as Tophet, that we had to use a laundry soap so strong that it bit into the flesh like lye, and that besides carrying the heavy tubs back and forth from out doors, we had to adapt ourselves to their inconvenient shape, you will hardly wonder that we failed to find it a strictly enjoyable occasion.

To cap the climax, Ted while airily perched on the rim of his tub, lost his balance and went over backward with a bang that brought a torrent of whining complaint from the bedroom, and a deluge of sudsy water on the floor which kept us busy with mop and broom for nearly half an hour.

At last, though, the bath was finished, the various things put away, and less refreshed than when we essayed our scrub, we climbed up a shaky ladder to the loft over the kitchen which had been allotted to us for temporary sleeping quarters.

Our regular bedroom, so Mrs. Corey had apologetically informed me, was to be a ground floor chamber opposite the one occupied by her husband and herself; but this at present was filled with old lumber and trash, and Mr. Corey, she explained, hadn't yet had time to clean it out.

Mr. Corey also, it seems, "hadn't had time" to go down to the village and order a bedstead; but if I could put up for one night with a shakedown on the floor, she herself would assuredly go over to a neighbor's on the morrow, and telephone the furniture man.

I, of course, had assured her that sleeping on the floor was no hardship to me, and that in fact I rather preferred it; but I didn't know then that a knobby corn-husk tick was all that was to intervene between me and the hard boards.

Every time I moved, I seemed to strike more and more protuberances to bore into my anatomy, until at last I gave it up as a bad job, and choosing a level surface as the least of two evils, spread my blanket on the bare floor.

Nor was this all. The weather, as I have said, was sultry, and the small room with its one narrow window was so heated from the fire in the kitchen below, that the temperature was fairly stifling.

A swarm of buzzing, stinging mosquitoes invaded the place, a mouse ran across my face, and a couple of screech owls kept up a dismal hooting just outside the window.

I must confess I didn't sleep well; but Ted seemed to be even more restless than myself. Every time I dropped off for a few minutes to wake and slap at a mosquito, turn a softer side to the boards, or execrate those diabolical owls, I would hear him tossing and turning; and when at last toward morning, having sunk into something more nearly resembling slumber, I roused up to find it broad daylight, he had already dressed and left the room.

Instantly I was filled with vague alarms.

"Evidently the poor chap didn't sleep a

wink," I muttered, reaching for my clothes. "Maybe, he's got so disheartened over the prospect here that he's up to something desperate."

But as I stumbled, half-dressed and apprehensive down the ladder, I was reassured by the sight of him moving blithely about in the kitchen with a big apron tied under his chin.

"Oh, is that you, Weldon?" he exclaimed as he glanced up at me. "You don't look as though you had passed a very restful night. Well, neither did I; but it was chiefly because my mind was too active. And I bet you can't guess over what?"

"Over the situation here?"

"No. Not the way you mean."

"Over your muddle of evasions to Miss Perley yesterday, then?"

Wrong again. No; I was figuring on how to get a decent bathing equipment into this house, and I think I have at last solved the problem."

Before I could question him, however, his mother came out of her door, and paused, astonished, at the sight of us.

"Why, Teddy," she exclaimed, "what are you boys doing up so early?" Then, as her glance wandered over the room: "and you have actually laid the table and lighted the fire for me?"

"Oh, that is not all," crowed her son. "Look."

And he kicked open the oven door to show her a pan of puffy corn muffins turning golden brown, lifted the cover of a spider to reveal some delicately-cut slices of bacon frying to a crisp, and waved under her nose the coffee-pot from whose spout was beginning to issue a delicious aroma.

"Now, you just sit down, ma, and prepare to be waited on, and to eat. I haven't been nosing around that cooking school at Columbia and chinning the girls over there without picking up a few points, you see."

The poor lady sank into a chair and her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, it will be like Heaven to eat a real meal again," she murmured. "I never did have the cook's knack, and since your father's misfortunes have come, he has more than once declared that the food he has to sit down to is practically uneatable. I take the utmost pains, and do the best I know how, but for some reason I don't seem to succeed."

"Well, don't you worry any more," said Ted, deftly dishing up the bacon. "Hereafter I will look after the culinary department.

"And that isn't all the reforms I am going to institute, either," he added. "The fence has to be mended, the roof patched, the yard mowed and the house painted. But first and foremost, as I was telling Weldon, this nuisance of chasing a quarter of a mile to the spring and back has got to be stopped. I intend to install water connections, and put in a bath-room.

She looked at him as though she thought he must have taken leave of his senses.

"A bath-room?" she gasped. "Here? Why, Teddy, I'd as soon expect to witness a miracle."

"All right," he grinned, "wait and see the miracle performed."

CHAPTER X.

THE SPRING ON THE HILLSIDE.

A good lining to one's stomach is a sort of inside overcoat protecting one against the chilling blasts of doubt. The wise promoter always takes the capitalist he is after to luncheon or dinner before he broaches his proposal.

On top of that bang-up breakfast, I was disposed to be much less skeptical of Ted and his projects than I had been when my internal machinery was wrestling with the underdone pork and overdone onions of his mother's supper.

I was still "from Missouri"; but I was in a mood where I was quite willing to move into some more trustful State.

So, when he proposed, after breakfast, that I lend my assistance to the plan he had in mind, I interposed no objections, but followed him rather curiously up the pathway back of the house.

His idea, he explained to me as we went along, had come to him that morning while getting a fresh pail of water from the spring; and he caused me to take especial note of the topography of the ground we passed over.

The path, as he pointed out, led straight up the hill from the house on a slant of, say, fifteen feet to the hundred for about two hundred yards, and then dipped over the summit to enter a narrow, high-walled gully running back into another hill just beyond.

Up this gully was located the spring, and from the mouth of it flowed a sparkling little brook, which just beyond plunged over a high, rocky bank, forming a miniature cascade.

A little below us, and just on the edge of Mr. Corey's property, a steam-shovel was at work, and a great gash showed where a cut

was in progress for the new Pansy Leaf extension.

"Right there," said Ted, pointing to this spot, "would be an excellent place for the road to locate a water-tank. They would have no pumping to do, and no bother of any kind beyond the laying of pipes; for a dam thrown across the mouth of this gully would turn it into a natural reservoir, and gravity would do the rest."

I studied the situation a minute, especially regarding the trickling little stream as it flowed out of the ravine at our feet; then I shook my head.

"Not enough water," I dissented. "One engine would drink up all that you could store in half a day."

"Ah, but you haven't seen it all," he exclaimed impatiently. "Come with me," and he led the way up the steep opposite bank of the gully and through a tangle of underbrush and fallen logs until we reached the farther side of the hill.

Here, it appeared, was an almost similar ravine, but with a larger spring, and a brook of much more respectable dimensions flowing out of it.

"And that is not all," he informed me gleefully. "Around this hill are five springs of greater or lesser size each, as I happen to know, continuous in flow the whole year around.

"It reminds me," he observed, "of a place I've heard of down in West Virginia, where, within a radius of a dozen yards on top of a certain mountain, four big rivers have their source. Each takes a different direction and follows a distinct course for hundreds of miles; but in the end their waters mingle, for all go to swell the volume of the mighty Ohio.

"The fellow who was telling me about it," he went on with a smile, "was wondering if Pittsburgh wouldn't be shut off from navigation in case somebody should turn the springs forming the Allegheny and Monongahela into the one forming the Kanawha.

"That, of course, is ridiculous; but it has given me the inspiration what to do here—divert all these springs into the lower one we first visited. And, don't you see, Weldon, you will have all the head of water in your reservoir that you can possibly use?"

There was no gainsaying his argument. The water was there, and the question of converging the different streams was practically a mere matter of digging a trench.

Moreover, the construction of his reservoir, as he had said, interposed only the slightest of difficulties. The mouth of the gully was so narrow that one could almost leap across it; but it widened out behind, so that a mere apology of a dam would speedily transform it into a broad, deep basin covering an area equal to five or six city blocks.

"This water-tank scheme, however," Ted confided to me, as we returned to our starting point, "is a later idea. What I originally had in mind was merely to furnish a water supply to the house, and that is still the first thing I shall tackle."

"But is it feasible?" I questioned doubtfully, glancing at the high bank ahead over which the path clambered before it struck the slope leading down to the house. "Seems to me, son, you've got a pretty tough engineering nut to crack in order to get the proper fall for your pipes. Indeed, I shouldn't wonder if the spring is on a lower level than the house."

"No; you are wrong," he insisted. "I have only been able to pace off the distances and figure roughly on the elevations; but I am satisfied there is ample leeway. For such a short distance, a fall of twenty or twenty-five feet would be all that is necessary, and I calculate it at nearer thirty."

"Well, be that as it may," I still argued, "there is plenty left to keep you guessing. From the looks of it, I should say that bank over yonder is one chunk of solid granite, and to steam-drill it and blast out a conduit is going to cost considerably more than the job is worth."

"Gee, but you are bright!" and he eyed me sarcastically. "If you spring many of that kind in public, Columbia will be asking for your diploma back. Who in his sober senses would ever dream of blasting a conduit for a little proposition of this sort? Of course, a siphon is the trick to use. You'll find, too, that it will work like a charm."

"Oh," I said, considerably crestfallen at the ease with which he had been able to put it over me.

Nevertheless, a few minutes later I was back on the job, picking flaws and trying to prove him in the wrong. Corey always says that one of the chief reasons he likes me is because I am the original "great objector," and that if any of his schemes pass muster with me, he can be dead sure they are right.

"But, Ted," I now asked, when he had finally disposed satisfactorily of all the engineering criticisms I had to offer, "how are you going to manage about the expense? Pipes and siphons and all that sort of paraphernalia are not to be got for the asking, and neither do they grow on trees."

"Ah, old spoil-sport," he laughed, "I was waiting for that one. What else, do you suppose put the idea of the water-tank for the railroad in my head? I calculate on having the Pansy Leaf pay for my bath-room all right, and I am going to sit right down this morning and write a letter taking up the matter with the division engineer.

"The only dickens of it all," he added ruefully, "is that, with official red-tape and the usual delay in such matters, it'll probably be Christmas before I find myself in the tub."

CHAPTER XI.

TED'S AUTOMOBILE.

As a matter of fact, Ted didn't have to wait for the decision of the division engineer; and this, more as a result of his own impetuous eagerness, coupled with a touch of luck, than from any other cause.

An idea, once in his brain, kept seething and simmering and popping out in all sorts of unexpected directions, like a handful of corn in a skillet; so it was no especial surprise to me, when I had dropped to sleep in a blanket out in the side yard after dinner, trying to make up for my wakeful night, to find him suddenly shaking me by the shoulder.

"Weldon, I want to speak with you about that dam," he said.

"Oh, dam!" I muttered, but with quite a different meaning.

"Yes, the dam," he repeated, too full of his own purpose to heed my drowsy maledictions. "It has just struck me that, in order to make a successful dicker with the division engineer when he comes, we must be able to show him that we've got all the water he needs. He isn't going to waste time trapesing to all those five different springs and figuring on the capacity of each. He'll just look at the first one, and when he sees only that thin trickle of water coming out, he'll shake his head and say: 'Nixi.'

"In other words," Ted went on, "I must have my reservoir completed before he arrives, and consequently the dam must be built at once."

"All right," I responded, burrowing deeper into my pillow. "Go ahead and build it; but don't come around and wake me up every time some wheel in your head starts a new revolution."

My eyes were closed, but I could feel the look of reproach he cast on me for my somnolent lack of interest.

A moment longer I dallied with the temptation of my slothful yearnings; then sat up somewhat crossly and opened my lids.

"Oh, well," I snapped, "now that you've done the *Macbeth* act and murdered sleep, I suppose you might as well let me have the whole story. How is this dam to be built, that it can't wait until I have finished a half-hour nap? Some new and wonderful invention, is it, which will make the Ashokan engineers take to the tall timbers?"

"No," he returned, passing over the ungracious tone of my compliance, as was his way when he had some more important object in view than mere squabbling. "No: nothing newer or more wonderful than good, old elbow-grease. We can do the work ourselves, Weldon, if you have got the sand to help me."

"It will take more than elbow-grease and sand," I grumbled: "yes, and more than earth and stones, too. You will need to have proper materials for a dam to hold back that weight of water. By rights, it should have a foundation and wings of solid concrete."

"Exactly," he cried triumphantly. "And what do you think? I've just discovered a lot of Portland cement back in the barn. Dad bought it once for the Bow-Wow and, having no immediate use for it, stored it up here and forgot about it."

This revelation materially changed the complexion of things, for I didn't need him to tell me that there was an ample supply of gravel to form our concrete in the bed of the gully.

In fact, so far as I could see, there was no longer any reason why we two should not, as Ted had suggested, build a thoroughly strong and durable dam.

"When do you want to begin?" I questioned.

"Right now, unless," he smiled, "you want to finish that nap you were so crazy about."

"No; I'm ready whenever you are. We'll postpone the sleep job until a more convenient season."

Accordingly, we spent the remainder of the afternoon rolling those heavy barrels of cement up over the brow of the hill and down to the mouth of the gully, and in getting everything ready for our operations. And so tuckered out was I by my strenuous and unaccustomed exercise that, when I had downed the excellent supper Ted knocked off a half-hour earlier to prepare, and had stretched myself out on my corn-husks, neither mosquitoes nor screech-owls nor anything else had power to disturb me.

I verily believe that had a cannon been

fired in our room that night, neither Ted nor I would have stirred.

Nevertheless, we were up bright and early the next morning, feeling like a couple of two-year-olds and, breakfast once despatched, we lost no time in getting back to the work.

For three days we worked like beavers, excavating down to bed-rock for our foundation, filling in the frames at sides and bottom with concrete, and then erecting a crisscross of logs and earth, the whole bulwarked with a rip-rap of boulders and solid masonry; and by sunset of the third day we had the satisfaction of seeing our dam completed, eighteen feet high, properly proportioned in every particular, strong and substantial as the granite walls of the gully clasping it on either side.

We stood on the bank watching the water rapidly fill up the basin behind it; for our trenches had been already dug, and it required but the knocking away of a few obstructions to turn the streams from our five springs into the single pool.

"Well," said I, "there is the first step toward your bath-room, Ted."

"Yes, and I'm afraid the last step, too, for some time," he returned moodily, for he was worried at having received no answer from his letter to the division engineer. "I guess, old man, we'll have to be content with nothing more than a swimming-pool for the present."

As he finished, another voice behind us boomed out with an "Hallo! What's this?" so abruptly, that we both gave a start, which came near precipitating us off the bank.

Turning, I saw a stout, red-faced man gazing with astonishment at our achievement. We had both been too engrossed in watching the inflow of the water to note his approach through the woods along the right of the ravine.

Ted at once recognized him, however, and introduced him to me as Mr. Dartle, a wealthy neighbor, the owner of the large stock-farm just across the line of the new railway from the Corey place and farther down the slope.

"Mr. Dartle is one of the most noted breeders of fancy cattle in the country," vouchsafed Ted politely.

But Mr. Dartle was too eaten up with curiosity to waste much time on the amenities.

"What you fellers tryin' to do here?" he demanded, his eyes and mouth still agape at the transformation we had effected. "Why in Sam Hill should you be dammin' up this old gully?"

Ted explained that it was to furnish a water supply for the house, and went into details showing how he expected to transport the flow.

"Well, say, that's pretty cute now," admitted Mr. Dartle. "But why in Sam Hill did you want to make such a big reservoy fur? You'll have water there enough to float a battleship."

"Oh, we thought, while we were about it, we might build one of decent size," answered Ted carelessly.

It was evident that he didn't intend to give away all his plans.

"Jes' so," the stock-breeder nodded. "Dunno but you're wise, too. A body never knows jes' what is goin' to turn up."

He stood a few moments longer watching with us the pool fill; then, struck apparently by a sudden thought, he turned again to Ted.

"Say," he proposed, "why can't I git in on this here water-hole of your'n? I spent seven hundred dollars pipin' that spring on my place to my barns; but the pesky thing dries up every summer, and we have to be haulin' water over half the time."

"Get in on it?" hesitated Ted. I could see how he was struggling not to appear too anxious. "Why, I guess that would be all O.K."

"All right," assented Dartle, "if the charge ain't too high. What you goin' to tax me fur this here priviledge?"

"Let's see. You've got about a half-mile of piping in over there, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Dartle? That ought to be sufficient for both our needs without having to buy any new. Say, then, that you furnish me with all the pipe I require, and a couple of your hands to lay it, and I guess we can call your water-bill square.

"Or stop," he interrupted himself with a sudden reflection. "Haven't you also got an automobile, Mr. Dartle, that you bought and never use?"

"Yes; but don't think that's goin' to be thrown into the bargain, son I've found that a hoss suits me better'n one of them durned rattle-traps; but jest the same I ain't givin' it away."

"Oh, I never dreamed of asking that," Ted assured him. "I only thought that, so long as you are not using it, you might be willing to let me have the loan of it for the summer."

When the bargain was thus completed, and Dartle had moved on, I turned eagerly to my companion.

"Will you kindly tell me what ever got

you to propose such terms as those?" I asked. "I can understand the pipe part of it; but why in Sam Hill, as Dartle says, did you strike him for the loan of his automobile instead of a cash consideration?"

"Oh, that's easy," he laughed. "In the first place, the old fellow is as close as the bark on a tree, and he would have squealed murder at the thought of giving up actual hard cash. But there was another reason why I especially wanted his motor," he admitted.

"And what was that?"

"In order that I might make good my invitations to Nellie Perley."

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW OUTLOOK.

THE automobile from Dartle came over next morning at just about the same time the rural mail delivery brought an answer from the division engineer stating that he would be up that day to examine into the proposition which Mr. Corey had so kindly submitted to him.

"Gee, but it's lucky, I happened to remember old Dartle had this thing," cried Ted exultantly, as he patted the side of the car. "Now, I can receive his 'Nibs' in proper style when he comes; for, let me tell you, a bit of front goes a long way with some of these guys. Weldon, I am afraid you will have to act as my chauffeur to-day, and address me as Mr. Corey, whenever you speak to me."

Well, I couldn't see much sense in that; but I was game all right, so I dug into my trunk for a motor-coat and cap I had, stuck on a pair of goggles, and tried to look like the real article for all I was worth.

And, say, do you know, our darned tomfoolery proved to be a winner; for Crosby, the division engineer has since confessed to me that he came up there under the impression that he was going to meet the old bankrupt builder of the Bow-Wow, and that if there was anything in the proposition, he could close a deal for little or nothing.

When he stepped off the train, though, and was hustled to a waiting motor-car by a shrewd-looking, well-dressed chap who evidently was in no pressing need of money, from the fact that he employed a chauffeur, Crosby says that he immediately made up his mind that the railroad would have to pay.

They were hard put to it for a water-tank along that section, it seems, except at considerable expense, and Ted's offer coming to them like a godsend, the engineer's instructions were to clinch it without fail, but of course at as low a figure as possible.

Fifty or a hundred dollars for a perpetual contract, Crosby tells me, was the price he expected to pay.

I laugh still, when I remember how his eyes were almost popping out of his head, as Ted ushered him into the car, and taking a seat beside him in the rear gave me a curt:

"Out to the reservoir, Samuel."

"Pardon me, Mr. Corey," stammered Crosby; "but I will have to admit I am surprised. I had expected to meet an entirely different man in this matter, the late owner of the B., O. and W., in fact. His name, too, is Edmund K., you know."

"Yes," Ted smiled his stereotyped answer, "but you see this neighborhood is full of Coreys.

Then, to get off the subject, the rascal began to descant on me in a supposed undertone, but every word of which reached my ear.

"I pay him a big salary," he said with the air of a millionaire, "and also overlook a good deal of petty grafting that he does; for the fellow has been with me a long time, and I believe is really attached to me."

He also took occasion to remark as we passed a fine estate just outside the town that he was seriously thinking of buying it.

"Yes," said I to myself; "and so am I 'thinking' of running for President, but that is about all it will ever amount to."

However, Crosby was duly impressed by all this fol-de-rol, and every minute kept notching up on his figures, which after all was the main object to be attained.

By road, the nearest point to the resrvoir that we could reach was some distance up the hill back of Corey's house; so it happened, that alighting from the car, we approached the gully from above, and could see nothing of it or of our construction work until we were directly on the bank.

If we could not see, we could hear, however, and as we drew nearer, the sound of angry, frightened voices come up to us through the woods, mingled with a strange, ever-increasing roar.

Involuntarily, we all three started to running; but as we plunged through the underbrush, and came out on the edge of the ravine, we paused short, stricken with amazement.

Below us, the basin, brimful, was pouring out its overflow over the top of the dam, turn-

ing the miniature cascade just below into a foaming Niagara which flooded the cut where the railroad's steam-shovel was at work, and was even encroaching on Dartle's land upon the further side.

Beside the dam, stood a party of the steam-shovelers, Dartle, and a group of his men, all loudly disputing among themselves as to the cause of the phenomenon, and the best method whereby to put a stop to it.

The real trouble was that in our desire to show the division engineer an ample head of water, Ted and I had closed the safety gate that morning, never realizing how quickly the basin would fill.

But now as we saw the devastation which was being caused by our thoughtlessness, we sprang down the slope with one accord, and began tugging with all our strength at the heavy winch.

Slowly it yielded, the water began to come through more and more as the aperture widened; and then the gate fully opened, the imprisoned flood slowly receded from the top of the dam, and poured itself a rushing but harmless torrent down the runway.

"By Jove," exclaimed Crosby, a far-away look in his eyes as he glanced along the line of the railroad in course of construction, "there is certainly enough water power here to—"

Then, as he saw our questioning glances bent upon him, he halted in unmistakable confusion.

"Ah, Mr. Corey," he said in a totally different voice; "let me congratulate you on your dam. It must have been splendidly built to withstand all that pressure."

But Ted wasn't to be turned aside by a bit of taffy, no matter how judiciously administered.

I could see he was doing some pretty rapid thinking for the next few minutes, and presently while Crosby was taking some additional measurements, he drew me aside and whispered excitedly in my ear:

"I've figured out what he was going to say, and I know now how to bring Perley and the Pansy Leaf to time."

"Eh?" I gasped.

"Yes, sir, it is plain as the nose on your face. The thought struck him that here was sufficient water power to allow the use of electricity on this division, and he started to speak his idea aloud. Just think of the tremendous saving to be effected, if the trains were to be jerked over this extension by a water-power-generated current, instead of by steam. I'll bet you what you dare, that's what he will recommend just as soon as he gets back to headquarters.

"But the Pansy Leaf'll not get it without paying," he added emphatically. "They'll find themselves bidding for the plum against their old rival, the D., N. and Q."

"The D., N. and Q.?"

"Certainly. Don't you think the D., N. and Q. would be tickled to death to parallel this extension of the Pansy Leaf and thereby knock out all the advantage the latter expects to gain from the cut-off?"

"Possibly," I admitted; "but the thing is impossible. As I understand it, there is only one possible right-of-way through Berkley gap."

"Ah, but don't you see my little dam settles that question, too, and knocks all of Jabez Perley's vaunted shrewdness and sagacity into a cocked hat. For a steam road, the right-of-way through the gap is a necessity; but an electric road, able to take stiffer grades, can go up over the hills. It is a life and death question in fact for the Pansy Leaf; for an electrified parallel line of the D., N. and Q. would simply send them to the scrap-heap.

"But whoever gets it will have to pay," he repeated. "They will have to pay dearly."

CHAPTER XIII.

A FRANCHISE WHILE YOU WAIT.

TED'S glowing visions of future profits did not, however, obscure his eyesight in regard to the lesser transaction at hand.

He drove a stiff bargain—a very stiff bargain—with Crosby, securing not only a high annual rental for a stipulated number of gallons of water, but also an immediate cash bonus, which he elatedly whispered to me would a good deal more than cover the cost of the bath-tub and plumbing.

"I suppose," remarked Crosby carelessly as he drew up the contract, "that we might as well insert a clause providing that whatever additional water the road may need for any purpose it shall have at the same rate. Not that it cuts any figure in this case, of course, but they like at headquarters to have those little safeguards put in."

"Just so," returned Ted dryly; "but I also have a prejudice concerning such 'little safeguards,' and I guess, if you please, we will leave the clause you mention out."

He also gave the division engineer a shock when it came time to sign up; for the latter

then first discovered that he had been dealing throughout with a representative of "old Bow-Wow" Corey, Ted having secured from his father legal authority to close the transaction on whatever terms he saw fit.

"I thought you said you were no relative of his," flared up the railroad man angrily.

"Oh, no. I merely told you there were plenty of Coreys in the neighborhood, and that is the literal truth."

Nor was this the last time that poor Crosby was destined to suffer chagrin; for when he hastened to headquarters to report the astounding discovery he had made out in the Berkley hills, he found himself forestalled by a letter from Ted, giving the full details, and intimating pretty plainly that unless the Pansy Leaf came down handsomely for the water power, the D., N. and Q. probably would, a similar notification having been sent to them.

The sensation which those two missives created in certain Wall Street offices, and the results which arose from them are matters to receive attention a little further along and therefore shall not be touched on here.

To return to the thread of my story, we saw Crosby off on the train, drove from there to the plumber's to order the bath-room equipment, and then Ted, sort of bracing himself as though about to dive into cold water, announced:

"And now that business is over, let us attend to pleasure. I am going around to take Miss Perley on one of those motor rides I promised her."

He had been bold as brass up to this time, standing up for his rights with Crosby, and carrying things off with a high hand; but now he turned nervous and fidgety as a cat. The color came and went in his face, his hands trembled, and he drove the car at a funereal pace, taking the longest way he could figure out to reach the Perleys' house.

I actually believe he would have funked going altogether, if he hadn't been ashamed to weaken before me. It was his obstinacy kept him up to doing what he said he would.

As he stood waiting at the door, after he had rung the bell, he was the most perfect picture of a condemned criminal on the way to execution that I have ever beheld.

But five seconds later you should have seen the transformation scene. Nell came out all smiles, and Ted was transformed.

Evidently she hadn't dropped to his duplicity yet; for she was as gay and gracious as she had been either that day on the campus or during the trip out from New York.

In the sunshine of her favor, his spirits revived; and he bore the scolding she gave him for not showing up before, with the look of a cat lapping down cream.

At first she declared that just to punish him she would not go out in his old motor car; but finally consented for the sake of a girl chum who was visiting her, and who she said would be down in a minute.

The latter, she insisted, we would both fall in love with the minute we saw; and although her prediction was not fully verified, I must confess that it came a good half way to being true.

This is not my story; but possibly I may be pardoned for intruding a personal note, and stating that the young lady to whom I was then introduced, has long since become my wife.

Such being the upshot of the occurrence, it may well be imagined that the four of us had a delightful time together that afternoon.

On our return, Mrs. Corey urged Ted and myself so hospitably to stay for supper that we could not well refuse, and it was consequently eight o'clock or a little after when we again boarded the motor and started for the farm.

As we sped along the main street, I saw a throng gathered about the town hall and people passing in and out.

"Hallo," I questioned. "What's up?"

For I had heard of no public entertainment in prospect.

Ted glanced indifferently at the crowd. "Meeting of the Board of Aldermen, I guess," he answered.

Then a sudden thought striking him, he ground down on the brake, and brought the machine to a halt with a jerk.

"Suppose we attend, Weldon?" he suggested. "I have an idea it may be worth our while."

When we came out again, we had in our pockets, signed, sealed, and in legal form, fifty year franchises to supply the town of Berkley with water-works, and also with electric light and power.

The aldermen had treated the affair as a huge joke, but Ted got what he wanted.

"Let them laugh," whispered Ted to me, "He laughs best who laughs last."

CHAPTER XIV.

PA COREY'S BARGAIN.

For the explanation of Ted's purpose in those franchises, I had not long to wait.

"Weldon," he said, as we spun luxuriously along the road which less than a week before we had tramped with heavy hearts, "this water-power is going to be a bigger thing than either of us have had any idea. Why, it opens up new vistas of wealth and power to my mind almost every minute."

"How so?" I asked.

"Why, don't you see? With that sheer fall just below the mouth of the gully, and the ability to increase our head of water to a much greater extent, we can supply almost unlimited power. What will be the result? Industries will cluster there.

"First, the railroad power-houses; then, mills and factories, and shops of all kinds. Their employees will have to be housed and supplied with the necessities of life. First thing we know, we shall have a city springing up. Then our water and light franchises will be worth having.

"I know one thing," he added emphatically, "I would not sell that worthless old farm of ours just now, if I was offered six times its market value.

"Have you got any money?" He turned to me in his impulsive way. "If you have, I'd advise you to invest it in six months options on land out in that vicinity, and make your eternal fortune."

"Oh, I haven't enough to do anything with," I deprecated. "My uncle left me a legacy some years ago; but I used a good part of it on my education. What remains, all told, doesn't amount to $1,200."

"Twelve hundred dollars!" He opened his eyes. "Good land, man, you can buy an option on half of Florida County with $1,200.

I didn't know whether I was a fool or not; but the next morning I drew on the bank at home for my hoarded nest-egg, and sank every penny of it in taking options on that bleak and barren mountain side.

The next few days after the excitement we had been through seemed rather uneventful. We found some interest in watching the plumbers turn into a bath-room the little loft we had used as a sleeping chamber the night of our arrival; for the promised bedstead had now arrived, and we were duly installed in the room down-stairs.

The rest of the time we put in at various chores, and in bringing about much needed improvements on the premises. The fence was now mended, the yard mowed, the roof re-shingled, a girl hired to relieve Ted and his mother of the cooking and other work, and orders even given for the painting of the house and the erection of a front veranda.

All this had been accomplished, either by the labor of us two youngsters, or else with the bonus-money received from the railroad; yet Mr. Corey appeared far from pleased.

He had tried to get his son to turn over to him the payment made on the water-tank deal; but Ted firmly declined.

Now the old man grouched and sniffed around all day about the sinful waste of all that good cash which could have been invested to advantage by a shrewd, business man like himself.

He seemed quite to forget that the windfall was entirely due to his son's enterprise and ingenuity, and talked about Ted as though he were some crook who by fraud and chicanery had swindled him out of his rightful dues.

No one paid much heed to the old fellow's grumblings, though. As for Ted and myself, we had troubles of our own; for we were beginning to grow concerned over the failure of either of the railroads to pay the slightest heed to his letters.

Were all our rainbow hopes built on false premises? Were we mistaken in the meaning we had credited to Crosby's interrupted sentence? We could not believe it, and yet this continued silence certainly appeared ominous.

The only surcease we could find from our gnawing apprehensions was in the society of Nellie Perley and her chum, and we sought it with more and more regularity.

Nearly every afternoon, in fact, we were at Nellie's house, or else out with the two in the motor, and at such times I guess we both forgot that there were such things as rival railroads, and water-power going to waste, and options drawing nearer expiration every day.

Yet there, too, I'd wake up every now and again to a twinge of apprehension as might some fellow living at the foot of a volcano. Not that I personally was in danger of the eruption, but I didn't well see how Ted could possibly escape and I understood better now what it might mean to lose one's girl.

And if I was perturbed on his account, imagine how he must have felt himself with that sort of danger constantly hanging over him. He has since told me that he started out time and again with the intention of 'fessing up, only to weaken and hold back when actually in her presence.

Oh, his rule of divine justice worked to a T in this case. He got paid back for those fibs of his with compound interest.

How Nellie had failed for so long to learn the truth in a gossiping little place like Berkley, I couldn't figure out anyhow; but at length concluded that it must be because she associated chiefly with the "summer people," and had few acquaintances among the native folk.

Still I knew that almost any day some chance remark or unforeseen incident would open her eyes and provoke the cataclysm. I knew it, and Ted knew it, too.

And, by Jove, I thought the time had come, when one afternoon about two weeks later as the four of us were sitting on Perley's porch, I suddenly glanced up and saw old Jabez turning in at the gate.

We had never happened to run into him before on our visits to the house; for he had come to Berkley but infrequently that summer, and indeed for the last three weeks had remained steadily in New York.

He was here now, though, without mistake, and, to my mind, his arrival made the exposure of Ted's silly deceptions certain.

He knew who the boy was, remember; for he could hardly have forgotten that introduction as he sat waiting in his automobile on Class Day.

Moreover, although he might have paid no heed when hearing his daughter speak of her acquaintance with a "Mr. Corey," it was hardly likely that he would fail to mention the relationship to "old Bow-Wow," when he thus saw the boy with his own eyes.

No, I felt that Ted was cornered, and I am sure that he felt so, too.

He paled slightly, and involuntarily braced himself as though for a shock, as he saw the railroad president's eyes light on him with a quick gleam of recognition, followed by a sudden grim tightening of the lips.

The hostile expression faded from his face, however, and a warm, gracious smile took its place; for Perley, when he wanted could be as conciliatory as oil.

Merely nodding to the rest of us, he stepped toward Ted, and held out his hand.

"Young Mr. Corey, I believe," he said affably. "If I am not mistaken, I had the pleasure of meeting you in New York?"

I have always put it down to my chum's credit that he didn't make an abject and gibbering fool of himself at this point. True, he was so taken aback for a second, that he reeled groggily, and grasped at the arm of his chair; but he quickly caught hold of himself and came back with an assent like a Chesterfield.

"Well, Mr. Corey," said the other, "this is a rather informal way to talk business; but my time is limited and meeting you here saves me the trouble of hunting you up as I had expected to do.

"To be brief, sir, and come to the point without delay. I am instructed by the directors of the Pansy Leaf to inform you that we are ready to accept your proposition in regard to water-power, and accede to your rather onerous terms."

He hesitated a moment, then added: "You may have resented somewhat our seeming indifference in this matter and our failure to communicate with you; but I assure you that our attention has been so engaged with—er—other matters, that it was only yesterday we could take up your proposal with a view to reaching a decision."

What those "other matters" which had engaged their attention were, he did not take the trouble to state; but we know now that it was a Kilkenny cat fight between themselves and the D., N. and Q. provoked by Ted's duplicate letters to their respective chiefs.

According to the way of railroads, neither system was willing to buy what they wanted from an outsider. Instead, each determined to wipe the other off the face of the earth, and then having no competitor, purchase the water-power for a song.

The echoes of that memorable battle on the stock exchange did not reach us in our seclusion; but it must have been furious.

At the end of two weeks, though, it was still a draw; and Perley concluding that maybe discretion was the better part of valor, had persuaded his associates to pull off, and try what was really the less expensive tack.

They were all ready enough to quit the disastrous campaign against the D., N. and Q.; but some of them still urged that a way be sought to thimblerig Ted.

Old Jabez, however, had had a report from Crosby on the water-tank deal, and told them plainly that there was no use in wasting time. They simply had to meet the terms proposed, and the sooner and more graciously they did it the better.

So, now at last, Ted Corey's boast was made good, and the Pansy Leaf was about to pay the debt it owed on the despised Bow-Wow.

"I have full authority," announced Perley to Ted," and shall be prepared to close with you, as soon as I have inspected your reservoir and plant, and am satisfied that everything is as represented."

Of course, agents for both lines had made a thorough examination long before, and he knew that the proposition was all right; but it would never have done for him to miss taking a squint at the dam himself and poking a stick into the reservoir to measure its depth. Gosh, how much of a bluff there is in business after all!

I will say for Perley, however, that he made no pretense at lofty indifference as so many men in his position would have done. He was ready and eager to go out to the place at once; and frankly said so.

We persuaded him, though, to defer his visit for a couple of hours; for we wanted our undertaking to look its best for him, and to accomplish this it was necessary to shut down the water-gate.

"All right," he smiled, when we had explained our reasons, "I will wait then as you say. Nell and I will take a run out there about six o'clock, eh, daughter?"

How we raced that car of Dartle's out to the farm! How our hearts thrilled with triumph on the way! How we shouted, and cheered and laughed and slapped one another on the back once we were clear of the town

And then as we spun the machine up into the yard, and sprang out, Mrs. Corey, her face radiant, came running to the door to meet us.

How it could have happened, I didn't know, but I surely judged from her expression that she must have heard the good news.

"Oh, Teddy, Teddy," she exclaimed, "what do you think? Father has sold this worthless old farm!"

"Sold the farm?" gasped Ted.

"Yes," she replied proudly; "and at a splendid price, too. He gets fifteen hundred dollars!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

WELL, say, maybe those D., N. & Q. people hadn't been smart? While Perley and his associates on the Pansy Leaf were preparing to pay Ted a fortune for the coveted water-power, the other gang had got next to the old man and scooped in the farm, springs and all, for a beggarly pittance.

Ted saw it all in a flash, and staggered back, white-faced and practically "all in," against the wheel of the automobile.

"Yes," his mother ran on, so happy that she failed to notice his agitation, "isn't it glorious? The money is all counted out on the table, a great pile of twenty-dollar bills; and your father—"

She was interrupted by the old man's querulous voice from within as he impatiently called, "Mary! Mary!"

"Ah"—she turned toward the door—"I guess they must be waiting for me to sign now."

"Waiting for you to sign!" Ted revived like a man charged with oxygen.

Across the yard he went like an unchained whirlwind, sprang up the steps at a single bound, and dashed after his mother into the room.

She had just seated herself at the table, and was dipping her pen into the ink.

Snatching the pen from her surprised grasp, he flung it across the room; then turned to face his father and the smug representativve of the D., N. & Q., both of whom had risen angrily from their chairs and stood glaring at him.

"Why, what do you mean, Teddy?" quavered his mother.

"Mean?" Ted roared. "I mean that you are not going to sign that swindling deed if I can prevent it."

"Swindling deed?" blustered the supposititious purchaser. "You don't know what you are talking about, young man. At fifteen hundred dollars I am offering really much more than the place is worth."

"Here, that'll do for you." Ted turned on him. "I know just what you want, and whom you represent. Never think that you'll get for fifteen hundred what is nearer worth fifteen millions. You can understand right now that the Pansy Leaf and I have come to terms; so, since your deed without my mother's signature is worthless, you can take it, and this"—he swept up the pile of bank-notes with a contemptuous gesture—"and clear out.

"Or perhaps," he added grimly, as the other seemed to hesitate, "you would prefer to have me kick you off the place?"

The man cast one glance at Ted's face, quivering with righteous indignation, measured his stalwart frame; then, quickly gathering up the rejected bunch of twenties, beat it for the door.

Old man Corey, however, was less easy to subdue. He got it into his head that Ted had killed off a profitable deal for the sake of some mere visionary project, and, refusing to listen to any explanations, raved and stamped around the room, until finally in his angry disappointment he stormed out of the house and off up into the woods.

Neither did the mother seem able to get through her head what was up.

"What does it all mean, Teddy?" she kept repeating. "Why wouldn't you let me sign?"

"I haven't time to tell you now, ma," he finally exclaimed in desperation at the seeming impossibility of making her understand. "Only know that everything is all right, and that prosperity is here—a richer prosperity than we have ever known.

"Come on, Weldon," he added, turning to me. "That water-gate has got to be closed, for Perley will be out now almost before we know it."

However, the magnate did not arrive too soon; for the springs responded nobly to our call, and by the time he appeared the basin stood brimful.

He expressed himself, too, as fully satisfied, and announced to Ted that he would be ready to close their deal and pay over the cash as soon as the papers could be prepared on the morrow.

Just before he and Nell were ready to leave, the whole party of us walked out on the dam, and the father and daughter watched while Ted and I operated the gate to let out the confined flood.

As they stood there, Nell suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, what is that?"

Following the direction of her pointed finger, we saw down by the concrete base of the dam on the further side a sputtering, hissing thing, like a serpent of tiny sparks—unmistakably a lighted fuse.

For a moment we three men stood, paralyzed with horror. We could see it was just about burned up, and there was no possibility with the intervening distance to reach it in time.

Another second, and there would undoubtedly come a terrific explosion which would blow us all to smithereens.

But at that instant, with a wild shout, a disheveled, gray-haired figure dashed down that side of the gulley, pounced on the spluttering bomb, and, straightening up, hurled it far out over the cliff beyond, where it went off with a deafening report, but harmlessly, in the bed of the stream.

The savior who appeared so opportunely was old man Corey. Lying back in the woods nursing his grievance, he had chanced to overhear two rough-looking men talking of how they had arranged to dynamite the dam.

He gathered that their bomb was already planted, and set to go off at six o'clock; but, fearful that if they discovered him they would prevent his coming to the rescue, he had to creep very cautiously and silently from his covert and make a long détour through the woods in order to reach his destination.

And, as it was, he arrived, as previously related, not a moment too soon.

"Ah," cried Ted with sparkling eyes, as he pointed to the statuesque old figure with arm still upraised, "that is the 'old visionary of the mountains' and my father! Haven't I a right to be proud of him? In the slang of the day, he's 'made good!'"

He thought he was making a great revelation; but, as a matter of fact, Nell had discovered the fact long before, but kept her own counsel.

Nor, much as she hated deceit, did she blame Ted for his evasions, she has since told me.

"No wonder," she says excusingly, "he didn't want to start out in life, or pay court to me, stamped with the handicap of his father's failures."

I guess with her, as with most other women, there is one law for the "one man," and another for all the rest.

Well, there is little more of my story left to tell. We have never found out who attempted to perpetrate the outrage at the dam, although we have some pretty well-defined suspicions. Far be it from me to ascribe any such despicable act to the estimable directors of the D., N. & Q.; but I can understand how a railroad corporation might give their representative to understand that if he was outbid in the deal, a move of the sort would seriously discommode and harass their successful rivals.

However, there is no danger of any recurrence of that sort of thing, for the dam is now almost as carefully guarded as the crown jewels of England.

I may also state that, according to his promise, Mr. Perley the next morning duly ratified his agreement with the Coreys, father and son, and the Pansy Leaf was once more saved.

"Is there anything else I've got you want?" Jabez joked Ted after the papers were signed. "You've overlooked my watch and scarf-pin."

"No, you may keep those," said Ted, bold as brass; "but I guess there is one more demand I will have to make of you."

"And what is that?"

"Your daughter."

Jabez studied him for a full minute with his searching gaze.

"What has she got to say about it?" he asked at length.

"Oh, I am under promise not to ask her for thirty days; but I guess it will be all right. She understands that I can't speak yet; but we have talked a good deal about what we expect to do after everything is arranged and we are married."

Well, after that, what could I do but release him from his pledge?

THE END.

Why He Got the Automobile.

BY FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

How Chance Mishap Suggested a Look into the Mouth of the Gift-Horse.

MILLER roused up from the doze into which he had fallen and, gripping afresh the pipe that had long since grown cold, stared down the road toward where he could hear the noise of an approaching automobile.

The old storekeeper did not realize the picture he made as he sat there on the narrow stoop, with the fitting background of a plow, a roll of barbed-wire fencing, and the fertilizer signs tacked on the building; but the driver of the automobile evidently did, for he smiled slightly to himself as he pulled up before the place.

After shooting a quick glance at the weather-beaten sign, he asked: "Is Mr. Miller about?"

"Guess he might be," the old man replied, with no apparent interest in the arrival of the newcomer—he had already decided that he was an agent for some patent-medicine, and as he was well-stocked up with pain-killers, "good alike for man or beast," he felt that he had no use for the salesman's goods.

"I'd like to see him," the other went on, and, stepping from the car, he advanced to the steps of the porch. "Can I do so?"

"Guess ye kin, if yer eyes is in good shape," the storekeeper chuckled—there was something in this man's deference that tickled his vanity.

"Oh, are you Mr. Miller?"

"Was up to yesterday, an' ain't heard of no one makin' application to change it since."

"Then you're the man I want to see."

The stranger hurried lightly up the steps and, as he stood before the old man, he added: "I've come all the way from New York to see you, so that we could have a little conversation."

This statement did not tend to decrease the storekeeper's idea that the fellow had something to dispose of. In fact, it increased it, and he queried bluntly: "Wal, wot ye got to sell?"

"Sell?" The man laughed lightly. "I've nothing to sell. That isn't my mission."

"No?" Miller remarked with a rising inflection.

The other had already pulled the roll of barbed wire over beside the storekeeper.

"No—just to the contrary. You see—"

But the sentence was not completed just then. The man had seated himself upon one of the sharp points of the roll, and his sudden rise in the world brought forth the exclamation "Ouch!" and also the necessary information that "These points are blamed sharp."

"Just like the people here'bouts." As Miller spoke, there was a gleam of suspicion in his eyes.

"And that's what we've all got to be nowadays," the stranger agreed, as he tipped the roll over and seated himself on the wooden reel.

Then, with a sudden look of interest, he glanced up into the storekeeper's face as he added: "Mr. Miller, my name is Williams, and I'm a special agent for the Elting Motor Car Company, who are manufacturing the very best cheap car upon the market to-day."

"They be?" the old man remarked in a most disinterested tone.

"Yes. The car they are making is the very one that all the manufacturers in the country have been working on for years, and upon which thousands and thousands of dollars have been spent. But we've beaten them all out. We've got the goods, and I tell you it's a pleasure and a satisfaction to know that."

The man paused a moment, but Miller's face was as expressionless as so much molded clay. Plainly, the wondrous success of the Elting Motor Car Company aroused no great enthusiasm within the breast of this old resident of the hills.

"Ever ride in an automobile?" Williams queried of a sudden.

"Who? Me?" the old man asked quickly, and in his voice there was a plainly apparent alarm.

"They're great," the other assured him. "Just the very thing to get over these hills. With one of them—"

"Look here, young man," Miller broke in. "I thought you said you wasn't tryin' to sell nothin'."

"Why—I'm not," Williams asserted. "I—"

"Ain't you fishin' 'bout, tryin' to sell me one of them consarned things?" The storekeeper pointed a long, bony finger contemptuously at the brightly-painted car before them.

"*Sell* one!" the other laughed.

Then he faced the old man, and his voice dropped to one of confidence as he said: "Mr. Miller, I told you I'm not here to sell you anything, and I'm not. My errand here is to *give* you something, and, if you'll take it, I'll make you a present of that little machine there, and I tell you honestly, no one can buy a more serviceable car at any price."

For a moment the old man didn't speak—he only stared incredulously at the other.

"I mean it," Williams continued. "My company sent me up here to see you, and try to get you to accept that car with their compliments."

A look of suspicion swept over Miller's weather-scarred face.

"Folks ain't givin' things away for nothin' nowadays," he maintained.

"Indeed they're not," Williams agreed, much to the other's surprise. "And my company is no exception to the rule. But we've figured it all out, and we consider it the very best kind of advertising."

"Wal, I'm listenin'," Miller announced rather curtly, when the other paused an instant.

Williams's tone of confidence appeared again as he began: "It's this way, Mr. Miller. The automobile manufacturers all over the country are advertisement-mad. Why, some of the companies spend fifty thousand dollars a year for advertising alone."

"It don't seem possible." The storekeeper's face showed that he was visibly impressed.

"Now, here's where we come in," Williams went on. "We've figured the whole thing out, and we've got a great scheme. It's an assured fact that one car sells others, and, working upon this theory, we've decided to give away—present to the leading man of a district—a car absolutely free, and appoint him our agent for his territory. We are giving away one thousand cars this way, and even the cost of them isn't as much as we spent last year for advertising. So, you see, if each one of these cars sells five others, and each one of those five sells an equal number, you can readily realize how we can make the generous proposition which we know will repay us many times."

The old man knocked the ashes from his pipe and, as he filled it again, he said thoughtfully: "Wal, now, sence you put it thet way, it do seem a good thing fer you."

"And for you, too," the other laughed. "In fact, it's a case of profit for all hands, if you'll accept that car."

The storekeeper's eyes followed the other's finger, but his mind was centered upon the fact that his possession of an automobile would raise him far above his neighbors. He thought of how Cephus Buckley, the only owner of a car in town, would turn green with envy when he saw the comparison between this one and his own weather-beaten five-year-old model.

"Think I could learn to run the thing?" Miller queried.

"*Learn* to run it?" the other laughed. "Why, man, that car practically runs itself. There's really nothing to learn about it. If you'll accept it—and I know you will—we'll take a short spin now, and in a half hour I'll explain all you need to know."

Then he added with mock seriousness: "Will you consider that car your own personal property?"

"Wal, I'd be 'bout nineteen different kinds of a fool if I wouldn't," the old man answered dryly.

"Then we'll just look over this paper," Williams remarked as he drew a typewritten sheet from his pocket, and proceeded to read.

It was a simple statement of the fact that the storekeeper—Williams filled, in the blank space left for this purpose, the old man's name—accepted of the Elting Motor Car Company one of their latest-model cars, at absolutely no cost to him; and further agreed to advertise it to the best of his ability; and should he succeed in making any sales, he was to receive as a remuneration the sum of twenty per cent of the price received for same.

"That's fair enough, isn't it?" Williams asked, as he handed the document to the other.

"Couldn't be more so," the storekeeper asserted emphatically.

"Then just sign it, so that I can take it back to the company."

Miller rose and, entering the store, went to the old-fashioned desk, the other following, and his scrawled signature soon closed the transfer.

"Now for a spin," Williams explained.

"Why—I can't leave the store," the old man faltered.

"Isn't there some one you can get to look after it?" and Williams's brow knit thoughtfully. "I must return to the city as soon as possible."

"I know what I'll do," Miller exclaimed. "I'll get Hiram Tingley's boy."

The storekeeper clattered to the door and down the steps toward the old farmhouse across the road. He quickly reappeared with a youth at his side and, after a few directions, joined Williams, who had meanwhile cranked the car.

"That's the first thing to do," he explained. "Then you throw this lever."

Slowly the machine moved ahead, and a strange tingling feeling of delight spread over the old man's big, bony frame. But, as Williams made the car circle about and start back the way he had come, Miller's jaw dropped with disappointment as he thought of the fact that Cephus Buckley lived in the other direction, and of the satisfaction it would have given him to go speeding by his house. But he refrained from mentioning the fact, and the car shot down the dusty country road at a rate that caused Miller to grip timorously the sides of the seat.

Williams suddenly reduced the speed, and as the car came nearly to a standstill, he said: "Now you take the wheel." As they changed seats, he gave some directions and, throwing on the power again, they shot ahead, with the instructor keeping a steady hand on the steering apparatus.

Miller was beside himself with joy and excitement, and the other threw on more power, until the machine beneath them seemed fairly to leap ahead. Then of a sudden, as they swung around a sharp bend in the road, a solitary, dust-covered man appeared only a short distance away. Williams reached over and blew a long blast of the horn. But the pedestrian apparently did not hear it; he kept directly on in the middle of the road. Williams again pressed the bulb of the horn; then he seized a lever in a wild endeavor to shut off the power.

"Is he deaf?" he exclaimed excitedly, as every second brought them closer to the man.

He tugged desperately at the brake in an endeavor to stop the car, which was now only a few feet from the stranger.

Just as they were almost upon him, Williams gave a shout of warning, the other faced about quickly, and even Miller, in his excitement, noted the look of fear on his face as he saw the car bearing down upon him. He hesitated an instant, then gave one desperate leap toward the bushes at the roadside.

But the second that he had hesitated had been just long enough to prevent his reaching a point of safety. A cry reached Miller's ears, and he turned to see the man fall to the ground.

A few feet further on Williams brought the car to a stop and, springing out, ran back to where the man lay prostrate in the dust. He was apparently unconscious, and he turned him over tenderly as Miller hurried to his side.

"Is he hurt?" the storekeeper asked in a hushed tone of fear, but before Williams could reply, they both saw a big blotch of red on his forehead.

"Get some water!" Williams directed hoarsely; but the storekeeper seemed rooted to the spot, and only stared about helplessly.

At that juncture the injured man opened his eyes, and suddenly sprang to his feet.

"Why did you run me down?" he demanded angrily of the old man.

"I—I didn't do it!" Miller gasped in fright.

"Yes, you did," the stranger insisted. "I saw you running that thing, and I'll make you pay for it."

The hand he placed to his forehead came in contact with the blood there and increased his rage.

"I'm going to have you arrested for this!" he stormed.

Miller was too scared to speak, and Williams, seeing the predicament in which he was placed, interposed in an attempt to soothe the man's feelings.

"My dear sir, I'm awfully sorry it happened. It was purely an accident."

"An accident, eh?" the other sneered, as he turned from Williams to Miller. "Did you attempt to turn out at all?"

As the storekeeper seemed unable to voice his words of regret or apology, the man stepped threateningly toward him.

"Do you own the road?" he demanded. "Haven't I as much right on it as you have?"

"Yes, but—" Miller began.

"Of course I have," the stranger interrupted hotly. "Of course I have, and you deliberately run me down. But you'll pay for it. You needn't think you can go racing about the country in that thing, killing dogs and chickens and injuring people, without paying for the damage you do. I'll show you—"

"My dear fellow," Williams interposed, "it was purely an accident, and, as you've suffered, we are ready to pay you for any injury we've caused. What do you consider it worth?"

The stranger faced Williams and, after studying him keenly for an instant, replied: "Well, I figure that about three hundred dollars would about cover all damages."

"Three hundred dollars!"

"That's my figure," the man with the bloody forehead stated positively.

"But it's out of all reason," Williams claimed. "Set a figure that's fair, and we'll settle, but for no such amount as that."

Before he could say anything further, Miller stepped to his side, and tugged on his arm. The two men walked away a few feet.

"Have *we* got to pay him any money?" the storekeeper queried in an excited whisper.

"*I* have," Williams replied. "The company wouldn't have any trouble over this for three times what he asks. But I think I can get him to come down."

With Miller's mind now set at rest, the two men again approached the other, who seated himself upon a large rock by the roadside, holding his hand to his blood-stained forehead.

"Well, what are you going to do?" he demanded.

"Look here," Williams began. "You know three hundred is an exorbitant claim, and so do I. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you two hundred dollars cash and call it square. What do you say to that?"

At first the man protested very strongly against such a figure, but when he saw Williams was determined to give no more, he reluctantly agreed to accept it, and the donor of the automobile turned to Miller.

"Lend me that much for about an hour," he suggested. "I'll telegraph to New York and get it back by that time, and then I'll pay you. We can't afford to have any trouble over this matter."

At first the storekeeper plainly showed that such an arrangement was not particularly to his liking, but after a moment of quick thought, he realized he should not betray such feelings toward a concern that had shown itself so broad in all its dealings with him. Upon his agreeing to the plan, the three crowded into the car, and it started on the return trip to the store, where the old man counted out the necessary number of bills from a roll he took from the safe, and tendered them to Williams.

"You're sure the company'll not object to payin' it back?" he could not refrain from inquiring.

William's laugh reassured him.

"I should say not," he said lightly, and he faced the stranger to add: "Here's your money. Take it and get out, and in the future don't fall asleep while walking along the road. You may not get off so easily the next time."

The man seized the roll of bills and shuffled out of the store, leaving the other two to watch him as he shambled along the dusty road in the direction of Weston, the nearest railroad town, about six miles distant.

Suddenly the wheezing and puffing of an antiquated automobile reached the ears of both men simultaneously, and Miller hurried to the door to see Cephus Buckley bring his car to a halt beside the new Elting, and stare at it in amazement.

"How do ye like it, Ceph?" Miller called from the porch, where he now stood with a triumphant smile lighting up his features.

"Who owns it?" the other called back.

"I do."

As if unable to believe this assertion, Buckley stepped from his own car and toward the new one, as did Miller and Williams.

"Putty slick lookin' little hoss," the farmer admitted. "When did ye buy it?"

"This mornin'. Mr. Williams here jest brung it up."

"And Mr. Williams has got to go to Weston," the deliverer of the car put in smilingly. "That telegram, you know. Suppose we take your friend with us, so he can see how well she runs. He might want to buy one some day. So how'll this do—we'll ride down together, and I'll send my telegram and wait for the answer while you two take an hour's spin. Mr. Buckley'll be able to run it without any trouble; and then, after I get my answer, I'll take the next train to New York."

"You won't get no train to N' York tonight," Buckley put in. "The last one'll be gone 'fore we get to Weston."

"Then I'll put up at the hotel—"

"No, sir!" Miller objected most strongly. "You'll come back here and stay with me."

Williams voiced a weak protest, but as the storekeeper was so insistent, he agreed to accept his hospitality, after which the three entered the car, and soon came within the outskirts of Weston, Buckley still giving way to expressions of delight over the way the car ran.

They drew up before the telegraph office, and leaving Williams to send his despatch, Buckley took the wheel, and the two countrymen started on a short run through the town. They had only proceeded a short distance when a peculiar clicking beneath the car told them that something had gone wrong with the mechanism.

Buckley alighted, and endeavored to make an examination to find out what was wrong, but this new model was so entirely different from his antiquated affair that he was at a loss to determine what was out of order, so he climbed in again, and they slowly made their way back to the telegraph office.

A glance within showed them that Williams was not waiting there, so they left the car in front of the building, and strolled to the hotel on the corner, where they entered the café. They were in the act of taking seats at a table near where a screen gave some privacy to those seated behind it, when Miller heard a familiar voice, and placing his finger to his lips to warn Buckley against speaking, he stood for a moment listening to the low-toned conversation that he could hear quite distinctly from the other side of the screen.

Had any one given the old storekeeper more than a passing glance, he would have noticed a peculiar look of resolution and anger on the man's face, as he strained his sense of hearing to catch every word that was spoken by the two men so near him.

There was a grim look on Miller's face as he tiptoed toward the door, beckoning Buckley to follow him. They entered the car and the storekeeper related to the other what this overheard conversation had revealed to him. He then directed the other to take him to a certain house.

After a brief interview with the man who answered his knock, Miller once more climbed into the car, and the ride back to the telegraph office was entirely taken up with the laying of plans.

"My answer hasn't come yet," Williams told Miller as they ran up. "I'll have to wait, I guess."

"'Tain't no use doin' thet," the storekeeper interposed. "To-morrow'll do jest as well. Come on home now, an' come down ag'in in the mornin'."

There was something so insistent in the old man's tone that the automobile agent looked at him questioningly, but the other's face betrayed nothing out of the ordinary.

"Well, if that's agreeable to you," Williams said.

"It suttinly is," Miller announced emphatically, and with that the other crowded into the car, and the return journey began.

Buckley called Williams's attention to the clicking beneath the machine, but as he declared it was nothing, the ride continued silently, quite a marked difference to their trip in the opposite direction.

They soon arrived at Miller's store, and after a brief, but earnest praising of the merits of an Elting car, Buckley entered his own, which wheezed and puffed away, leaving the two men staring after him.

Then Williams turned to the other.

"Where are you going to keep your new horse?" he asked.

"I guess the carriage shed'll 'bout suit it, an' if you'll run her 'round there, I'll be much obliged. Then I'll take another lesson to-morrow mornin', 'fore you go."

Williams did as directed, the old man following on foot, and after the car was safely under cover, he snapped a padlock on the door.

"Why, you don't lock up things in the country, do you?" Williams exclaimed in astonishment. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Jest as well to do so," the other remarked curtly. "You've heard 'bout the feller what locked the door after the hoss was stolen, ain't ye?"

"Yes, but—'

"Wal, I ain't thet fellow." Then Miller forced a smile to his face, as he added: "I ain't takin' no chances."

They retraced their steps in silence, and Miller busied himself in the store, while the other sat idly by and watched him, wondering at the old man's sudden change of demeanor. He was anything but talkative now, and Williams decided that the accident and the money matter had upset him.

The call for supper came at last, after which Miller locked the store, and claiming that it was his bed-hour he showed Williams to the spare room, and agreeing to call him early, went to his own, but not to sleep. In-

stead, he carefully pulled down the curtains, and then going to the old-fashioned bureau, took out a revolver that, as a relic or curiosity, would have been eagerly purchased by any museum owner.

The old man carefully oiled and cleansed it, and then ramming into the one barrel a huge charge of powder, completed the loading with a bullet and cap. Then blowing out the light, he took up his post in the dark at a window from which he had a clear view of the carriage-house in which his gift-horse was stored.

His wife, whom he had already acquainted with the knowledge of his newly acquired motor, had retired to her room, and was unaware of the vigil her husband was keeping, or the reasons that led him to do so, and it was well that such was the case.

After a brief wait, a quail down the road emitted its customary "Bob White" three times, and Miller hurriedly lighted the lamp, then as quickly extinguished it. Had any one noted the happening, he would have remarked upon the fact that quail do not move about or call after sundown, and he might also have wondered at the sudden lighting and putting out of the lamp in the back room. But to the old storekeeper each of these things meant something.

The following moments passed slowly, and once the old man gave a start as he imagined he detected a figure edging along in the shadow of the carriage-house. He strained his eyes in an endeavor to pierce the darkness, but no one appeared.

Then, after a wait that seemed particularly long, a queer noise came from the front of the store, and while under ordinary conditions Miller would have decided that it was made by some night-bird, on this occasion he attributed it to something else, and he stepped to the door to listen. As he pressed his ear to the panels, his suspicions were verified—he heard some one noiselessly descending the stairs, and a moment later the front door opened and closed softly.

Miller retraced his steps to the window that looked out upon the carriage-shed, and soon saw two figures sneak from around the side of the house. They stopped in front of the door behind which the new car was stored.

The old man watched them, and his anger and indignation reached a breaking point as he heard a grating sound, and realized that the hasp of the padlock had been pulled out with a piece of metal, and then the hinges of the door creaked as they were thrown open.

"What—what you doin' there?" he demanded from his window, and as the two figures faced about quickly, four men rushed from different parts of the yard and closed in upon them.

"Hold 'em!" Miller directed. He hurried from the room, dashed down the back stairs, and quickly joined the group in the yard.

"What does this mean, Mr. Miller?" a voice which he recognized as Williams queried indignantly.

A deal of sarcasm and anger was thrown into the words, as the storekeeper retorted: "It means, Mr. Williams, or whatever your right name may be, thet when you an' your pardner was plannin' this very thing in the hotel to-day, an' laughin' to think how easy I was, thet I was on the other side of the screen, an' heard it all. An' let me introduce ye to the sheriff an' his three constables."

"Why, Mr. Miller, I'm at a total loss to—"

"Wal, the first thing fer ye to do is to turn over my two hundred dollars which we gave to this here friend of yours fer runnin' him down. I heard him sayin' in the hotel thet thet imitation blood which he spread over his face wa'n't no good—it dried too quick—an' thet before ye worked the same game ag'in, he'd have to get some better kind. An' then ye both laughed, an' said, 'Wal, he was a easy one,' an' thet after ye got away with the car to-night ye hoped ye'd git 'em jest as easy for some days to come. But I reckon now thet I'm 'bout the last one ye'll swindle for some time to come."

Williams turned slowly to his colleague.

"Give him back his money, Jim, and he'll give us back the car. Then we'll be on our way."

"I don't think you will," the sheriff spoke up. "In fact, I'm putty certain thet you'll go 'long with us.

"You see, Josiah," he added to Miller, "after you lef' my house this arternoon, I got a telegram tellin' me to look out for these two fellers. They're wanted fer playin' the same game—runnin' off in the night with the car they give away, an' fergettin' to pay the money the one borrowed to pay the other one fer runnin' him down—in a few towns. An' last, but not least, this here car they stole in Palmer, Connecticut. I guess all them things 'll be enough to keep 'em out of mischief fer a while."

Suddenly the two men attempted to break away from their captors, but it was a case of five to two, and handcuffs bound their wrists together. The sheriff thereupon despatched

one of his men for the wagon they had left in a secluded part of another road.

"Wasn't jest sure, Josiah, whether ye heard our signal," the sheriff chuckled. "Guess I must be a putty good one at imitatin' a quail."

"I heard it, all right," the old man asserted, as Williams turned toward where he stood with the old-fashioned pistol still gripped nervously in his right hand.

"The money's here in my trouser's-pocket," he said grimly. "Count out your two hundred dollars. There's lots more there, and I want the rest back."

The storekeeper did as directed, and with the aid of lighted matches separated his money from the large roll the sharper had and returned the balance.

"Looks like bizness hed been good," the sheriff remarked.

"You'll always be able to find men who expect to get something for nothing," Williams growled, and as the wagon drew up before the store, the group started toward it.

"Don't let no one get thet machine till I come fer it," the sheriff warned, as the captors and prisoners climbed into the wagon, and were soon on their way to the jail at Weston.

Slowly and thoughtfully the old storekeeper entered the house and made his way to his room, and as he passed his wife's door, she called nervously: "What's the matter? Where you been, Josiah?"

"Out by the carriage-house," he replied, "learnin' thet any one what spects to git somethin' fer nothin' is a durned fool."

DEVIL'S OWN ISLAND.*

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN,

Author of "His Risen Past," "Ways to Wealth," "His Stolen Fortune," etc.

What Came of a Semistranding In Bangkok, Followed by the Victim's Shipping Himself Aboard a Vessel Where He Wasn't Wanted.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KING HAS A SUBJECT.

IN such a position that it had been hidden from view from the middle of the island, with its bruised and blood-stained face turned upward, lay the body of Mate Starkin, late of the Isabella.

Burnham's surprise gave place to quick hatred. All the wrongs he had suffered at this man's hands, all the misery the mate had helped to bring upon Miss Brindle, all the coarse jests and personal insults Burnham had heard from those thick lips, the dark malice that had glittered from between those closed eyelids—all this flashed into the mind of Burnham.

He could hardly restrain the oath that sprang to his lips. He felt an intense longing to beat, pound, hurl stones at the ugly face, to grind it with his heel until it should lose what semblance it retained of a human countenance.

Then, when the paroxysm of hate reached a point where he clenched his fists and ground his teeth and dug deep holes in the sand with his heels, he saw a sudden change of color flash across the bruised features on the ground. One of the mate's thick fingers twitched.

Burnham started back with that impulse of fright that would come to any one on seeing signs of life in what he thought to be a corpse. Realizing that there lay before him only another such half drowned being as he had been himself a few hours since, he came nearer and watched for another sign of returning life.

And now there arose in his mind the question whether he should end the miserable existence that was hanging only by a thread. A blow on the head with one of the stones would do it.

He had seen this man commit deliberate murder more than once. He was king here, and held state authority to execute a murderer. Burnham picked up a stone.

But it was a human life that he was about to terminate. There was something too cold-blooded about the deed. He could not do it. The stone was hurled into the sea.

Still full of hatred that just lacked the quality of being murderous, Burnham sat down and glared at the still form. He could

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see the little vein on the side of the mate's forehead pulsating rapidly. That was the only indication of life.

It seemed to his overwrought sense that the pulsations were growing weaker. He reflected that there was little chance of the mate's returning to life or consciousness as long as he lay on his back with lungs probably more or less filled with water.

He did not need to kill the man. The little pulse would beat slower and slower. Then it would stop—and the soul that still clung to that ugly form would have deserted it.

A cry of horror escaped his lips.

"No," he almost shrieked. "I can't stand it! I'll do what I can."

Quickly rolling the prostrate body over, he began to chafe the wrists as he worked the arms to and fro like pump-handles as he had seen the life-savers do the previous summer at Martha's Vineyard, when a bather had nearly drowned.

Sweating with the toil, he kept on and on until his own strength seemed well-nigh exhausted. It was not until he had fallen, utterly used up with the work, that a heavy groan from the limp body beside him told that his efforts had partially succeeded.

Burnham pulled himself together and returned to the task. At last he turned the breathing man over again, face upward. The bloodshot eyes looked up into his in wonder. The thick lips only sent forth moans of pain.

In the face was written the terror of death, the thirst for life. It was incapable of expressing gratitude or any other decent emotion.

But Burnham's bitterest enemy, the man whom he would with reason have seen dead before all other men, he who had thrice attempted to kill his present rescuer, was alive. Burnham had saved his life. The king of the island had a subject in his domain.

The sun went down into the boundless waste of water. In the short twilight, Burnham watched his patient's return to life, and saw him close his eyes for natural sleep just as he himself had done when the first pains of recovery had subsided.

Utter weariness soon sent the king after his subject into the Land of Nod. Broad daylight had returned when his eyes opened again.

He had just been dreaming that he was sitting down alone to a banquet that would have fed a dozen ordinary mortals. And he had turned to the butler or waiter, whichever it was, and complained that there was not enough to eat.

His dreams seemed to have stopped coming true. There was certainly no banquet anywhere in sight as he sat up and looked around. He saw that the mate was sitting up and looking around too. A scowl of hate shot across the scarred brow of the Isabella's second officer.

But the scowl was quickly succeeded by a crafty smile.

"Hey, steward, where the Hades are we?" the fellow inquired with an attempt at forced good-nature.

This assumption of authority aroused instant resentment in Burnham's breast.

"I'm not your steward just now, if you please," he snapped. "This island belongs to me, and if you don't feel like behaving—"

"Oho!" the mate grinned. "Well, if *you* please, I'll inform you that if you get sassy, I'll plug you full of—"

He put his hand to his hip where his pistol usually reposed. Then he softened considerably.

"Oh, well, if you think you're boss around these diggings, have it your own way. What you got to drink?"

Burnham was almost glad of the lack of provisions. He waved his arm toward the ocean.

"Plenty of it," he grinned.

But Mate Starkin could see no joke in this. He raised himself to his feet without emitting any of the groans he showed in his twisting face.

"Don't you fool with me," he snarled. "I want a drink, and want it quick."

But Burnham was feeling fairly rested, if most uncomfortably hungry. He could see that the mate was in no condition for a fight.

"Better go look for it," he told his late superior.

Starkin came toward him with clenched fists. Burnham stood up and looked his very readiest. The mate scowled again and backed away. Then he turned on his heel and walked off toward the boulders in the middle of the island. His walk showed about fifty-seven varieties of limp.

Burnham stood watching him. He was not at all sure that he had done a wise thing in saving this man's life. Still, if worse came to worst, he could probably overpower the man in his present condition.

If, on the other hand, the mate was still strong enough to kill him, or should become so in a few hours, it might be an easier death than one by starvation.

The mate limped on to the farther end of the island. Then he turned back toward the

middle. Burnham decided to go to meet him. He did not intend to exhibit any white feathers. But he walked slowly. There was nothing attractive about meeting the surly fellow.

Starkin reached the tallest of the boulders, and stopped to lean against it and rest. He was standing just where Burnham had leaped down when he discovered the chest.

Burnham called himself a fool for not having covered the treasure with sand again. He saw Starkin stoop and lift the lid, then drop it and turn quickly and painfully to cast a suspicious glance in his direction.

Burnham looked squarely into the evil eyes to show that he knew just what was the cause of the mate's interest.

Starkin was panting for breath after the exertion of his short walk. He did not care to bring the treasure into dispute.

"Steward," he began again, "for Heaven's sake, get me something to drink.

Burnham saw that the fellow was absolutely faint with thirst. A sickly pallor spread over the coarse features. The thick lips parted and showed that they were burning red inside. The sight of such suffering took away Burnham's resentment for the moment.

"There's not a drop of water here but that," he said in a tone of regret as he again waved toward the shimmering sea.

Starkin lurched heavily to one side, lost his balance, and fell.

"Water, water," he moaned. "Dig here in the sand. It won't be so salt for a little bit."

Then he went off into a dead faint.

The idea that fresh water could be had aroused an intense fever within Burnham. He had resolutely kept his mind from the thought of thirst, knowing that it would only drive him to madness if he allowed himself to even admit its existence. He remembered now having heard somewhere that sea-water, filtered through some distance of sand, loses much of its saltness.

Heedless of the half-healed blisters on his fingers and palms, he began to dig with his bare hands. Suddenly he thought of a golden plate he had seen among the other things in the chest. He threw the precious vessels right and left until he had found this. Using it for a shovel, he dug faster into the grit.

He had thought that his island was hardly two feet higher than the surface of the water. He had not noticed that the tide had steadily receded from the shore as he had first seen it. Now, as he dug down and down without even approaching signs of moisture, these facts were borne in upon his mind.

As fast as his arms could throw up the platefuls of soft sand, he dug for an hour. Then he came to a stratum of thick mud in which there was no sand at all. The digging was heavier and slower, but he kept on.

The pile of waste mounted higher than his head. His breath came short and fast. The perspiration poured from his whole body. His head throbbed violently. But his thirst increased the while, and drove him to renewed effort.

The mud grew more and more moist. At length, moving his heel from one spot to another, he discovered that the imprint was filling with yellow water. He stooped and gathered a few drops in his fingers.

He was about to put these to his lips when he remembered the other man lying unconscious from thirst above him. He hurried to scramble out of the hole.

Before he could do this the precious drops had passed out between his fingers. He had nothing to give. He had lost what he craved for himself in attempting to pass it on to another. But, as his feet slipped back onto the bottom, they splashed in a thin surface which was only half dirt. A little more scooping thinned this still further.

He skimmed from the top as much as the golden plate would hold and carried it to the lips of the unconscious mate. Watching every drop as though it had been more precious than the vessel from which he poured it, he saw it all gurgle into the gaping mouth.

The instant Starkin's eyes opened, Burnham plunged back into the pit and poured plateful after plateful down his own parched throat. It was thick with grit, but there was no taste of salt in it.

Isla de Diabolo contained a well of fresh water. And, should that become brackish, the king knew now how to get another well.

From the heap of things he had thrown from the treasure-chest, Burnham took a golden cup. This he filled with the water and carried to the prostrate Starkin. In the bloodshot eyes there came an expression that might almost have been translated into gratitude.

The late mate of the Isabella did not, however, seem inclined to talk or attempt exertion of any kind. He rolled over on one side and closed his eyes wearily. Burnham staggered weakly around to the shaded side of the rock and lay down to rest from his labors.

He did not lie still long. The slaking of his thirst had eased the pangs of hunger for a few moments. But these speedily returned to force him once more to his feet and send him

tramping around and around the island in a wildly futile search for food.

Twice or thrice he fell from sheer exhaustion, only to rise again and resume his hopeless hunt.

It was of no use. There was no hope. He knew this well enough. He knew that he was acting irrationally in using his strength in this incessant walking.

He believed he was going mad. He could feel that his eyes were well-nigh starting from their sockets as he stared at every pebble of the glaring beach. He had lost control of himself. He could not stop.

His trembling knees bent beneath his weight, but, as if of their own volition, carried him ever forward, ever round and round the ghastly ellipse of sand.

And then, without any more reason than was ruling his other actions, he raised his eyes from the beach to the sea. Bobbing merrily upon the dancing waves, hardly more than two hundred yards from the shore, a handkerchief fastened to a stick like a tiny flagpole, was doing its best to unfurl itself and attract his attention.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SWIM FOR A DINNER.

For fully a minute Burnham stared at the little banner in amazed incomprehension. He had heard that the steamers passing San Miguel, in the Azores, drop overboard a box of mail for the inhabitants, and a fellow traveler on the Atlantic had told him that a "dinky little flag" was stuck on the top of this box.

He wondered whether some steamship had adopted this means of delivering the papers to the kingdom of Isla de Diabolo.

Then his heart jumped to his throat in a manner that was quite dangerous. He suddenly remembered that Marie Brindle, in telling him of the plan of the Isabella's officers to leave him on a desert island, had promised to get overboard a box of provisions, and told him to look out for it.

Tears of gratitude sprang to his eyes as he thought that almost her last act had been one of kindness toward him. Of course, he could know nothing of the horrors aboard the Isabella as she had gone down in that wild night of terror. But here was real evidence that, before the girl had been carried down to death with the helpless Chinamen on the ship, she had remembered him and done what she could for his welfare, perhaps, even at the risk of her life with the angry officers of the ill-fated steamer.

As he unhesitatingly removed his clothes and plunged into the sea to wade out toward the bobbing little banner, he felt a greater longing for the possession of this token of the girl's regard than for the food it contained. Without a thought of his weakness, he threw himself forward when the bottom suddenly dropped away beneath his feet.

He had not swum half a hundred yards before it was brought home to him that he was not in the condition he had been in when across the Merrimac and back again was an easy boyish stunt. His breathing grew harder and harder. His strokes became shorter and weaker.

He turned over upon his back to rest, and used only his feet to propel himself. A little wave washed over his face and into his mouth to strangle him. He had to use his arms again to keep his head up while he choked.

Again the breast stroke, then the side, then on his back once more; he was getting to the point where he only tried each different stroke for a second or two, then swung to another for rest.

With a great effort he raised himself to look for the little flag. He saw it bobbing up and down, apparently as far away as ever. He glanced back toward shore, only to find that it was much farther away than he dared hope to swim.

He aroused himself to another effort. It lasted but a moment. He turned over and tried to float without motion. He could not hold his breath long enough to keep his head above the ripples. His feet, as he sought to use them barely enough to float him, seemed made of lead.

And then he simply floundered. It was the last effort. He was fighting one more useless fight. Full well he knew what the end would be. Utterly played out, he ceased his struggling, and the water closed over the top of his head.

Instantly his hands and knees came in contact with the smooth, sandy bottom. He thrust it away from him, and his whole body arose above the surface before his hands were free from the sand. He had been struggling over a bar, which, in the low tide, was less than two feet from the top of the sea.

He sat down with his head and shoulders out of water and panted until he had recovered breath enough to laugh. He waited a few moments longer, then started to wade toward the little flag.

Nowhere was the water more than knee-

deep. The box was resting upon the bottom every time it fell into the trough of one of the little waves.

Gently, almost reverently, he unfastened the handkerchief from its tiny staff. It was a dainty lace affair, such as women carry. Before he tied it carefully about his arm, Burnham kissed its embroidered border. Then he turned his attention to the task of shoving the box ashore.

As he waded over the shallow bar, his mind was taken up with wondering whether he might not find inside some other token or message of love.

He ascertained that the bar did not fall away until within twenty-five yards of the beach. But, unless you have tried it, you do not know just how hard a swim twenty-five yards can be when you are pushing a good-sized box before you. Burnham found that out.

More than once he was compelled to stop and let the box play the part of life-preserver. It was not specially designed for the purpose and turned over and over, threatening to drown him. By the time he reached the beach he was quite content to lie down and let his dinner wait while he rested his weary limbs.

Again the cravings of hunger cut short his rest. He had before him the problem of opening the box, which, he knew, was carefully sealed to keep out the water.

He walked very cautiously around to where the mate was still snoring, and looked over the golden pile for something that would pry open a lid.

None of the precious objects seemed available. Only one way remained. He must batter a corner of the box to pieces with a stone.

He found a sharp-cornered rock of about the right size and set to work. It took a lot of pounding to split one of the inch boards, and he had reduced a good part of it to tooth-picks by the time it was done. And each splinter he made reminded him that he was not ready for tooth-picks yet.

At last the thing was open. He seized the linen in which the provisions were wrapped. It did not yield promptly, and, in his eagerness, he tore out the strip in his hand. And there, before his famished eyes, lay food—dried meats, boxes of dainty biscuits, cans of preserved meats and fruits, two or three bottles of wine.

And it was his. He could eat it. He could stop and decide where to begin. And, once begun, he might eat and eat and eat until his starved stomach was filled.

He became giddy with the thought, and his hands trembled as he drew forth a small boiled ham and paused a moment to decide where to take the first delicious bite.

The particular spot where the rind lay open to disclose a solid vein of red leanness suited him best. Not having a fork or knife, he tore the thick skin loose with his forefinger. Then, with a sigh of greedy anticipation, he raised the whole ham to his lips.

A sudden chuckle behind him made him lift his face just in time to catch the full force of a well directed blow from Starkin's hard fist. The ham rolled from his fingers into the sand, as Burnham measured his length upon the beach.

He was just sufficiently stunned so that he lay still and saw the late mate of the Isabella carefully lift the ham, drop it into the opening in the box, then pick up box and all and stalk away to the far corner of the island.

Burnham had often seen his father feed his little stock of high-breed poultry. He had frequently been amused to see some pullet show how low bred she really was by running away from the rest with a morsel half as big as herself.

But, as he watched Mate Starkin carry off that box, he did not think of high or low-bred birds that find their way to market as poultry. He could only think of a certain beast whose carcass figures at the meat-shops as pork.

CHAPTER XIX.

ONE MEAL, BUT NOT TWO.

Burnham was mad. He could feel the sharp pain over one eye, and knew that it was going to be beautifully black. That was one reason why he was mad.

When he raised his head, he could see the mate greedily devouring good food that had been meant for himself. That was another reason why he was mad.

The worst of it was that he fully realized that he was already too weak to attempt to assert his rights to the stuff. He was tired out. He had worn himself to the verge of exhaustion in getting water, primarily for the mate to drink. Then he had nearly drowned in swimming for food—secondarily for the mate to eat.

He was down and out. And every minute was making him weaker while it was adding strength to the burly fellow on the end of the island. These thoughts made Burnham maddest of all.

Once he rose dizzily to his feet with the determination to go and fight, even at the cost of being wiped out of existence entirely. Fortunately, he fell down before he had taken three steps. As far as outward motion was concerned, he was pretty quiet after that.

But if one took into consideration his inward feelings, the "Old Faithful" geyser in Yellowstone Park was not more ebullient than he.

The longer he watched the other man p tting more and more provisions within his belt, the more certain did he become that Starkin was overeating. He got to the place where he was absolutely sure that the ex-mate had eaten enough for two.

But, having his own dinner eaten by proxy did not tend to assuage Burnham's appetite. That kept right on gnawing inside him, just the same as though Starkin had stopped when he had finished what ought to have been a square meal for one.

It did not hurt his feelings so badly to see the contents of the second and third wine bottle follow the first down that capacious throat. Water had always been good enough for him to drink. But even in that matter, the mate was taking what did not belong to him, and Burnham did not love him any the better for it.

If he had but known it, all this while the ugly fellow was doing him an unintended kindness.

Any doctor will tell you that a man cannot eat all he wants when he has been starving for two or three days without disastrous consequences. Certainly Burnham would have made himself sick, had not Starkin provided him with a horrible example.

Watching the mate, Burnham saw the coarse features suddenly assume a purple hue. The purple was followed by pallor. Still trying to gulp down the contents of a jar of preserves, Mate Starkin gently toppled over and lay writhing and groaning in the sand.

It was Burnham's opportunity. He did not fail to seize it with both hands. This time he did not offer or attempt to do anything to relieve another man's sufferings. He had sufferings enough of his own to attend to. He just ran up and grabbed the open edge of that box and started to drag it away, heedless of the curses and threats of the other fellow.

There was still plenty to eat inside. Starkin had not uncovered a third of its original contents. Burnham could have put himself twice over into the mate's present sorry condition. But he had learned wisdom. He ate sparingly, just enough to satisfy his most acute cravings.

Then he sat down upon the box to wait for what he had eaten to digest before eating more.

But now it was the turn of sleep to get in its work. With blinking eyes, Burnham made sure that there was no immediate danger of assault by Starkin. That gentle rascal had fallen into a drunken slumber after disgorging about two-thirds of what he had eaten.

Slipping from his perch on the box to the sand, Burnham half reclined against his precious larder and passed swiftly away to dreamless repose.

It seemed hardly more than a moment before he was startled wide awake by a fearful crash of thunder. He had not had time to pull his faculties together when a blinding flash was followed by another clap so close upon its heels that they seemed exactly simultaneous.

Then came that ominous silence which precedes a sudden tempest. Black darkness had settled over the little island. Whether it was only early evening or far on toward morning, Burnham had not the slightest idea.

A far-off hissing sound had caught his ear. It grew louder as the wind and rain came swiftly nearer. A huge drop of water splashed upon his face. Then he remembered the box of provisions against which he was leaning.

His first thought was to turn it on one side to prevent the rain from spoiling the contents. But, as another bright flash of lightning showed him the angry whitecaps approaching across the sea, he concluded it would be safer to put the box upon the flat top of the highest of the boulders in the middle of the island.

He was just in time in throwing it across his shoulders. Even as he did so, a quick wave swept over the beach and nearly threw him from his feet. As fast as he could, he ran toward the rocks. It was the work of a moment to shove the box upon the big stone whose top he could just easily reach. Then he clambered up beside it and turned about to watch the storm by the light of the swiftly recurring flashes of lightning.

He heard the splashing of one wave at the base of the rock. Another he saw as it lapped higher against the side of his solid footing. The spray of a third dashed over him and he grasped the box more tightly, fearing that it might be washed away.

Then he thought of Starkin. Where was the ex-mate? Had he, too, been awakened

by the crashing thunder and gained safety on another of the rocks? In one flash of lightning Burnham made sure that he was not on one side of him. In a second he saw that the rocks on the other side were bare.

He strained his eyes toward the point where the mate had lain when last he had seen him in his drunken stupor. The waves were already piling in quick succession over the sand there. He concluded that one of them must have washed Starkin away.

Yet he could not feel quite satisfied with the conclusion. At first he was dissatisfied because he was not sure that he was rid of the fellow for good.

Then that strange impulse that had already come near to being his undoing, the impulse to save a life if there was a chance of doing so—began to work upon him. He felt dissatisfied that he had not made some effort to get Starkin out of danger.

And every wave that broke in helpless fury against the base of his rock increased his dissatisfaction with himself. He called himself a fool for not being glad of even a hope that his enemy was gone forever. But he felt himself a coward for not making an attempt to rescue a fellow creature in peril of his life.

In the end he slipped from his perch into the boiling surge that now reached almost to his waist.

He kept on the leeward side of the big rocks until he came to the last of them. Then, watching as best he could for a space between the breakers, he made a quick dash for the end of the island.

Half way down, a wave caught him and hurled him from his feet. He arose and started forward again, only to be bowled over before he had accomplished three steps.

This time he was swept into deeper water and realized that he had left the central, highest ridge of the beach. He breasted the next wave and regained the shallower part, then turned for another yard of gain toward the end of the island.

Somewhere in his head, back of the notion of struggling to accomplish what he had undertaken, he knew he was silly for undertaking it. Once he paused and glanced back toward the rocks in the glare of a blinding flash of light. But he could not bring himself to return until he had made sure that rescue of Starkin was impossible.

Up to his shoulders now, he had to thrust himself into the face of each oncoming wave They caught him unawares in the dark and whirled him about unmercifully. Over and over again he had to fight his way back to the ridge after one of the breakers had hurled him to where he could hardly touch bottom after it had passed.

At length, after he had succeeded in holding his own while three successive waves did their worst to drown him, he saw by the friendly lightning that there was sufficient space between him and the next to warrant the hope of making a successful dash clear to where he believed the mate had lain.

Rushing forward with all his might, he reached the spot. Still fighting to hold his ground as another trio of breakers hurled themselves upon him, he felt the sandy bottom with his feet. He pushed into the face of the sea until this receded. He let himself be carried across the point until the water was over his head when he tried to touch bottom in the hollow of the trough.

He swam back again, using the utmost of his strength. His feet found nothing but sand.

Still fearing that he had not come far enough from the rocks to reach the real point he sought, he made one more wild plunge forward till the bottom dropped away from his feet. And then a larger wave than any that had struck him yet caught him and carried him clear to leeward of the point. As he tried to swim back again, the second of these huge triplets swept him farther away.

A third lifted him upon its crest, so that he could look behind it and see the bare sand of the island. And he knew it was too far away from him for hope of reaching it.

And now began a battle royal with the sea. His only salvation lay in keeping alongside the island while swimming to the shelter of the rocks. It might not have been so hard had the beach not broken each wave that came and sent it, a surging, incalculable broth, down the leeward side upon him.

He was caught in swirling eddies and spun about in seas of briny froth. Often he saw only the pale green of water over his head when the lightning flashed upon it. But, each time he came to the surface and got his bearings and his breath, he saw that he was making some headway.

Then, just when the first of the rocks loomed up almost directly to the windward side, the deep made one last desperate effort to catch him. Over and over he was turned in somersaults by the rolling water. He thought he would never come to the top again. But he did, and the comparative quiet in which he now found himself told him that he had gained the shelter he sought.

The crests of the waves were breaking again and again over the rocks. The water surged in and out between them. But its force was spent ere it reached him as he swam ashore and once more felt the firm sand under his feet.

Then it was that he knew it must be near morning. Had he not slept long, he would not have had the strength for the battle he had just won.

"The mate of the Isabella is gone," he told himself, as he made those brave strokes shoreward.

The thought was rather quieting than otherwise. He was rid of the man, and he had done more than his duty to save him.

At last he reached the high rock from which he had started. He looked upward for a hold on its rough top as the lightning flashed. In the bold glare of white light his eyes met the leering grin of Mate Starkin of the Isabella. He also saw that the box was no longer where he had left it. Evidently it had been washed away.

Equally evident, Starkin had climbed the rock from its windward side shortly after Burnham had started to find him.

Burnham recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to begin to lift himself upward by the time another flash showed. He felt the heavy foot of the ex-mate upon his shoulder.

"You stay down there, you!" Starkin shouted above the noise of the tempest. "There ain't room for both of us up here!"

CHAPTER XX.

A BAD DAWN BRINGS A BETTER DAY.

Of course, there were other rocks that afforded sufficient protection from the waves, so that Burnham was in no grave danger of drowning. There was no other upon which a man might safely attempt to stand or sit down.

He was forced to crouch beneath the leeward side of as big a one as he could find, and, drenched to the skin again and again, sometimes nearly washed from his place, to cling as best he might to a jagged edge and wait for the storm to subside.

That he still had a chance for life he well knew was no fault of Starkin's. That murderous wretch had determined to kill him if possible. And this was the man he had twice preserved from death and once attempted to save almost at the cost of his own life.

It seemed now that he had been foolish. Yet, he could not quite bring himself to regret what he had done. After all his struggles to keep himself alive, it was only too plain that he had preserved to himself but the briefest respite before death must claim him. And he was glad that he had no other man's blood on his hands, even though he might have killed in self-defense.

A clean conscience, one with a few heroic acts of mercy to its credit, is a mighty consoling thing when one knows that a few hours must bring him face to face with eternity.

As swiftly as it had arisen, the tropical squall abated. The wind died out, and the waves splashed less and less vehemently against the opposite side of his shelter. After the night of tempest, the dawn broke in the east, lighting up with wondrous golds and purples the rapidly melting clouds.

Just as the great sun sprang forth from his bath in the sea, Burnham lay down upon the wet sand where the waves had ceased to wash between the rocks.

Tired, hungry, hopeless, he was yet at peace with himself, and could look up into the eye of the coming day without any shame for anything he had done.

His thoughts turned to the sweet girl whose spirit, he believed, was happy somewhere beyond that bright sky. A prayer of thanksgiving arose to his lips that he had kept himself worthy to join her there. Lest any spot of hatred should remain upon his soul, he forgave the mate from the bottom of his heart.

Had he not known how such words would be received, he would have gone and expressed his forgiveness to Starkin himself.

Suddenly he was aroused from all these kindly, generous, and religious thoughts. Out of his peace of mind he was dragged into a struggle of life and death. He heard Starkin's harsh voice above him, and saw the ugly face peering over the top of his shelter.

"Still alive, curse you!" the man was saying. "Well, you won't be long."

Burnham had barely time to leap to his feet as Starkin rushed around the corner of the boulder and hurled his heavy weight upon the worn-out man to whom he doubly and triply owed his life.

All the forgiving, kindly thoughts fled to the winds. Men can talk as they will of the possibility of preserving a love for your enemies while you are trying to overcome them. But that is not the way it is done.

Anger, rage, hatred—these were the feelings that took instant possession of Burnham and nerved him to contest every advantage to the utmost of his nearly exhausted powers.

He kicked, bit, scratched, tore at the mate's hair as he felt himself seized in the strong man's thick arms. He did not heed the sting of the blows that rained upon his chest and face. He did not feel the bruises as he fell and brought the big weight down with him.

Over and over they rolled in the wet sand among the stones that lay about the feet of the boulders. Now Burnham was on top, and futilely seeking a grasp at his antagonist's throat. In another instant he was underneath, and the mate's knee crushed down upon the pit of his stomach.

His eyes were bulging with the pain. The whole world seemed red with blood. But he still fought with the desperation of a madman to keep away the clutch of the big fingers that reached for his own throat.

Again and again he thrust the powerful arms aside. But with each thrust he knew that the strength of his own hands was waning.

At last the heavier hand gained the hold it sought. Burnham thought his eyes had popped out of his head as the red light went out. He was still conscious enough to feel his tongue hanging dry and thick over his lips when the hard grasp suddenly relaxed.

In some way, he felt that the body upon him was moving about, as though searching for something while still holding him down. With a fearful effort of will he brought the red light back to his eyes. The mate was sitting upon his stomach. In his face was the bloody leer of murderous triumph. In his hand was a sharp-pointed stone.

Starkin held the stone before Burnham's eyes.

"Guess that will do the job," he grinned. "Now—one, two, three."

He lifted the ugly piece of rock and brought it down with the last word to within an inch of Burnham's forehead.

"Made you blink, didn't it?" the ugly fiend laughed. "This time you'll be done blinking."

Again the stone was lifted. Burnham closed his eyes. He opened them again as the sharp snap of a pistol rang from behind the rocks. He saw the stone fall harmlessly beside him from the broken arm of his assailant. Somewhere a voice was saying: "Pretty good shot, but why didn't you aim at his heart?"

"To tell the truth, I did try to," another voice responded as the scurry of footsteps in the soggy sand came near.

Burnham thought he could see, through the red in his burning eyes, a foot shoot up against the mate's jaw. The weight rolled from his stomach. One of the voices was raised to hurl curses at the weight.

Then Burnham's eyes closed and stayed closed. He had a half-notion that he was being carried somewhere. He thought he heard the even dip, dip, of oars in the water. This grew fainter and fainter, and he knew no more, until his eyes opened under a white awning and he felt the grateful heat of brandy being poured into his throat.

For three whole days and nights he lay quite still. He vaguely wondered where he was, but the task of asking was too great.

He felt comfortable. Liquid food was given him in teaspoonfuls, and seemed to more than satisfy him. Most of the time he slept away the exhaustion of his terrible experiences.

Then one morning, he awoke with a feeling that he wanted to live. He wanted to know about things. He wanted somebody to tell him what had happened and how it had come to happen.

He heard a fine, manly voice speaking to him and saying: "Well, you're looking brighter this morning. How do you feel?"

"All right," he replied firmly. "Where am I, anyhow?"

"Can't tell you, Mr. Burnham," the other replied, showing that he had somehow learned the name of the man he had rescued. "Wait a minute. Here comes the doctor. We'll ask him if you can talk. I don't like to take any chances with these medical fellows."

"Good morning, Van," another voice broke in.

"Hallo, Doc; your patient wants to know where he's at. Shall we tell him?"

Burnham looked back at the smooth-shaven face which was studying his own.

"I'm feeling fine," he urged as the doctor felt his pulse.

"Yes, you can go ahead and tell him," the physician finally decided. "I've got to go and look after that other precious patient."

"Well, old man," began the individual who had been addressed as "Van," "so nearly as I can tell this time of morning, you're in about one hundred and twenty-two east longitude, four degrees and thirty minutes north of the equator. You're aboard the dinky steamship, Walawala, of the class commonly known as cruising yachts, a fairly decent craft, of which I happen to be the extravagant owner. My name, by the way, is Van Cleef. Now, is that clear?"

"Sounds pretty straight," Burnham smiled at the other's good nature. "But I don't be-

lieve it would put me clear out of commission to hear how you came to pick me off that ghastly island of mine, and to know what my name is."

"Easy enough to tell. Six days ago we sighted about as bad a specimen of wreck as ever waited a few hours to settle to the bottom. Locked up in the forecastle, we found the bodies of a few Chinamen, dead as mackerels, in some six feet of water.

"We did better when we broke into the deck-house. The young lady we found there was still able to breathe. You will pardon me if I, as an old man who am only artistically interested in such matters, express the opinion that she is a remarkably beautiful young lady."

"Marie!" burst from Burnham's lips. "Is she still alive?"

"So Dr. Rodney tells me. He says she will be able to leave her room to-day."

"Thank God," Burnham exclaimed reverently.

The other man looked at him with a humorous twitching of the lips.

"You interrupted my story," he said with mock anger. "Perhaps, you don't care to hear the rest of it?"

"Go on, go on; pardon me; I forgot," Burnham cried.

"Well, for a couple of days, the young lady kept raving about something going wrong with some diabolical island. She seemed to be out of her head completely. Then she got to mixing your name up with it. Of course, we are not making any very hot-footed business trip. So, when she seemed to grow calmer and told us a hair-raising tale about the island sinking into the sea or blowing up, or doing something—we didn't quite believe it, but we decided to cruise around a bit. "Came near being witnesses of a murder."

"And Starkin, what became of him?"

"He's back yonder on the poop. Dr. Rodney is attending to him now. I don't believe he'll pull through to get hung. He's been out of his head ever since I kicked him. Keeps raving about some darned treasure back there on the island. Wants us to go back and dig the whole place up for him."

CHAPTER XXI.

BACK TO BANGKOK.

"STILL got that on his brain has he?" Burnham spoke half to himself.

"Seems to have. Do you know anything about it?" Van Cleef asked without show of interest beyond the possibilities of a good story.

"Oh," Burnham replied, without any show of interest at all, "I suppose it's worth a million or two to any one who cared to go back to that fiendish place."

Van Cleef suddenly sprang toward the cot.

"What?" he cried. "Do you mean that there *is* something there? Are you telling the truth? Or, are you out of your head, too?"

Burnham was beginning to feel weary, but he told the story of the finding of the treasure in the ravine and again on the sand.

"Unless it was washed away by the storm, it ought to be there yet," he finished.

Then, seeing the eager interest in the other's eyes, he added: "If you wanted it, I'd be glad to have helped you get it in payment for what you have done for—us."

The plural he used to take in Miss Brindle.

"No, no, not so fast, my boy," Van Cleef returned. "From what you say, I think there is another claimant who must be considered."

"Who?—Starkin?" Burnham cried indignantly.

"No. Starkin has no more claim to that stuff than I have. But the young lady down below is the daughter or granddaughter of the original pirate who stole the stuff. She has about the sort of claim most of us have to the wealth we have inherited."

"But Starkin is the son of the old mate."

"Well, don't let that worry you. We'll send him to the gallows before he can put in any claims—if he lives to get them. And now I'll tell you how you can help me a whole lot."

The old gentleman's eyes looked very squarely into Burnham's face for a moment before he began.

"To tell you the truth, I'm a sort of fugitive from what is called justice, myself. "It's one of those mixed-up business affairs. A gang of bloodthirsty speculators first got me into a bad hole and then tried to turn me over to the mercy of a Federal sleuth—one of the kind that hunts down 'predatory wealth.' If I could raise five hundred thousand, I could put things straight in no time."

"Well, go in and take all you want. I don't care, and I don't think Miss Brindle will feel very differently about it."

"And I'll pay you any sort of usury you want to demand. Ahoy there, captain, put about and make for that little patch of sand where we found these men," he shouted to the officer on the bridge.

And so, quite recovered, Robert Burnham found himself once more ashore on Isla de Diabolo three days later. Without much difficulty, the most of the golden articles were discovered under the thin coat of sand that had covered them. The gems were still undisturbed under the broken lid of the chest.

"And now, captain," Van Cleef ordered when they had returned to the yacht, "make for Bangkok as fast as your engines will spin the screws."

"Where?" Burnham asked in dismay.

"Bangkok." Van Cleef repeated. "The King of Siam is a personal friend of mine. He'll give a small fortune for that crown and some of the other things, and help us to dispose of the rest. If he won't do it for old times' sake, I've got a case of champagne in the locker for which he'd quit his throne."

Five days later, Burnham walked through the mangy, dog-ridden streets of the Siamese capital. Even the wretched curs did not look quite so bad as they had a few weeks before.

To tell the truth, he did not see much of any of the unpleasant sights. He was too much preoccupied, looking from the corners of his eyes at a certain face about on a level with his shoulder.

Of course, he and Miss Brindle had agreed to loan Mr. Van Cleef the half million of dollars. They must have come to some sort of understanding about another matter. For Burnham's first words, after he had reached the office of the American consulate, and greeted the son of the nominal official, were most enthusiastically spoken.

"Mr. Jackson, let me present you to Miss Brindle who is to become Mrs. Burnham just as quickly as we can find a priest."

"I'll beat that," Jackson replied warmly, as he bowed to the lady. "There's a whole bishop living not two blocks from here."

"By the way," he added as he picked up his *tobie* and placed it on his head. "Here's a letter of credit for you that was sent over by the English agent who didn't know your address. I was going to forward it to Lowell."

Burnham looked at the Siamese figures of the post-mark.

"What do they mean?" he asked of Jackson.

"January twentieth," Jackson translated.

"It came the day after I sailed on the Isabella," Burnham exclaimed.

The girl looked at him to see if he showed a trace of regret.

"Aren't you sorry?" she asked.

"Sorry?" Burnham echoed. "Why, look at all the money I've got." Then they all joined in laughter at his teasing.

"And, what are you going to do after the wedding?" Jackson inquired, adding quickly, "if I'm not being too inquisitive."

Just at that moment an ugly-faced white man, who was coming toward them as they walked out of the door, turned back and slunk off across the street. Burnham started in surprise, the girl clutching his arm in terror.

"Who is that fellow, anyhow?" Jackson asked, noting their startled looks.

Before Burnham or the girl could answer, four little Siamese soldiers sprang from the opposite corner and leaped upon Starkin with a yell of joy. In spite of his curses, howls, and powerful efforts to throw them off, they soon had him down and bound his arms securely to his side, not even sparing the broken wrist.

Jackson, hearing the man's round English oaths, stepped over to interfere on behalf of a fellow American. After a moment's parley, he came back.

"Don't think I can do much for him. They want him for two murders here," he explained to the others.

"Well," Burnham spoke up, "if they didn't, I, as a secret service agent of the United States Marine Board should have ordered his arrest for as many murders more, and some other things. He was the mate of the Isabella."

"You didn't tell me about your plans," Jackson began again as they walked away.

"We're going back to America to buy up the interests and the business of the bankrupt firm of Howard & Sons," Burnham answered. "And we're going first-class every mile of the way."

THE END.

A CHOICE.

THIS difference 'twixt the optimist
And pessimist you find—
One notes the clouds, the other talks
About the light behind.

Anonymous.

An Umbrella Entanglement.

BY GEORGE STILLWELL.

Some Episodes That Followed the Eagerness of a Young Man to Restore Lost Property to Its Owner.

"BY Jove! She's left her umbrella!"

Joe Story pounced on a slim silk affair leaning against the wall, and darted out to the hall.

Too late! The girl was in the elevator-cage already passing the floor below. He was on the nineteenth.

"Durn the luck! She must have just caught it. And it wouldn't happen once in a hundred times."

The iron door of another cage clanged open before him.

"Express! Going down!"

Joe leaped for the car. It shot straight to the bottom without a pause. As he stepped out, umbrella in hand, the other cage, which had stopped at nearly every floor, also reached the street level.

Several persons emerged. Among them was a pretty girl, with light hair and dark eyes. She wore a waterproof cloak.

"Er—I beg your pardon!" stammered Joe. "You—er—forgot your umbrella in our office—Mitchell & Grant, on the nineteenth."

"Oh, thank you!"

She smiled so sweetly that Joe Story simply could *not* let it end there.

"It is beginning to rain again. I'm glad I caught you."

"Yes. I should not have had time to go back for it. I have to hurry to the Subway and make a train."

"You live in the country, then?"

"Yes. In Jersey."

She had been fumbling at the umbrella to get it open. Joe saw that, with a parcel of what seemed to be dry goods in her hand, it was awkward for her.

"Will you permit me?"

He took the umbrella and opened it. At the same time he observed that the letters "C. L." were engraved on the straight silver handle. As she tripped away in the rain he tried to imagine what the "C. L." stood for.

When he turned to go back to the office the elevator man grinned at him sympathetically. Joe gave him a stony stare.

"Those fellows are too nosey, altogether," was his inward remark.

Miss Perrin, the stenographer who shared with Joe Story the outer office of the law firm of Mitchell & Grant, looked at him inquiringly as he came in.

"Did you find her, Mr. Story?"

"Yes. She went down in a local elevator and I caught an express, so I met her at the bottom. I'm very glad I did. It's raining hard. She told me she had to go to the Subway."

"Yes. She will change at Fulton Street to the Hudson River Tube. She lives near Newark."

"In New Jersey? Your home is there, isn't it?"

"Yes. She and I are neighbors. That's why she came to see me. There is to be a fair in connection with our church, and we are on the same committee."

"I saw her initials on the umbrella, 'C. L.'"

"Her name is Cora Lane. Her mother is Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane. Her father is dead."

Miss Perrin was always ready to talk when she was not busy. Joe Story was reading law with the firm. Law is a dry study, and he often dropped it for a few minutes' chat with the young lady of the typewriter.

The door of Mr. Aaron Mitchell's private room suddenly swung open, and a middle-aged lady, evidently very angry, bounced out. She was followed by Mr. Mitchell, who had opened the door for her, and whose calm professional manner contrasted sharply with her excitement.

"We will look further into the matter, Miss Linton," said Mr. Mitchell, in the sonorous tones which always proved so effective with juries. "But it is my opinion that nothing can be done."

"Something *must* be done. My deed gives me that strip of land, and I intend to have it."

"But, you see, Miss Linton, the other side also has a deed covering that strip, and the

date is prior to yours. There is no flaw in their title that we have been able to discover, and I'm afraid we have no case—no case at all."

"Humph! We'll test that in court. You keep right on and we'll win."

"We will follow your instructions, of course. But I feel it my duty to warn you that we have practically no chance."

"It's a question of right, not chance. I'm going to get that bit of meadow if I have to address the jury myself," declared Miss Linton. "Where's my umbrella?"

The office boy, sitting half asleep at his little table near the gate of the railing which fenced off the office, jumped up as if touched by a galvanic wire. He began to look for the umbrella.

"Where did you leave it, Miss Linton?" asked Aaron Mitchell.

"Leaning against the wall at the corner of the railing—just here."

She touched a certain spot in the wall with her forefinger and glowered at the office-boy.

"Where's that umbrella, Isidor?" demanded Mr. Mitchell sternly.

"I don't know, sir. I ain't seen it," was the plaintive answer. "I didn't see the lady put it nowhere."

"You're sure you had one, Miss Linton?"

"Of course I'm sure. Do you think, Mr. Mitchell, because people are trying to rob me of my real estate, that I don't know whether I had an umbrella or not?"

This was unanswerable. So Mr. Mitchell, Isidor, the office boy, and Miss Linton, all began to look about the floor. The umbrella might have fallen down.

Joe Story, who had been interested in Miss Linton ever since he had heard her mention the name of Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane, half rose from his chair. Then he sat down again.

He met the gaze of Miss Perrin, the stenographer, and shook his head. She understood that he did not mean to offer any explanation about the umbrella. It chanced that Isidor had been in the room of Mr. Grant, the other member of the firm, when Joe had taken it from the wall and run after the supposed owner.

"What kind of an umbrella was it, Miss Linton?"

Mr. Mitchell asked this in sheer desperation. He knew it was an inane question. What difference could it make what kind of an umbrella it was, if it was gone?

"Silk, with a straight silver handle, and my initials, 'C. L.' on it. It was a present and I wouldn't lose it for a hundred dollars."

"*You* don't know where it is, I suppose, Mr. Story?"

"No, sir," replied Joe Story shortly, and with perfect truth.

"Very strange!" murmured the lawyer. "Did any one come in while Miss Linton was in my room?"

"Yes. A lady," blurted out Isidor. Then he saw Joe shaking a fist at him behind his desk, and he added hastily: "But *she* didn't take it."

"How do you know?" snapped Miss Linton. "Can you swear to that?"

"Be careful, Isidor," added Mr. Mitchell sternly. "You know the meaning of the word 'perjury,' don't you?"

"Yes, sir," faltered Isidor.

"That lady came in to see me, Mr. Mitchell," interposed Miss Perrin, with dignity. "She had no umbrella when she went out. I'm sure of that."

Joe Story felt relieved. He did not know just what this severe-looking Miss Linton might do if she found out that her umbrella was in the possession of the pretty girl.

As for himself, while he was a man who obliged people whenever he could, (it was a constitutional weakness of his), he did not care to oblige Miss Linton by telling her the truth just then.

"Well, somebody must have taken it. Umbrellas don't walk away of their own accord," snorted Miss Linton.

"They do on a rainy day," ventured Mr. Mitchell, with a feeble smile.

"Why on a rainy day more than any other time? I can't see—"

Mr. Mitchell tried again.

"Why, you know, on a rainy day umbrellas are in demand. So they vanish sometimes without anybody touching them."

"Mr. Mitchell, how *can* an umbrella, which is an inanimate object, go away without being carried, either on a rainy or a fine day? That sounds to me like nonsense."

"Oh, gee!" groaned Joe Story, behind his desk. "Poor Mitchell! She couldn't see a joke with an X-ray."

Mr. Mitchell gave it up.

"The only thing I can do, he said, "is to lend you an umbrella, and return yours when we find it. As you say, it must be here somewhere."

"I want my own umbrella," she insisted obstinately.

"Of course, we shall find it. But in the meantime, won't you use mine?"

"Very well. Get it. I must have something to keep off the rain."

She said this in a most ungracious tone. But Mr. Mitchell was used to her manner, and did not heed it. He ran into his room and came back with one of two neat umbrellas he generally kept there for emergencies.

"Thank you. This will do for to-day. But I shall be in to-morrow for my own," warned Miss Linton, as she turned to go. "I can't understand a thing being lost in that way, with people sitting right in the room."

She sniffed so pointedly at Joe Story that he was obliged to bend down and begin writing his name over and over on a pad to hide his confusion. Mr. Mitchell opened the gate for her. He bowed politely as he said:

"Good morning, Miss Linton. We'll communicate with you when there's anything new in the matter of that strip of land."

"You'd better let me know something about my umbrella, too. Ah"—she brought her hand down on the wooden railing with a slap—"I've just remembered! A young man followed me into this office from the elevator. He was here when I went into your room."

"Oh, yes, I forgot him!" put in Joe Story. "He was an insurance agent. He didn't stay half a minute."

Miss Linton shook her finger impressively as she said in tragic tones:

"That insurance agent took my umbrella. When I looked at him in the elevator I said to myself: 'You're just the kind of man who'd steal things.' I didn't like his expression. I can tell a dishonest person at a glance."

"Would you know him again?" asked Mr. Mitchell.

"Anywhere," replied Miss Linton. "I never forget a face I've once seen."

She stalked out without another word. Aaron Mitchell shook his fist at the closed door.

"The old crank!" he growled. "What do you suppose became of her infernal umbrella, Story? It wasn't that insurance agent, was it?"

Joe Story smiled, as he answered:

"Well, hardly. It was your nephew, Mr. Richard Mitchell. He called to see you about that insurance. When he found you were busy he wouldn't wait."

"And that old tabby had the nerve to say my nephew looked like a thief!" bellowed Aaron Mitchell. "The foul fiend seized her umbrella!"

The lawyer went into his room and slammed the door. A minute afterward his bell rang. Isidor answered it on the jump.

"Mr. Mitchell wants you, Mr. Story," announced Isidor as he came out.

"Story, I want you to go to Newark, if you will."

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane has never seen you, I know. I wish you'd go there and ask her what she'll take for that strip of meadow. I don't think Miss Linton has a valid claim to it. But she can make a lot of trouble."

"I see."

"So it is possible that Mrs. Lane might be willing to compromise if it were put to her tactfully."

"Yes."

"Neither Mr. Grant nor I could go as attorneys for the other side. But you are not known. You can do it as our confidential agent."

"When shall I go?"

Mr. Mitchell picked up a railroad schedule.

"You couldn't make the twelve forty-two. It's nearly twelve now. But there's one at one-nineteen. You can get that. You'll have half an hour's ride on the trolley when you get to Newark. Mrs. Lane's house is in the suburbs."

"Very well, Mr. Mitchell."

Joe Story caught the one-nineteen, and as the train pulled out to cross the swampy meadows on its way to Newark he sat back and thought.

"This is the luckiest thing for me," ran his reflections. "I intended to come out here to find Miss Lane this afternoon, anyhow. Now, the firm pays my expenses, and I don't have to say I want the afternoon off. I'll see the girl and get back the umbrella. Then I'll interview her mother for the old man. If I put it through all right, it may give me an excuse to call again. Cora Lane! That's one of the prettiest names I ever heard. *She's* pretty, too, and—"

His fancies became vague and disjointed at this point. They blended with the throbbing of the wheels over the rails, and mixed themselves up with the scenery, as such imaginings will. He came to himself with a start when he heard shouts of "Newark!" as the train slowed down at the platform.

He made for a trolley-car, and at the end of about half an hour was put off in a pleasant, tree-shadowed road, with spacious country homes, each in its own grounds. It was still raining, but very little.

The third house he came to was that of

Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane, as he knew from the directions given to him by Mr. Mitchell. On one side of it was a large meadow. It was part of that meadow which Miss Linton claimed under the will of her late uncle, who in his lifetime had been a neighbor of the Lanes.

As Joe Story walked up the winding gravel-path to Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane's house, he saw that some one was in a rocking-chair on the wide veranda.

"A girl!" he muttered. A little nearer, and he added: "*The* girl!"

Just then a cloud broke, and the sun lighted up her clear-cut profile and wove a more brilliant gold into her fair hair. The rain had ceased.

She was in a light summer frock, and her fingers were busy with some sort of fancy needlework. Not far from her, on the floor of the veranda, was an open umbrella. It had been spread there to dry.

"Miss Lane?"

His hat was off, and he stood at the foot of the veranda steps. She recognized him with a smile.

"You are the gentleman who brought my umbrella to me, are you not?"

"Yes. I represent Messrs. Mitchell & Grant, counselors-at-law. I should like to see Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane, if possible. My name is Story—Joseph Story."

Somehow, he did not know how to tell this charming, self-possessed young lady that he had blundered in giving her an umbrella which belonged to somebody else. Apparently she had not discovered the mistake. Her initials, "C. L.," were on the handle, and the general pattern of the article was identical with her own property, no doubt.

Why, the deuce, had Miss Linton the same initials? Joe remembered that that good lady's first name was Caroline.

"My mother is engaged just now. But I don't suppose she'll be long. Will you come up on the porch and sit down?"

Would he? He went up the steps two at a time and took the rocker she indicated.

"How beautiful it is out here!" he said. "It's a treat to a person who lives in the city to get into such an Arcadia."

"Or even to one who visits New York only occasionally," she responded. "I am always glad to get home. But one meets very obliging people in the city. I can't forget your kindness in coming all the way down in the elevator for my benefit. It was a great thing for a busy man to do. I should have been really in serious distress but for you. I was not sure where I had lost my umbrella. It was my impression that I'd left it in one of the elevators."

Joe Story was glad to hear her say this. The elevator man probably would find it, and would give it to the superintendent of the building. From him it could be procured on identifying the property. That kind of thing happened every day in all large business edifices.

"Oh, you think you left it in the elevator?"

"Yes; I was almost sure I had done so until you said you found it in your office. But I get so confused in those bustling places."

"Yes, they *are* bustling."

Joe knew this was a feeble thing to say. But he could *not* get out what he knew he had to tell her.

"It was the first time I ever was in a great building like that alone," she went on. "But it was important for me to see Miss Perrin. So, as I was in New York, shopping, I made up my mind to venture. My mother did not want me to go. She is afraid of pickpockets. If I had come home without my umbrella, she would have said it was exactly what she expected."

She laughed, and Joe Story thought he had never heard a sound more musical. However, he *must* tell her she had the wrong umbrella. Miss Linton would be back at the office the next day, and if her property were not there, it would mean more trouble, and perhaps the loss of a well-paying client to the firm.

"By the way, Miss Lane," he began. "I—"

At this moment a gust of wind swept up from the lawn, and, catching the open umbrella underneath, whisked it, bouncing, whirling and plunging, along the veranda.

Joe Story was out of his chair and after the umbrella all in one movement. The wind, precursor of another shower, blew harder. *Bang* went the parachute against the railing, and then up it flew.

Joe managed to catch it by the end of the handle. But his hold was not very firm; and the handle, being straight, slipped through his fingers.

"Confound the thing! It'll blow clean away."

It did look like it. But the vagrant wind, veering suddenly, sent the umbrella in the other direction. It danced a few steps on its handle, and then swooped into the house through the wide-open doorway.

There was a feminine yell, and Joe ran to the rescue. The umbrella was over the head of a lady, the handle sticking out behind, over her left shoulder. She was completely extinguished.

Joe carefully pulled the umbrella away, and—found himself looking into the flushed and angry face of Miss Caroline Linton!

"Let me see that umbrella!" she demanded.

She was trying to straighten her hat with one hand, while she held out the other for the article which had caused Joe Story so much trouble.

"Certainly!" he answered.

He closed it and put it in her hand. She looked at the "C. L." on the handle, and then, her beady eyes blazing with fury, she shouted:

"So you had my umbrella all the time. It's just what I suspected. I knew as soon as I saw you in Mitchell & Grant's office that you would steal an umbrella if you had the chance. I'm never mistaken in my opinion of any one. I can tell the character of people at first glance.

"When we were looking about the office for this umbrella you had it hidden somewhere," she went on. "Then, as soon as I'd gone, you brought it out. I suppose you and that stenographer had a good laugh at my expense. It would serve you right if I had you arrested. But I'll see that you are discharged from Mitchell & Grant's. I'm sure they won't allow you to stay there when they find out what you've done."

She stopped for breath, and opened the umbrella with a snap. It was raining again. She prepared to go down the steps.

A pleasant-faced lady, whom Joe Story knew at once, from her resemblance to her daughter, to be Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane, had been standing in the doorway, listening in astonishment.

"I don't understand," she said in quiet, even tones. "What's the matter?"

"This is Mr. Story, mother," said Cora. "He was waiting to see you."

"But what's this about the umbrella?"

"About the umbrella?" broke in Miss Linton. "Why, it's my umbrella, that I left in the office where this person is employed, and which I find in his possession out here in Newark. It's by the merest good luck I've discovered it.

"If I hadn't been the kind of woman who looks after her own business, I should never have got it back. But I made up my mind to come out here and talk to you about that strip of land, and I find the umbrella and the man who stole it. That's all."

"No!" cried the girl in a clear, resolute voice. "That is *not* all!"

Joe looked at her in admiration, but with no hope that she could say anything to convince the infuriated woman of his innocence.

"What do you mean?" snapped Miss Linton.

"Will you allow me to show you something inside that umbrella?"

"What can you show me inside my own umbrella?"

But, nevertheless, she handed it to the girl, who quietly turned it up, so that the light fell full upon that part of the handle where the ribs branched out. On a narrow silver plate, let into the wood of the handle and running longitudinally, could be plainly read, in capitals, "Cora Lane."

Joe Story's mouth fell open in astonishment. Miss Linton put on her nose-glasses and inspected the plate narrowly. Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane looked bewildered.

"But—but—" stammered Miss Linton, "I thought this was my umbrella. It looks exactly like it, even to the initials 'C. L.' on the handle. But mine hasn't any plate with 'Cora Lane.'" She turned fiercely on Joe. "Look here, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Mr. Story," put in Cora Lane quietly.

"Well, Mr. Story, then. Where did this umbrella come from?"

"It was bought for me by my father only a month before he died," said the girl, before Joe could speak. "He had the plate, with my name, put on it, as well as the initials."

"But how did Mr.—er—Story come to have it in his hands just now?"

"He had picked it up from the veranda. I was in New York to-day, and it got wet. So I had it open to dry, and—"

"Oh, you were in New York?" interrupted Miss Linton. "Didn't I see you in a dry-goods store in Twenty-Third Street?"

"I was in a store there?"

"Then, I know how it was. I never forget a face. You and I were at the lace-counter at the same time, and I leaned my umbrella against it. I remember now, your umbrella was close by it, and I remarked that they were much alike. I picked up yours by mistake."

"You couldn't have done that," interrupted Miss Lane. "I had my umbrella up when I went to the building where Mitchell & Grant's offices are, after leaving the dry-goods store, and I saw my name-plate on the handle.

"You had already gone into the offices when I got there. When I got home I remembered that I had seen your umbrella there, and thought how much it resembled my own, which I had then lost."

"I don't understand," faltered Joe Story. "The umbrella I brought to you was the one left in our office, and which you are sure was not yours. Yet you have your own now. This makes my head spin."

"What I want to know is, where is my umbrella?" ripped out Miss Linton, with increasing irritation.

Joe Story had been thinking hard. He struck the open palm of his left hand with his right fist.

"I have it!" he shouted.

"What—my umbrella?"

"No—the key to the mystery."

The others looked at him hopefully, and he went on:

"It *was* your umbrella I took out of the office, Miss Linton."

"I knew that all along," she replied, with a triumphant chuckle. "No one can deceive me."

"But I didn't do it intentionally," insisted Joe. "I thought it was Miss Lane's, and I took it to return it to her. I see how it was now."

"Then, be good enough to explain it to *me*," requested Miss Linton stiffly.

"I will. As I was going down in the elevator I saw in the mirror that my necktie was crooked. I put down the umbrella—which was yours—while I straightened the tie. When I picked up the umbrella from the corner of the elevator-cage I saw there was another standing near it, but did not give it a second thought. You can all see, now, of course. By good luck, I made an exchange without knowing it, and got the right one, after all."

It turned out as Joe Story had divined. Curiously enough, his mistake in the elevator righted one previously made by Miss Cora Lane as she went up to Mitchell & Grant's offices. The umbrella Joe handed to her in the lobby of the sky-scraper was her own.

The superintendent of the building had Miss Caroline Linton's umbrella, and it was returned to her the next day, her ladyship receiving it with a scornful sniff.

As for the strip of land, Mrs. Van Schuyler Lane proved her ownership in due course. She thinks Joe Story had a great deal to do with her success. Consequently he is a welcome, as well as frequent, visitor at her home. Cora is always there when he calls. Miss Linton was angry over her legal defeat, but no more so than when she thought some one had stolen her umbrella.

The Runaway Runabout.

BY KIRTLAND ALLEN WILSON.

How an Oddly Assorted Lot of People Came to Be Brought Together Between Dawn and Breakfast of a Summer Morning.

INTO the peace and wonder of a summer dawn broke the raucous roar of a speeding automobile. A tramp paused midway of his sleepy exit from a haystack that stood near the highroad, and settled back to await the passing of the noisy intruder.

The car was not long in coming. Its red hood leaped into view from behind a bend and loomed rapidly into the broadening perspective of vision and hearing.

"A fellow and a girl," the tramp murmured as the car drew nearer. "and good-looking ones, too."

He wondered lazily, as a stone wall hid the automobile from view, what circumstances could have brought the young people forth so early in the morning. But his reflections were interrupted.

Bang—crunch—crunch—bang!

The throbbing of the motor subsided into a fretful sputtering and then simpered into silence. A pair of excited voices rose from beyond the wall.

"That's what comes of bein' in a hurry," the tramp remarked, exchanging a significant glance with the landscape.

He rose stiffly to command a view of the situation.

He could not see the man, who was hidden behind the raised lid of the hood, engaged in an examination of the machinery. But the girl was still in her seat, from which

she was leaning over the side and exhorting her companion to hurry.

She lifted her head after a moment to look back over the road whence they had come. The tramp could not help but note her fresh beauty and the dark profusion of curls that strayed forth from beneath her loosely tied automobile bonnet.

"It wouldn't take more than one guess to tell what those youngsters are up to," the tramp told himself with a grin. "And they're afraid the old man will catch them, too," he added, as he watched the furtive glances that the young woman continued to cast up the road.

The young man rose from his work at a hurried word from his companion, and they spent a moment in watching and listening. He was very young, but there was an aggressive mold to the chin and a definite suggestion of self-reliance in his countenance.

"Oh, Jack, I'm sure he was right behind us," the girl broke in suddenly; "I heard him several times. Listen. He must be very near. Oh, what if we should get caught!"

She sank back in her seat, overwhelmed by the thought. Jack, after another glance up the road, turned abruptly again to his work.

"He's too close for comfort—I'm sure of that," he muttered to himself. "I'll fix you this time, confound your old pipes," he ejaculated aloud, as he seized a wrench and went at the machine, "or I'll break you in two—one or the other."

He thrust his hands in among the cylinders under the hood, pulling and twisting here and there in a last effort of temper and desperation.

The tramp left the haystack and moved to the stone fence.

"You'd better get a hustle on, mister," he called huskily from the wall. "The old man will be clear of the turn in a minute. Don't you hear him?"

The young people straightened up with a jerk. It was disconcerting to learn so suddenly that they were not alone. But a look of relief followed that of startled surprise upon their faces as they saw the picturesque figure of the tramp. They nodded to him and at his repeated direction turned again to listen.

Sure enough, from the distance there now plainly sounded the steady throb of a motor.

"Jee-rusalem, you're right!" gasped Jack, flinging himself back into the hood.

He came forth again after a moment's work, his eyes shining.

"Joy!" he ejaculated. "I've got her fixed now."

He rushed to move a handle and the motor started up with a rattle and a whir that brought delight to the faces of both. But Jack's fell as suddenly as it had lightened.

"She sounds all right now," he said hurriedly, "but she's in bad shape and will bust again before she's gone a mile. And we'll be caught if we have another breakdown."

He looked up hopelessly, his eyes fell again on the tramp, and he leaped with a sudden idea.

"Here, Nell, come out of the car—quick!" he exclaimed, carrying out his own command by seizing her about the waist and lifting her down. "I've got a scheme that will fool him."

With the young woman out of the car, Jack turned to the knight of the road.

"Come on, you—mister—I don't know your name—but hurry up and jump in. No, don't stop or we'll be caught. You don't want to see him get us, do you?"

His order and argument were so sudden, imperative, and persuasive that the tramp obeyed, his face blank with amazement.

"This will mean a bunch of money for you, old man, if you do just as I tell you," Jack said quickly, as he shoved the tramp into the driver's seat of the runabout. "Get over the fence there, Nell," he called to the girl. "I'll be with you in a second."

"Ain't you comin' along, too?" the tramp gasped weakly.

"Of course not," said Jack. "Do you suppose I want to get caught. No, sit still, it's all right."

He pushed a bill into the tramp's pocket.

"Listen, now. Keep that wheel steady and turn it to right or left, whichever way you want to go. It's easy enough. Don't worry, and I'll see you soon. Good-by and good luck."

He pushed a lever as he spoke, turned a switch under the steering-wheel, and the car began to move forward.

"Do you want to kill me, mister?" the tramp wailed. "Let me out of this—"

But Jack, running alongside, pushed him back into the seat.

"You're safe enough. Just sit tight and keep the wheel steady. So-long."

The tramp endeavored to expostulate further, but his words were pushed back into his throat by the force of air pressing against him as the car shot ahead.

"Jack—Jack! He's coming!"

Nell's panic-stricken voice led Jack to

scamper for the wall at top speed. He scaled it and tumbled into the soft earth on the other side, where he found his companion huddled in a heap against the stones.

"It's all right, honey dear," he said soothingly, as he caught his breath. He leaned over and kissed her. "We're as safe here as if we were miles away."

He broke suddenly into a fit of laughter.

"That was a great idea of mine, wasn't it, to send Mr. Weary Wraggles off in the car to get caught instead of us?"

"I suppose it was all right," she quavered, tremulous between laughter and tears. "But what are we going to do without our machine? We can't walk all the way into the city, you know. And—and—it's too late now to go back."

She tried to smile bravely, however, through her tears.

"Listen!" exclaimed Jack, tightening his hold about her waist. "Here he comes—and going fifty miles an hour, too. He certainly would have caught us in another minute. Oh, my, but I'll bet he's mad!"

He could not resist lifting his head to peep over the wall. The pursuer was less than a hundred feet away.

But, with an exclamation of astonishment, Jack suddenly stood bolt upright. Nor did he heed Nell's quick and desperate effort to pull him back out of sight.

"Why, it's not he, after all!" he cried.

Nell scrambled to her feet with a cry of surprise and delight. The driver of the speeding car was a young man, a chauffeur. With him was a man of middle age, whose pointed mustache and beard of iron gray gave him a distinctly military appearance.

The machine was about to slip past when the elder of the two turned his head, saw the young pair standing by the wall, and spoke a word to his driver. The car was brought to as quick a stop as the rate at which it had been going would permit.

Nell trembled with sudden alarm, and Jack thrust a supporting arm about her.

"Good morning," the man called briskly. "I am Captain Mason, chief constable for this county." Nell gasped, and Jack felt reason to be anxious. "I've just got word that there was a burglary somewhere up near East Wilton last night"—the young pair drew deep breaths of relief—"and I'm on my way to my office at Wilton Center to get my men out on the case.

"Some folks up at East Wilton claim they saw a man whom they think might have been the burglar footing it down this way late last night. He was a rather tall chap, they say, with black whiskers and ragged clothes. Have you people seen a man of that description anywhere along the road? Why, what's the matter?"

He saw the faces of the young man and woman go suddenly pale at his description of the burglar. A look of bewildered astonishment was growing in Jack's. Nell began to laugh weakly and hysterically. Captain Mason jumped from his car and approached the wall.

"See him!" howled Jack, when he had got his breath. He climbed upon the wall in his excitement. "See him? Why, he was here only a minute ago, and—"

"Yes, yes; go on," the constable urged as Jack paused, struck suddenly by the force of the admission he was about to make.

To tell the truth regarding the incident would be to place himself in the most ridiculous light he could imagine. So he resolved to tell no more than was necessary.

"Why, he went off—in my car!" Jack finished, with an effort, blurting out the words quickly so as to have done with the confession.

It was Captain Mason's turn to look blank with amazement.

"Went off in your car!" he gasped. "Well, of all the slick ones I ever heard of, he's the cleverest. Held you up, I suppose, and bolted with your machine before you could do anything."

Jack nodded his head vaguely. He was looking at Nell, who was looking at him. Fortunately for them their eyes had not voices, or the constable would have learned that Jack's statement was by no means complete.

"Better jump in my car and come along with me," Captain Mason said in a businesslike tone. "There's plenty of room in the back seat, and, besides, I may need you. And we'll see if we can't catch up with that rascal."

"We'll be glad to get a lift into Wilton Center," Jack said gratefully, "for we are in a hurry to get to town; and perhaps we can get a train from there. As for my machine—the motor wasn't working at all well," he went on, as he helped Nell into the car; "and if you hurry, I'm sure you can catch your burglar."

II.

In the car ahead a tramp was having the most exciting time of his life. He had found very quickly that the steering apparatus had an insistent desire to turn from the beaten

track and plunge down embankments or into stone walls or to veer off into corn-fields.

After wabbling from side to side over a half-mile of straight road, however, he mastered enough of the art of steering to keep the machine with fair steadiness in the middle of the highway. When he thought of the narrow escapes he'd already had in the car, the time he had spent in it seemed like an age, although in reality it had been but a few minutes.

He was scarcely conscious of the landscape through which the throbbing car was carrying him. Once he had a confused idea that the machine had engaged in a dodging match with a purple-faced farmer, who hurled imprecations at him as it fled on.

Again, he had a notion that he had sped through a flock of chickens usurping the middle of the road, and that out of the squawking, frightened flutter of hens a ferocious dog had leaped, only to drop into the past as quickly as it had appeared.

And then there came a sudden turn in a road that had been unusually straight. The tramp saw the turn, and dimly realized that a crisis was impending. In a blind sort of way he made a supreme effort to swing the machine around, but a gnawing chill at his vitals told him that he would be unsuccessful.

By sheer luck he negotiated a part of the curve, becoming conscious, however, that at its beginning he seemed gradually to rise from his place in spite of his effort to remain seated.

An instant later he shot wildly through the air, and in another moment found himself sprawling in the grass of an ascending bank. Against the bottom of the bank the automobile was snorting and pawing like an enraged steed.

The tramp drew himself up slowly, fearing each instant to feel a twinge of pain. But none came. He whistled with astonishment when he found he was unhurt.

But angry, none the less, at the car for its treatment of him, he slid down the bank and gave it a resounding kick upon the hood. The machine seemed to respond meekly to the chastisement by ceasing its snorting and lapsing into blessed silence.

"Walkin's good enough for me," the tramp remarked, still rubbing his limbs in search of injuries. "But before I even try walkin' again I'd better sit down a bit and catch my wind."

He was settling himself back luxuriously upon the bank when the roar of an automobile filtered through the morning calm. He started to his feet.

"I forgot I was bein' chased by the old man!" he exclaimed. "This business of playin' proxy to a pair of elopers has its drawbacks. I guess the safest place for me is out of sight just at present. It don't look proper for a tramp to be found standin' in the neighborhood of a busted automobile."

He scrambled up the bank and concealed himself in the trees and bushes at its top. As he waited he amused himself by contemplating, with shining eyes, the bill which the young man had stuffed into his pocket.

He heard the approaching car slow down for the turn, and then, as he peered from his hiding-place, saw it swing into view.

"Well, what do you think of that!" he ejaculated, as his amazed eyes recognized the young pair in the back seat. "I thought they were goin' to lay low for a while."

Then his eyes fell upon the military-looking man seated beside the driver, and he ducked his head quickly.

"That ain't the irate father sittin' there in the front seat," he told himself. "That's my old friend, Captain Mason. I'll just sit tight here in the woods. Not that he's got anything against me, but I don't care to monkey with possible trouble. What I'd like to know is, though, where's the old man?"

He heard the car stop and its occupants jump hurriedly down. He heard their exclaiming voices as they examined the abandoned machine, and heard the young man tinkering with its motor in an unsuccessful effort to make it work.

It was with real enjoyment that he heard Captain Mason discoursing on the route he conjectured the tramp had taken after abandoning the machine. The stop to examine the car was not continued for long, however. The chief constable was anxious to hurry on to his office at Wilton Center, and neither Jack nor Nell seemed inclined to tarry.

In fact, the nervous glances which the young people cast back over the road they had traveled, and their frequent whispered consultations, were attracting the attention of Captain Mason. Already he had formed a private opinion as to what had brought them out thus early in the morning, and this opinion was strengthened by their frequently expressed anxiety to get into the city as soon as possible.

They seemed to reply directly enough to any leading questions he put to them, but there was something, apparently, that made

them uneasy when an attempt was made to draw them into conversation.

"There's something mighty peculiar about those youngsters," Captain Mason told himself. "I'll just keep my eye on them."

"This car is too badly damaged to run," Jack reported, concluding his inspection of the machine, "and so we'll have to ask you to carry us on to Wilton Center, Captain Mason. I can send a man back from there to take care of this car, and then we can take the early train into the city."

This last remark set the tramp, in his foliage-screened hiding-place, growling with displeasure. He remembered the young man's remark that there would be "a bunch of money in it" for him if he would do as the young man had directed. He had done as he had been told, but now "Jack," apparently, had forgotten his promise.

"You can't lose me as easily as that, my boy," the tramp remarked, as if addressing the young man.

He reflected, with a sudden gleam of hope, that Wilton Center was only a mile or so distant.

"I can follow him there on foot and get to him before he takes the train," he planned.

So, when the party climbed back into Captain Mason's machine and sped away, the tramp emerged from his hiding-place, slid down the bank to the road, and set out after them.

But the four in the constable's automobile and the single pedestrian following in their wake were not the only persons traveling the country highway so early in the morning. The tramp realized this before he had covered a hundred yards. It interested him, too, for he was hoping that he might have a sight of the "old man" in the case. He paused for a moment in deep thought, then turned back.

Only a mile or so behind Captain Mason and his party, as they started again for Wilton Center, came another automobile. It contained the figure of a stalwart, elderly, and handsome man, whose countenance was stern with some serious thought. He was driving his high-powered roadster at top speed.

The name of John Turner, president of the Columbian Steel Corporation, had been well known through this section of the country long before his becoming a resident of it. He had erected a bungalow — one of his many recreation-seats—on the shores of the little lake beyond East Wilton, and now and then spent a day or a week there as a change from his city mansion.

Members of his family were seen there occasionally also, and among them his daughter, whose beauty had quickly become a subject of much comment among the suburban folk.

The lines about Mr. Turner's mouth tightened as from the top of a slight rise he saw a fast-moving speck in the road far ahead.

"That's the car," he said with a grunt of satisfaction. "And, barring accident, I can catch it in another five miles."

"To think of the nerve of that young scoundrel!" he exclaimed aloud. "And after all I have done for him. He has betrayed my confidence in him and taken advantage of my kindness. Even helps himself to one of my cars! I stood for him because Nell liked him, but I never thought for an instant—" He clenched his teeth savagely. "The young scoundrel!

"But I'll catch him," he added with determination. "It's a straight road and a good one all the way to the city, and this machine can go fifteen miles an hour faster than that one. Hallo—what's this?"

He had come in sight of the abandoned machine.

III.

"It'll be an hour before the next train into the city," Captain Mason told Jack as they swung into the main street of Wilton Center. "Hadn't I better let you down at the hotel, so that you can get your breakfast before you start into town?"

Jack looked nervous and impatient, and there were dark circles showing themselves under the heavy lashes of the girl.

"We'd like to go right on to town if we can find some quick way to get there," Jack replied in an anxious tone. "Isn't there an automobile I could hire to take us there?" He looked at Nell. "It's very important that we go on as soon as possible."

Captain Mason knew that automobiles could be had for hire in Wilton Center, but he did not tell the young man about it. Instead, he looked so keenly at the young people that Nell showed her embarrassment.

"It'll be just as well to hold these youngsters here for an hour," the constable told himself, "for then I'll have them where I can lay my hands on them if anything happens in the meantime. I shouldn't wonder if the girl's dad should turn up pretty soon; and if there's anything in it for me, I might as well take advantage of it."

"I suppose there's nothing else for us to do, then," Jack sighed, as he joined Nell in taking a long glance back up the road.

As they drew up before the hotel the girl whispered into his ear, and Jack nodded vigorously.

After thanking Captain Mason hurriedly, they stepped from the car and entered the hotel, whose proprietor, introduced to them by the constable as Mr. Samuel Brown, greeted them sleepily at the entrance. Once within, they rushed to the telephone-booth, both squeezing into the narrow compartment and closing the door.

Captain Mason, who followed them into the building on the pretext that he had a detail of business to attend to there, did his best to hear what their excited voices were saying over the telephone, but finally gave it up. He held a moment's whispered conversation with Mr. Brown, then hurried back to his car and drove swiftly to his office down the street.

As he paused to unlock the door he heard the telephone-bell jangling insistently within.

"Hallo!" he answered, as he rushed to his desk and took up the receiver.

"Hallo, chief!" said a voice which he immediately recognized as that of one of his deputies at East Wilton. "I've been trying to get you for a long time. I called up your house first, but they told me you were on your way to your office."

"Yes; what is it, Miller? About that burglary?" Captain Mason asked. "I tried to get you on the telephone from my house, but your wife said you were out."

"That's right," Miller answered. "I was trying to catch a young pair that came through here breaking the speed law into smithereens. I just happened to be out trying this new motor cycle of mine when they came along. I tried to stop them, but they just sailed by like a railroad train. I chased them for a while, then gave it up. It's about them I want to talk to you. You see, fifteen minutes later, Mr. John Turner—"

"What—John Turner, the steel man—from the lake?" Captain Mason asked, his eyes opening wide as a sudden thought struck him.

"Yep—John Turner. He was going like mad, too—in his big roadster. I recognized the girl in the other machine as his daughter. It's an elopement, of course. If they haven't gone through Wilton Center yet, and you can head them off, it'll be a big thing for you."

"Listen, Miller," Mason said hurriedly. "I don't know any of the details of that burglary, so you get busy on it right away, and let me know what you learn by telephone. As for the elopers—I've got them right here in the hotel, and you can bet I'll hold them till Mr. Turner shows up."

He snapped the receiver back on its hook and rushed off to the hotel.

"Are those youngsters still here," he anxiously inquired of Brown as he stepped in.

"They're inside, in there," Brown answered, pointing to the parlor. "I told 'em," he added proudly, with a wink at the constable, "that I couldn't have breakfast ready for 'em for half an hour. I knew that would hold 'em up for you a little longer."

"Good for you, Sam," Mason said and whispered into Brown's ear.

While Brown was recovering from his amazement, Captain Mason stepped to the parlor door and looked in upon his quarry.

They were safely within his grasp, he saw. Unconscious of his presence, they stood at the window at the farther end of the room, looking out. The young man's arm encircled the waist of the girl at his side.

Mason thought first he would cough discreetly, announcing his presence, and then enter the room and engage them in conversation. But at that moment he heard the chug-chug of an automobile.

"The sound of that machine will give them a scare," he told himself quickly, "and they'll try to escape."

He rushed out to Brown.

"That's probably Mr. Turner coming now," he told him. "You go out and bring him in while I stand guard over these youngsters. Tell him I've got his man in here. That'll fetch him."

With that he strode noisily into the parlor. The young people heard him coming and greeted him cordially.

"Sit down, Captain Mason," Jack said. "I don't know how we can thank you enough for giving us a lift into Wilton Center. I hope you will stay and take breakfast with us, provided you can delay as long as Mr. Brown seems intent upon making us wait. Is he always so slow?"

Mason smiled to himself and opened his mouth to answer, but the sound of footsteps crossing the hall to the parlor led him to close it again. He rose and moved to the door as Mr. Turner, escorted by Brown, entered.

"Here they are, Mr. Turner," Captain Mason said, an exultant note in his voice, as he pointed dramatically to the young people.

Jack and Nell, with excited exclamations, jumped to their feet. Captain Mason stepped into the doorway, shutting off that exit.

"Well, of all things!"

The words were chorused by all three—Mr. Turner, the young man, and Nell.

"Why, Daddy Turner, you darling, where on earth did *you* come from?" This from Nell as she rushed forward and threw herself into her father's arms.

"Well, what do you think of this! By George, but it certainly is good to see you!" This from Jack, who was wringing the elder man's hand with an energy that threatened to tear it from its socket.

"Bless your hearts—how on earth did you come here?" This from Mr. Turner, as he hugged his daughter to his breast with one arm and shook Jack's hand as strenuously as the latter was pumping his.

Captain Mason was still standing in the doorway, his eyes popping from his head, and his jaw wide open, when Jack bethought himself of him.

"Here, you must meet Captain Mason," he said enthusiastically. "The captain has been so kind to us—brought us into Wilton Center in his machine after ours broke down. If it hadn't been for him, I don't know what we would have done."

The constable had strength enough to step forward, but his handshake was decidedly limp.

"Indeed, it was most kind of you, Captain Mason," Mr. Turner said cordially, "to take such good care of my daughter and her husband. I appreciate it as a personal favor."

"Well—" Captain Mason looked and gasped his amazement. His face was purple. "Are you young folks married?" he exploded.

With an effort he controlled a sudden impulse to flee.

"Married! I should say so," Nell answered with a peal of laughter. "Why, we've even got a wee little boy, six months old. You must come and see him some time, too. He's the perfect image of his daddy. It was because of him we were in such a hurry to get back to town. Everything would have been all right if that horrid policeman in East Wilton hadn't chased us on a motorcycle, and scared us half to death for fear we wouldn't get home in time. We thought we heard him following us even after we were in your automobile."

"Yes, you see," Jack broke in, "we left the baby there with the nurse while we came out to East Wilton to a little dance at a friend's house. We had expected to stay there all night, but early this morning we got a phone message from the nurse that he was very ill. We started right back to town, but fortunately, at your suggestion, we stopped here, for that gave us a chance to telephone home and see how he was getting along. And it turns out he is all right again."

"Where was the dance you speak of?" Mr. Turner asked.

"At Hampton's bungalow—right next to ours, you know," Nell answered. "Having expected to stay there all night, we sent Tom back to town with the car, telling him to come in for us some time to-day. We didn't have keys to your bungalow, so we accepted the Hamptons' invitation to stay with them for the night."

"Tom went back to town—last night!" Mr. Turner was gasping with astonishment. "Tom—the chauffeur?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I thought—why, what car did you take to go home in?" Mr. Turner asked breathlessly.

Nell and Jack looked at each other and burst into laughter.

"I'll have to confess, I guess," said Jack, "that I played burglar. As Tom had gone back with the car, I didn't know how we'd get into town to the baby, until I remembered that you kept your runabout locked up in the garage at the bungalow. I went there, picked the lock and took the machine. We started for town just at daybreak. Why—did you hear about it?"

Mr. Turner grinned.

"So, you were the burglar, were you? You see," he went on, "I wanted to get a good night's rest, so I motored out alone last night in my roadster to the bungalow, and went to bed betimes. I woke up early this morning, heard a noise and got up to see the garage-door wide open and the runabout gone.

"I thought Tom was the thief, for he hadn't been doing his work well lately, and I came very near discharging him yesterday. If it hadn't been that Nell pleaded for him, I wouldn't have kept him. I thought, perhaps, he had taken the machine by way of revenge.

"I dressed quickly and started right off, for I could see that the tracks headed toward town. I met a couple of men on the road, but all they could say was that they saw a tramp hanging around last night."

"And they got me out of bed," Captain Mason put in, disgustedly, "and told me there had been a burglary somewhere up near the lake."

"Well, don't worry, captain; I've caught both the car and the burglar," Mr. Turner laughed. "I found the runabout back there where you young people left it. With the help of a tramp who happened to come along, I got it swung around so I could hitch it to my roadster and then I towed it in here to Wilton Center, and put it in a garage for repairs.

"I gave the tramp a lift in as far as this place. He was a peculiar chap—seemed to be mightily amused all the time about something. I sent him around to the hotel kitchen to get something to eat."

"Yes, and I'll tell you all about him later," Jack said, winking at Nell, who was screaming with laughter. "And now that the baby's all right, we won't have to hurry back to town, so let's all go in to breakfast. Captain Mason, I insist upon your joining us."

A WATCH IN THE NIGHT.

BY LILLIAN BENNET-THOMPSON.

A Delayed Trip to Buffalo and What Came of Seeking to Do a Good Turn to a Friend.

MR. EDWIN STERLING carefully stowed a packet of papers in an inside coat-pocket, pulled down the lid of the roll-top desk and, after carefully extinguishing the light, closed the office door after him and hurried out to the elevators.

There was no car descending at the moment, so he walked down the single flight of stairs and turned toward West Street.

"Of all the careless idiots!" he muttered. "Here I ought to be nearly to Buffalo! I wonder what Mary would say if she knew I had left those papers in my desk and gone off without them! Well, she doesn't know it; that's one comfort."

Perhaps it was. At any rate, Mrs. Edwin Sterling was possessed of a sharp tongue, and had a way of speaking her mind when she felt it her duty to do so. Mrs. Sterling had a strong sense of duty.

The illuminated hands of the great clock across the river pointed to twenty minutes past eight as Mr. Sterling emerged on the water-front and hurried along West Street toward the Lackawanna ferry.

"I'll be lucky if I can get a berth," he mused, as he crossed Cortlandt Street. "But there aren't so many people traveling in the middle of the week as there would be if it were Friday or Saturday. What a fool I was, to be sure!

"If I'd had my wits about me, I'd have been able to sleep in a comfortable bed in a hotel to-night, instead of bunking in a stuffy, uncomfortable berth in a car. I hope that train's on time in the morning. Adams said eight sharp; and it won't do to keep him waiting. But, thank Heaven, Mary doesn't know anything about it!"

Mrs. Sterling had that very afternoon dutifully kissed her husband good-by, and then stood upon the station platform, watching the Buffalo express pull out of the yard. Sterling was to meet Mr. Adams in Buffalo, at eight o'clock the next morning, to conclude a very important business deal, and he had elected to take the afternoon train, in order that he might be ready bright and early.

Half way to Albany, he had discovered that some papers, which it was absolutely essential for him to have, had been overlooked, and left in his desk at the office.

There would have been no time for him to telephone, telegraph, or write for them; and, accordingly, he was obliged to leave the train at Albany and return to New York.

No one was at the office at that time of night; and he had secured the papers and was now on his way to catch the nine o'clock express from Hoboken, which would get him to his destination barely in time to meet Mr. Adams. He had sent no word to his wife regarding his unexpected return to the city, feeling that it would be far more comfortable for him if she remained in ignorance of his carelessness in leaving the papers behind.

The day had been intensely warm, and the light breeze from the river that had sprung up after dark had done little to alleviate the fierce heat that still radiated from the pavements which had lain under a blistering sun all day.

At Dey Street Mr. Sterling became conscious that some one was approaching him—

some one who wabbled uncertainly and seemed to find navigation difficult, even when he took up the entire width of the sidewalk in his erratic progress.

"Intoxicated!" muttered Mr. Sterling in disgust. He was an abstemious man himself. "Aha!" he added, as a dark blur in a doorway resolved itself into two hard-looking characters; "if he had any valuables about him, it would be well for him to look to them."

So silently had Mr. Sterling approached that the prowlers in the doorway had not heard him until he was almost abreast of them. Then they suddenly sprang back out of sight.

Mr. Sterling had, by this time, come up with the unfortunate inebriate, and glanced curiously at him. An exclamation of surprise broke from his lips.

"Barnes!" he ejaculated. "Barnes!"

The man paused in the middle of an intricate figure eight he was describing on the sidewalk, and turned two blear eyes upon the speaker.

"Sterling!" he gurgled. "I—I'm tsick!" and reeled almost into the arms of that annoyed gentleman.

"Brace up!" commanded Sterling. "You're not sick—you're intoxicated!"

"Not. I'm tsick," repeated the other, clutching Sterling's coat. "Ve'y tsick."

Sterling looked around helplessly. Not a soul was in sight; even the shadows in the doorway had melted away. It was fast approaching the time for his boat to leave, and he could not afford to miss it; it meant too much to him.

Yet Barnes was his friend and neighbor, and he could not, in common decency, leave him on the street, unable to defend himself, and the prey of any thief or pickpocket that happened along.

A valuable gold watch-chain was stretched conspicuously over his ample waistcoat; and Sterling knew that a handsome watch reposed in the pocket at the other end of it. Barnes thought everything of that watch; it would break his heart if it were stolen.

Sterling thought rapidly; there was no time to lose. Barnes could undoubtedly make his way to the Erie ferry by himself: and, as he was plainly dressed, would attract no undesirable attention, unless some crook chanced to spy that watch chain. Without the chain, Barnes would be safe, he thought.

Sterling knew that to retrace his steps and personally conduct his neighbor aboard the boat meant that the train-boat on the Lackawanna would leave without him; which was not to be thought of. Too much was at stake. And this was before the days of the Hudson tunnel.

In a moment, his mind was made up. He would take the watch and chain himself, and allow Barnes to go home alone, which he could do, if given time enough. Then in the morning, he could send a telegram from Buffalo, stating that he had the watch, and so relieve Barnes's mind about it.

A few hours of anxiety might not hurt him; it would teach him a lesson.

Suiting the action to the decision, Sterling removed the costly timepiece from its owner's waistcoat-pocket, detached the chain from the button-hole, and transferred the whole to an inside pocket of his own coat.

"Now, Barnes, you go home," he said severely; "go right down to the ferry and get on the boat as soon as you can. Do you hear? I'll take care of your watch."

Barnes had been clinging to Sterling, looking stupid and befuddled: but at the word "watch," he suddenly woke up, clapped both his hands to his waistcoat-pocket and emitted a screech that reverberated along the quiet street and seemed to echo and reecho from the Jersey hills.

"For Heaven's sake, man, be quiet!" exclaimed Sterling in consternation. "What ails you?"

Barnes's answer was another ear-splitting yell, followed by a third and fourth. Sterling drew back and regarded him in speechless disgust.

"Oh, well," said he, "go on and howl, if it amuses you. I can't stay here all night. I've done the best I can for you, and now you'll have to shift for yourself."

There was a sound of running feet, and an instant later a tall form turned the corner and bore down upon them. Sterling gave a gasp of relief as he saw that the newcomer wore the uniform of the New York police.

"What's all this?" demanded the perspiring officer, as he came up.

By this time, Barnes had transferred his grip from his own waistcoat to Sterling's neck, where he now hung, both hands clasped tightly in the region of that gentleman's collar-button.

"My watch! My watch;" he managed to articulate. "Put it in his inside coat-pocket."

Then his grasp relaxed, he wavered and fell in a limp heap on the sidewalk.

"I'm sure I don't know what is the matter with him, officer," said Sterling, bending down to examine the fallen man. "He—hold on! Wait! What are you about?"

For the policeman had suddenly pinioned his hands behind him, and with lightning-like dexterity had inserted his fingers in the inside pocket of Sterling's coat.

He drew out Barnes's watch, looked first at it, and then at the neat fob which dangled from the watch-pocket of Sterling's trousers; then calmly dropped his find out of sight in a pocket of his uniform.

"You don't need but one ticker," said he.

He raised his whistle to his lips, and blew a shrill blast. More footsteps approached, and a second policeman hove into view around the corner.

"Get th' patrol wagon, Mike," said the first officer. "I've got a drunk and a dip."

"You are mistaken, officer," said Mr. Sterling with dignity, as the newcomer turned to obey. "I am not a—a—whatever it was that you called me; but I regret to say that my friend here *is* intoxicated."

"He's worse than that, is your 'friend here,'" observed the officer, with a critical glance at the prostrate figure. "He's boilin' drunk."

"I am on my way to catch the nine o'clock express for Buffalo from Hoboken," continued Mr. Sterling, with an anxious look at the big clock, "and as I came along the street here I saw two men lurking in a doorway, evidently watching this unfortunate man, whom I almost immediately recognized as Ezra Barnes, a friend and neighbor of mine for years.

"Knowing that Mr. Barnes valued his watch very highly, I decided to take it and give it back to him to-morrow night, when I expect to return from Buffalo.

"He seemed able to walk and presumably to get home alone; but not to take care of his valuables. And now," concluded Mr. Sterling, "since you have the watch and the particulars of how it came into my possession, I will go on. It is nearly time for the boat to leave."

"And who might you be, if I ain't seemin' too curious?" inquired the officer with interest.

"My name is Sterling—Edwin Sterling," was the reply; "and I have offices on Liberty Street. You'll see that Mr. Barnes receives proper care and that his wife is notified, will you not?"

"Sure," said the officer.

He prodded the inert form at his feet with the end of his night-stick, and Barnes grunted and turned half-way over.

"Do you know this cove?" asked the guardian of the law.

Barnes regarded Sterling with a vacant stare.

"I'm tsick," he muttered.

"Do you know him?" persisted the policeman, again making use of his night-stick.

"No! No! He's got my watch!" vociferated the despoiled one.

Sterling smiled with a superior air.

"Poor fellow!" he said sympathetically. "He doesn't recognize me, and I've lived opposite him for the past ten years. Well, good night to you, officer. I must really be going."

He started briskly off; but a detaining hand fell upon his arm, and he was unceremoniously brought to a standstill.

"Sure, we'll all go together, Mr. Sterling," said the policeman blandly.

With a rattle and clang, the patrol wagon drew up at the curb. Sterling caught his breath and shrank back.

"Not—not in that!" he gasped.

"A fine free ride, gratooitus, for nothin'," the policeman assured him. "An' where you're goin' your bed won't cost you a cent."

"But—but you're not going to arrest me? I've done nothing."

"What? Me? Arrest a philanthropist!" exclaimed the other in mock dismay. "Never! It's merely your company I'm after wantin'. Here, Mike; help the gentleman in."

"But surely you believe me?" protested Mr. Sterling in agonized tones. "I *must* catch that boat. It's *most* important."

"Far be it from me to doubt the word of a gentleman," returned the policeman politely. "Come—hurry up! We haven't got all night," he added, with a sudden change of tone.

Even as he spoke, the whistle of the departing ferry-boat sounded a knell to Mr. Sterling's hopes of reaching Buffalo in time to keep his appointment next morning and close the deal with Adams.

Still protesting feebly, he was hustled into the wagon. Barnes was bundled in beside him, and the patrolmen climbed in as the vehicle started off at a brisk pace.

Mr. Sterling stared modily out of the back, watching his prospects of making an advantageous business deal, as exemplified by the lights of the Lackawanna boat, recede into the dim distance.

At the station-house his story was received

with a marked degree of incredulity, which, as he was a truthful man, was very painful to him. Barnes had sunk into a stupor, from which it seemed impossible to arouse him, and he was removed to the hospital, where his case could receive proper attention.

Mr. Sterling heard the ambulance depart with a feeling akin to despair. He was divided between a desire to clear himself of the charge of picking pockets, and a fear of what would happen when his wife should learn of his ignominious position. Presumably, she would know some time; but there was no necessity for hurrying the evil moment.

Having never been arrested before, Mr. Sterling did not know exactly how to go about securing his release; but his identification by his lawyer seemed the most advisable thing.

Accordingly, the latter was called up on the telephone: but his wife, who answered, said that he was out of town and would not return for two or three days.

Next, Sterling made an effort to notify his cashier and a trustworthy business friend or two; but all were away. It seemed to the unfortunate man that a sudden exodus must have taken place from the city. He racked his brains, but could think of no one else with whom to communicate.

Naturally, he shrank from according undue publicity to his position; and regretted that he had given his right name to the officer: but that was something which it was too late to remedy.

Meanwhile the law, embodied in the officials at the station, was waxing impatient and a trifle ironical. Something must be done, and at once. Mrs. Sterling must be told.

In desperation, he gave his home address and telephone number, with the request that she be called up at once. It was now after ten o'clock; and the lady, who was a firm believer in the good old doctrine of "early to bed," had retired some time since.

She was not altogether pleased to be awakened from a sound and refreshing slumber and asked to come over to New York and identify an enterprising pickpocket who claimed to be her husband; and she snapped out with considerable asperity that Mr. Sterling was an honest man, and that she had herself seen him off on a train that afternoon.

Even if he were in jail, she declared—which he was most certainly not—*she* didn't propose to be bothered about it in the middle of the night; and if they rang her up again to ask any more idiotic questions they would undoubtedly be sorry. Whereupon she hung up the receiver.

In vain Mr. Sterling pleaded a mistake. Official patience had reached the limit of its endurance, and he was consigned to a cell.

"This is terrible!" he exclaimed to the good-natured patrolman who accompanied him. "If they had only explained to Mrs. Sterling that I got off the train and returned to New York, all would have been well."

"'Tis little time she gave for explainin'," said the officer. "And if you take my advice, you'll not send any more messages to her. She didn't seem to like being called, somehow."

"But I came back," repeated Mr. Sterling. "I did go away and came back again."

"Then you ain't no relative of Jim Jeffreys," announced the other positively.

"I never said I was," said the amazed Mr. Sterling. "But I suppose I must resign myself. To think of all I have lost! It is very hard."

It *was* hard. To be deprived of the opportunity to turn several thousand honest dollars was bad enough; but to be discredited and discovered by one's own wife and compelled to spend the night in a cell was worse.

Mr. Sterling felt himself a very hardly used man. His one consolation was that in the morning Barnes would have slept off the effects of his potations and would be able to identify as his friend the man whom he had accused of robbing him.

Mr. Sterling could not truthfully be said to pass a peaceful and comfortable night. He was very tired; but no sooner would he sink into a half doze than he would start up, broad awake, confronted by some hitherto unforeseen contingency that might occur.

Suppose Barnes did not sober up sufficiently before court opened in the morning. Or—far worse—suppose Mary heard what had happened?

As long as she now believed her husband safe in a hotel in Buffalo, what would she think when she found out that he was really in jail in New York. What would she *say?*

Then Mr. Sterling would rise and prowl around his cell, trying to conjure up some plausible excuse to account for his failure to keep his appointment with Mr. Adams.

Morning found him pale and hollow-eyed. At the earliest possible moment he succeeded in having the hospital called up, so that he might learn just how soon Barnes could be expected to appear and secure his release.

And five minutes later he felt as if the

bottom had dropped out of the universe and left him hanging over illimitable space.

For Barnes—Barnes the jovial, Barnes the convivial—*was dead!*

It had not been intoxication, said the hospital authorities, although the man had undoubtedly had something to drink, perhaps because he felt ill; but the real cause of death had been concussion of the brain, caused by a blow on the head! In spite of all efforts, the patient had succumbed.

Horrible! Mr. Sterling forgot his own predicament in thinking of his neighbor's sad and untimely end. He even began to prepare a speech of condolence for the widow, but was recalled to the present by the arrival of his breakfast. Not that he wanted anything to eat.

He began to wonder anxiously if any one would connect him with Barnes's sudden demise, and whether he would have to stand trial. Connect him? Of course they would! A blow on the head—and a man picking his pocket! Ghastly!

The food before him stood untouched as he sat, thunderstruck at this phase of the tragedy. He—Edwin Sterling—in the dock, accused of murdering his friend and neighbor; while his other friends and neighbors stood aloof, his wife despised him, and the yellow sheets published execrable pictures of him and demanded his prompt conviction and execution!

It was too much to be borne. Mr. Sterling dropped his head in his hands and groaned aloud.

"What's the matter, Ed?" inquired a cheerful and well-remembered voice from outside the grated door.

Mr. Sterling raised his head with a jerk.

"Barnes!" he choked. "Why—why—you're dead!"

"Nary time," said the other, with a wide grin. "Man in the next bed cashed in. They got us mixed. I had a touch of the sun, and felt so bad I got a drink. It went right to my head, and I guess I didn't quite know what I was saying.

"But it's all right. Think they'll let you out now. I've heard all about it, and I'm much obliged to you for trying to take care of me. It's a shame they put you in here."

Mr. Sterling thought as much, and said so, in no unmeasured terms, when he was presently permitted to leave the station. Once he found himself on the sidewalk, however, his mood quickly changed.

"What *shall* I say to Mary?" he asked of Barnes, who had accompanied him.

"Tell her I was sick, and you stayed to take care of me," Barnes suggested.

Sterling turned a look of withering contempt upon him.

"Sat up with a sick friend, eh?" said he. "Do you suppose she'd believe that, when thousands of dollars depended upon my meeting Adams this morning and paying him a deposit?

"No! I'm not going to do anything or say anything!" he added, with swift inspiration. "I'm not going home until to-night. That was the time I expected to get back from Buffalo, and she'll never know anything about it.

"Adams won't send to the house, and if he wires to the office my secretary will hold any messages. I've got him trained."

"Good!" said Barnes. "I'll go with you."

He did; and the revenues of various resorts at Coney Island were somewhat augmented by the joint decision. They spent a most delightful day and evening, and it was not until they boarded the last boat that left for New York that Mr. Sterling's misgivings began to return.

Time-table in hand, he calculated just what train he should catch out to his home in order to give the impression of returning from Buffalo; and then he and Barnes waited in Jersey City until it was time for the local to leave.

All was quiet in the house when Mr. Sterling mounted the front porch and inserted his key in the lock. He opened the door noiselessly and stepped in.

Then a voice came from the top of the stairs.

"Is that you, Edwin?"

"Yes, my dear," replied Mr. Sterling.

He was far from calm.

"You — you didn't close that deal with Adams, did you?" pursued the voice.

Sterling's heart sank.

"Why—why, Mary, how did you know?" he stammered, completely taken aback.

He expected a torrent of abuse; but the cry that came to his ears was one of joy. Mrs. Sterling ran lightly down the stairs and precipitated herself into her husband's arms.

"I didn't *know*," she explained, "but I thought—I *hoped* that you would find him out. When I saw by the papers this evening that he had been arrested for swindling, I was so afraid that you had seen him and paid over your money before he was taken away. He had stolen lots, and—"

"M-m! Just so. But he didn't get any

of *my* money," said Mr. Sterling. "I thought it better to wait a little while and inquire a little more closely into his methods. It is as well I did. I hope you were not worried, my dear."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Sterling. "I knew you were so very clever, Edwin."

Great his relief at this and no mention of the past night's phoning!

And Mr. Sterling was fain to pat her cheek and murmur deprecation of her praise.

He deemed it inexpedient to mention the reason for his cleverness in circumventing Mr. Adams.

THE MYCROFT PEARLS.

BY LESLIE HAVERGAL BRADSHAW.

Why the Detective Decided the Robbery Must Be an Inside Job After Examining the Putty on the Broken Window-Pane.

SHE was a beautiful woman, in the first bloom of youth. Evidently of high social standing—proclaimed by the superb equipage at the door — and with an unmistakable air of distinction, she ranked far above the general run of Dixon Druce's clients.

I must confess that I was seized with an overwhelming curiosity to know what had caused her to visit my friend. She was keeping him a long time. Again I looked at my watch. Would she never go?

Picking up a novel, I was about to subside patiently in my armchair when their voices hitherto inaudible through the thick wall of the next room, seemed to approach.

The next moment Druce came in.

"An extraordinary problem in some respects," he said, as he searched on the small table for his pipe, "although the main feature about it, is not so much that it has to do with crime, as that it furnishes us with a unique little study of our fashionable neighbors."

"It is one of those featureless affairs which often give the most trouble," he continued. "Briefly, the facts are these: Our visitor"—he always used the plural pronoun, a pleasantly flattering habit—"is the niece of Mycroft, the man who is going to run for Governor this fall. It appears that his country house suffered a visit from house-breakers last night, the safe being rifled. Only one article was taken, however, although that is quite enough—her new rope of pearls."

I gasped. The Mycroft jewels were already justly famous, and the news that the wealthy clubman was to present his niece with a huge collection of exquisite pearls for her New York début was already common property among the smart set.

That he had already given them to her, however, I was unaware. The fact had not yet been discovered by the keen reporters of the society journals. With this in mind, I attempted to follow my friend's methods.

"That shows conclusively," I remarked, "that the news of his having already purchased the gift and of its presence at the house, had leaked out, perhaps, prematurely."

"No doubt," said Druce carelessly, "but that is not of much account. Servants could easily overhear their conversation. Besides, I have no idea that they took any special precautions to keep the thing secret out there.

"She would be obliged to have the jewels several days before wearing them for the first time in public—probably to practise the effect," he added, with a laugh. "Then her maid would know of it. No, my dear fellow, the main thing is not that some people might have been aware of their presence in the safe at the Mycroft house, but to find them now."

I was silent.

"An interesting element now comes in," he went on. "You will, perhaps, be surprised to hear that these pearls are *not* the gift of Mycroft after all. On the contrary, the niece pays for them herself. She has given him about thirty thousand to purchase them for her. It seems that his private secretary has had something to do with pearls, knows some one in the business, or something like that. Through him, Mycroft can get much better value than his niece could on Fifth Avenue.

"This mutual arrangement works out very well, on his side especially, as it is given out that the rope is a gift from him. He gets the credit of being extremely generous and wealthy; she of owning such valuable pearls. Each is satisfied."

"A peculiar arrangement," I remarked.

Druce did not reply. Instead he got up briskly.

"Well," he said, "I think we'll go to the scene of operations, that is, if you have nothing particular on hand just now—"

"I shall be delighted."

Accordingly we started. On the way down Fifth Avenue to the Long Island Ferry, Druce paid a visit to a jeweler, but it did not keep him long, and in less than an hour we were being shown over the Hall, the country house referred to, by Mycroft's private secretary, a dark, serious-looking young fellow.

To me Druce did not seem to take his usual interest in details. There was no minute examination of the floor or door-handles, no flashing out of the microscope every few seconds. On the contrary, he appeared to give each room, which could in any way have been connected with the robbery, a mere cursory glance.

I was amazed. This could only point to one thing: that he already had a theory. But that, I argued to myself, was impossible. It was barely two hours ago that our fair caller had been first telling her trouble to Druce in our rooms, and, to my knowledge, he was not acquainted with any member of the Hall establishment.

Besides, it was his invariable custom to keep an open mind until he had seen all there was to be seen. Evidently there was something unusual in the case, in spite of its ordinary aspect.

Consoling myself with the reflection that sooner or later I would know everything, I turned to examine things about me.

There was, with the exception of the open safe, nothing to show that any robbery had taken place, until we came to the great proof of the local police theory, namely, that the theft was the work of a gang of burglars who had been noticed in the neighborhood recently, and that they had been disturbed at the outset, so that they had fled without waiting to secure anything more than the rope of pearls.

There was a side window with a southern aspect; nothing unusual about it, excepting that a large, almost circular pane of glass had been withdrawn. With some satisfaction, I noticed the dirty mark left by the putty that had been used to prevent the fall of the glass, and made a mental note to remark on it when Druce should, as he usually did, ask me for my opinion on the matter.

Dixon examined this window with great interest. Then he leaned out of it and gazed long and earnestly at the little flower-bed beneath, and the lawn farther out. After this, he went out into the garden, and from a small, narrow path once more carefully inspected the ground under the window.

Finally he walked up to it, examined the catch and the gaping hole in the pane, climbed through, and, to the astonishment of every one, announced that he had seen enough.

Mycroft himself, who had arrived from the city while Druce was conducting his observations, was considerably surprised. He did not permit himself to betray any opinion other than that of high regard for my friend's wonderful powers, but I dimly suspected that he now thought, if he had not before, that his niece was throwing away her money on a mere theorist. There was something in his manner which was, to say the least, reserved.

As a matter of fact—so Druce had told me in the train—he had been against her getting the advice of a private detective all along, having expressed himself as satisfied with the opinion of the local police and willing to wait for them to recover the jewels and capture the thief.

But he was hospitality itself, and pressed us cordially to remain to dinner, although Druce, explaining that he must return to New York at once, politely but firmly excused himself. In a very short time we were once more back in our flat on the avenue.

During the return journey Druce said nothing, but contented himself with gazing thoughtfully out of the car window on to the dreary Long Island scenery between Jamaica and the ferry. He gave me the impression of trying to make up his mind on some point.

To me, I frankly admit, the affair was inexplicable. As far as I could see, Druce had done nothing at the Hall. The whole case lacked some of the exciting features which frequently attended his greatest efforts—the affair of Carey, the safe-cracker, for instance, and the equally thrilling conflict my friend had had with Dr. Mulford.

I felt disappointed. Still, I reflected, the solution might be interesting although for my own part I could see no way in which the theory of the local police could be gainsaid.

It was sound. Everything tended to confirm it. There was abundant evidence that robbery had taken place, and it was extremely improbable that one man or even two had attempted it unaided. The state of the window and the total absence of any clues

showed great care on the part of the perpetrators. Everything had been neatly and scientifically done, thus pointing to the presence of experts.

My musings were interrupted by Druce winding his phonograph preparatory to playing some characteristic ragtime selections—his one hobby, as far as I could discover, unless it was when his fancy switched to the opposite extreme, and he went off for an evening at the opera or a classical concert.

I looked up, to find him surveying me with a smile of quiet amusement.

"Just a second," he said, as he stopped winding. "Directly I get this off I'll let you know the secret—if that is what you are waiting for."

My vigorous nod affirmed his supposition. "This" was a musical gem of the cake-walk order, entitled: "A Coon Band Contest." It was unusually bright and entertaining for that class of composition, and one of the few I could enjoy. Druce frequently played it; in fact, it was a favorite of his.

Directly the classic strains of the record had ended, he drew his chair up to the window.

"A very simple, though ingenious scheme," he remarked, "to make money. That is the answer to this problem. Of course all robberies are planned to make money, but this has unique features. In fact, its very simplicity—I might almost say its ridiculous obviousness—has completely baffled our lynx-eyed friends of the local force."

"I must admit," I remarked, "that they are entitled to sympathy."

Druce laughed. He had a hearty laugh, one to which it was a pleasure to listen. It indicated genuine merriment. For myself I could not see that there was anything to laugh at, so I merely watched him light his pipe and puff contentedly for a few moments.

"In some respects," he said, "it is one of the most interesting little problems I have looked into since the case of Le Mesurier, the French forger, in 1899. What I mean is that while it presents no startling incidents, the identity of the criminal is bound to be a complete surprise. It is one of those cases where circumstantial evidence points one way, and the truth in exactly the opposite direction.

"Now, Matthews, barring the personal interview I had with our client, the details of which you know, and the few minutes I was in Goldstein's the jeweler's, you have been with me ever since the affair was brought to my attention. You have seen practically everything, especially at the scene of the robbery, that I have. What do you make of it?"

"There seems little doubt," I replied cautiously, "that a gang of thieves, such as the ones the police report having seen in the vicinity, heard in some way, probably through the servants, of the presence of the jewels, and in their usual manner appropriated them. I cannot see any other theory that will fit the facts."

Druce shook his head.

"No, Matthews," he said. "You have made your old mistake of confusing the possible, and perhaps plausible, with the really probable."

I did not feel hurt at this, because I knew I could never hope to succeed along this line. But all the same I liked to make efforts at deduction occasionally.

"I will tell you just how I arrived at the solution," he continued, tilting his chair slightly. "The first thing that caught my eye at this house—I am sorry to be obliged to confess that it was not the beauty of the paintings, bric-à-brac, etc.—was the window."

"But you saw that last."

"First and last. It, as you saw, showed suspicious marks."

"Very."

"Now, there was one point about the cutting of the glass which seems to have escaped everybody, namely, that it was not done from the outside, but *from the inside*."

I stared.

"But," I objected, "I noticed the putty marks especially. It looked as though—well, as though it had been done in the orthodox fashion."

"Of course it did. That is just where the local police went off the track. They immediately connected this supposed fact with their knowledge of the previous presence of certain burglars, and then stopped work. 'Another job done?' said they to themselves. 'Let's go and get a drink.' It was typical of their methods."

"How do you know the pane was taken out from the inside?"

"From several indications. The way it is cut for one thing; the fact that the putty mark was on the inside for another. This showed me at once that the burglary was all a blind, especially as the catch was unfastened. You see, Matthews, a genuine burglar would have tried the catch first, and be-

sides, he would only have cut the glass as a last resort. This opinion of mine was definitely confirmed by the footsteps which you may have noticed on the little flower-bed outside. To me it was evident that they were artificial."

"What!"

"Made on purpose, if you prefer that," he replied. "I couldn't have laid much better false tracks myself. They were perfectly natural in many respects. The weak point was the grass. It belied them. The person who laid the tracks walked up to the edge of the grass with one pair of shoes on, stooped down, and made the footprints on the bed by means of another pair placed on his hands. I learned this by observing the grass. It was much more flattened by the toes of the stooping person than by the heels. In fact, the latter at the edge of the lawn had made very little impression, showing that he was sitting on his haunches, leaning over, all the weight of his body being on his toes. Do I make myself plain?"

"Perfectly."

"Again, it was evident that the footprints on the flower-bed were not made by the shoes which trod on the grass, because they were half a size smaller and much more pointed in the toe. Another thing, the length of stride on grass and bed varied considerably. This was really the conclusive point. Our first deduction is then established—the theft was committed by *some one inside the house*."

"Wonderful!" I ejaculated.

"Not at all. The next question is, how were the jewels taken? The safe is an excellent one, and is not marked in any way. Inference: it was opened by some one who knew the combination. Our second deduction, then, is that the person in the house who stole the pearls had ready access to the safe. This clears the servants."

"The private secretary?" I murmured.

"That remains to be seen. Never jump at conclusions. Admitting for the sake of argument that you are correct, what motive do you suggest? The gems, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"So I thought. Now, ask yourself, Matthews, if you were in his place, *would* you make any attempt to steal those jewels? You would have access to the safe, and that fact would be against you at the very beginning, for Mycroft himself is the only other person who knows the combination. Directly the pearls are gone who is first suspected? Why, the private secretary, of course.

"Mycroft immediately questions him and can easily tell whether he is guilty. If he has disposed of the pearls they are traced; if not, they are found where they have been hidden. To attempt to get away would of course be useless, an evidence of guilt in itself. Besides, we know that this young man has not fled, and that Mycroft does not suspect him. It would not, therefore, be worth while for him to take the valuables unless he could divert suspicion in the manner I have outlined. I thought of his doing this, but I liked the looks of him and I wanted something more satisfactory.

"You know, Matthews, you can *feel* when a man is guilty. That fellow is not. Well, to make certain in regard to him, I dropped in at Goldstein's to learn more about the pearls. By means of a little confidential talk with Goldstein himself—there are few things he would refuse me—I gained access to his private ledger. And now I'm going to surprise you. What do you think I found?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"The pearls were imitation!" he cried, with exultation. "They only cost a few dollars at the outside."

I sprang to my feet.

"What!" I shouted.

"Fact, I assure you."

"But they cost thirty thousand dollars."

"So Mycroft gave out that they would cost. But he bought these imitations instead of the real ones; and, what is more, he bought them himself. The private secretary had nothing to do with it."

I began to recover myself a little.

"I suppose," I remarked, "that he feared robbery, and took this means of safeguarding himself. It must have shown him the weakness of his safe. It was a clever thing."

Druce looked doubtful.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "Why should he keep it secret from his niece? She believes the jewels were real. The affair has been a great shock and disappointment to her. It is, to say the least, most unkind of Mycroft."

"One can never tell," I argued. "There may be all kinds of reasons why he should have taken this course. Outsiders can never know the real inside facts of things like this. Anyway, everything is all right now. The loss is trifling. The young lady will be tremendously grateful. My dear fellow, I congratuate you."

Druce got up, shook his pipe, and leaned with his back against the mantelpiece.

"Matthews," he said, "you are overlooking the main point. You are rejoicing over

a mere side issue—the fact of the real extent of the loss. We still have to discover the thief. Don't you see it is absurd to regard the case closed? I obtained this information before we left Manhattan. What do you think we visited the Hall for?"

"I beg your pardon," I said, crestfallen; "I had forgotten that."

"It is everything," he answered. "Now, we have seen that there has been no genuine burglary, and further we have agreed that the safe must have been opened by some one in the house. And further still, we know that only two persons had access to the safe. Therefore, the thief must be one of those two."

"I give it up," I replied, with resignation. "I don't see how your theory can be correct. You say you do not believe it is the secretary. The other is Mycroft himself. The whole thing baffles me. Who *is* the thief?"

Druce leaned forward with a peculiar impressiveness.

"Mycroft himself," he said.

I almost laughed outright. It was too much. My friend's brain, thought I, was at last turned.

We had started out with an ordinary kind of burglary, although among rich people, and ended with implicating a well-known public man, a philanthropist, in fact. I was quite prepared to hear Druce go on to say that the mayor was an accomplice, and that Cardinal Gibbons or Dr. Parkhurst had been waiting with a cart to carry the swag away.

"Go on," I said feebly, "go on. I am now sitting up in bed and taking nourishment. Why, man, Mycroft is—well, one of the leading figures of the country. You have erred at last, Druce."

"By no means," he asserted, with conviction. "Mycroft took those jewels and made those false tracks himself."

"But why should he? It's absurd."

"He was hard up. The market has been rocky lately. There is no knowing how much he is in debt. The man was in a corner. Good as the furnishings at the Hall are, I noticed that many of his more valuable things were gone."

"So you have been there before?"

"Several times. Knowing that he must have money at any cost, he conceived the plan of taking his niece's money, presumably to purchase the pearls, and, by paying a few dollars for imitations, pocketing the balance."

"And what about the safe?"

"He had to be careful. The imitation had deceived the girl easily enough, but would it get past her friends? When the pearls were exposed to the full blaze of a drawing-room light, would not the deception be revealed? Many society women, you know, are experts on jewelry. Mycroft had to prevent his niece from wearing the gems in public. By far the best way was to have a robbery. The effect would be twofold. He would get advertising of his wealth, which would improve his credit, and it would bring his niece into prominence and perhaps an early marriage. Hence more money, a consummation devoutly to be wished.

"Again, it would protect the Hall against future burglaries, as every knight of the dark-lantern would fight shy of the place. They would all know the effect upon Mycroft of the proverb, 'Once bitten, twice shy.'

"Next, he would have to remove all traces of the imitation jewels. Goldstein, of course, had not any idea of the identity of his customer. Mycroft, therefore, had to rifle the safe, and do it himself.

"Fortunately, everything was in his favor. It was a dark night, and he needed no light. The outside work, laying the false tracks, did not take long. The window-pane was a more ticklish job, but he did it from the inside, and had more time, because there was less risk of being discovered. The sea got rid of the incriminating pearls, I have no doubt.

"Everything, therefore, was clear. The niece would never dream of such a thing happening; the local police would go on prosecuting their gang-of-burglars theory, and it would be generally accepted. The affair, in a word, would be closed, but for—"

"You," I interrupted, with admiration.

It was not until later in the evening that it occurred to me to ask Druce how he was going to acquaint his client with his discovery.

"I confess, Matthews," he said, "that is quite a problem. However, she is not due until eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, and I have no doubt that my ingenuity will help me out. I'll go to bed and sleep over it."

He did. I soon followed his example, but I could not sleep. Here, it seemed to me, there was an opportunity of applying his methods in thinking out a way of telling the girl without incriminating her uncle. But how?

Still wondering, I fell asleep.

The first thing the next morning the problem was solved. Not, however, by Druce, and not, of course, by myself, but by that useful article of modern civilization, the daily newspaper.

As I picked up the *Sun*, my eye was immediately caught by an unusually large headline. I started to read aloud, when I was interrupted by an exclamation from Druce.

He had just unfolded his paper, and saw the news, too.

Mycroft was dead.

Each account was long, and gave an interesting description of the man's career. He had died from heart-disease, aggravated by worry. His niece had been with him to the last.

"*Requiescat in pace,*" said Druce quietly.

"Amen," I replied.

THE CASHIER'S LOOPHOLE.

BY ROBERT KEENE.

His Carefully Devised Plan to Cover a Shortage, and What Happened to It in the Carrying Out.

BEHIND the locked door of his office in the Higginsville Home Bank sat Moxley, the cashier, making up his mind to blow out his brains.

He had been stealing from the safe to play the Eastern stock market—a fact that he had concealed for a long time by systematically juggling the books—and now the bank examiner was coming to discover a shortage in the actual cash, and Moxley was going to jail.

With a gasp, he snatched up the pistol from the desk before him and pressed it to his head. He couldn't stay behind to face the disgrace of exposure and arrest. He closed his eyes and curved his finger on the trigger.

One more minute and the two tellers and one bookkeeper who made up the working force of Higginsville's only bank would break in at the door and find him, stretched out lifeless and still on the floor.

Would they wonder why he had done it? Perhaps, the pistol having dropped from his hand after making that black hole in his brow, and the connection being destroyed between the weapon and his use of it, it might look as if he had been murdered—

Suddenly he lowered the gun.

An idea had just darted into his mind. Was it possible?—had he stumbled on a way to save himself? He rose and fell to pacing the floor, breathing fast, his hands opening and closing at his sides.

Suppose he took that revolver with him into the safe at the dinner-hour, which was near at hand? It was the custom in the little country bank for the tellers and bookkeeper to go home at noon and leave the institution in sole charge of the cashier.

Suppose he inflicted a harmless scalp wound upon himself, instead of blowing out his brains, and lay down on the floor of the safe, in his own blood, to wait for the return of the tellers? When they picked him up he could tell the following story:

A desperate burglar had come into the safe while he, Moxley, was there on some unimportant business. The thief had tried to hold up the cashier at the point of a pistol, and the latter, throwing all caution to the winds, had grappled with the desperado and been shot.

Just before he lost consciousness, or as he fell, Moxley could claim that he had seen the burglar grab a large bundle of bills and make off. In that bundle of bills was the exact amount that the cashier, unknown to a soul, had himself stolen.

"Why not?" he whispered, striking his hands together. "Why not chance it? It's an old game, worked hundreds of times before. Why can't I get away with it?"

There was a knock at the locked door.

One of the tellers must be outside now to announce that it was noontime, and that he and his fellows were ready to depart. Moxley caught up the pistol from the desk and hid it in his pocket. By an effort he steadied himself, and called out that he would be there in a moment.

He heard the man's footsteps die away, and then he crossed the room on tiptoe and quietly unlocked the door. As he stepped out of his private office the coat-tails of the last employee were vanishing through the entrance to the street.

The cashier was alone, and unwatched. Now was the time to put into practise his plan—if he dared risk it. At any minute somebody might come in, a depositor, a farmer for a loan, and the bank would no longer be deserted.

Casting one apprehensive look over the

place, Moxley skulked back to the open safe and stepped inside. He marked the spot on the floor of the vault where he would be found, and took the revolver from his pocket.

At a sudden sound behind him he wheeled, whipping the weapon out of sight under his coat.

Nobody was there. Yet, he could have sworn that he had heard a step, a cautious footfall, behind him.

The cold sweat thick on his brow, he came out of the safe and walked around, looking into every corner and crevice of the vacant bank. A shadow flitted past the drawn curtains of the front windows—and he understood that it was the footfall of a passer-by on the street outside that he had heard.

This made him think. Since he could hear from the vault what went on in the street, the shot that he was going to take at himself would be instantly noticed outside.

Suppose a bystander, hearing the report of the pistol, should run at once into the bank and come upon Moxley before the smoke had cleared away? How, then, could he account for the escape unseen of the mythical burglar whom he was going to credit with having shot him?

Walking back into the safe, Moxley realized that he ran a risk here, and a grave one, too, of having his story discredited. It wouldn't do to attract attention to his wounded self too soon.

A bright idea occurred to him. Why shoot himself at all, and make a lot of unnecessary noise over his wounding?

It would do just as well if he only hit himself with the butt-end of the revolver, drawing blood from a blow on his skull.

He was now standing over the place in the vault where he wanted to be picked up. Stepping to one side, he kicked over a couple of bags of coin, tore loose a half-dozen packages of greenbacks, which he strewed on the floor, and then, having made the safe look as though a desperate struggle had happened there, he returned to the middle of the vault.

He took the revolver in his hand, tapping the butt once or twice against the side of his head to measure the weight of the blow he would need to deal himself in order to leave a creditable mark.

His story was going to be a little different now. It would be a smash on the skull, and not a shot, that he had received from the imaginary assailant whose attack had brought him to the bleeding, semi-conscious state in which he would be found.

Well, it was now or never.

Moxley drew back his hand. He hit himself a glancing blow on the side of the temple with the handle of the gun.

And then he dropped gently down in a heap on the floor of the safe.

II.

Two pairs of strong arms lifted the cashier into a sitting posture. A dipperful of cool water was thrown into his white face. Some one put a bottle to his lips and a trickle of fire ran down his throat.

Whereupon Moxley opened his eyes.

"Where—am I?" he murmured.

He stared blankly into the anxious faces of the two tellers who bent solicitously over him.

"What—what has happened?"

"That is what you will have to tell us, sir!" said the man who had held the brandy to his lips. "Jordan and I came back from lunch just now, and we couldn't find you anywhere. We ran in here to look for you—"

"And we came upon you lying senseless in a puddle of blood!" broke in the other. "There was an ugly wound in the side of your head, and this gun was on the floor beside you. Tell us what happened?"

The cashier looked dully around him at the walls of the safe. He put up one limp hand to his head, and gazed stupidly at the blood that came away on his fingers.

And then his dazed faculties appeared to clear.

"I remember now!" he said. "The bank examiner was coming to-morrow. I knew that I would be caught—that the money I had stolen to invest in stocks would be discovered. And then I had an idea.

"I came into the vault when everybody had gone to dinner. And I knocked myself out to make it look as though I had been in a terrific struggle with a burglar, who made off with the money I had taken.

"Now, you see, nobody will ever suspect me. There are the books—the books that I have fixed—"

With a little sigh the cashier's eyes closed, and he lapsed into unconsciousness once more.

III.

THE next time he came to it was to find himself lying on the rug in his own office, with one of the tellers sitting, as though on guard, at the desk beside him.

"Did they catch the burglar who nearly killed me in the safe just now?" the cashier whispered.

The teller grimly smiled.

"They haven't caught him yet!" he said.

"I hope they nab him with the money I saw him take as I fell," Moxley murmured weakly, "before the bank-examiner gets here to-morrow."

"The bank-examiner," remarked the other, "isn't coming to-morrow."

"He's not?"

Moxley wet his lips. His eyes were fixed on the teller's face, and there was something about the latter's smile that made him vaguely uneasy.

"The auditor wired in this morning," said the teller quietly, "that he wouldn't be here for two weeks. I thought you'd heard it?"

"I—I didn't," faltered the cashier.

"Here's another telegram," remarked the other, picking up a sheet of paper from Moxley's desk. "It came about an hour ago. Shall I read it? It's addressed to you."

He smoothed out the sheet.

"'Stocks rose to your instructed selling-point this A.M. You have cleared eight thousand dollars, which we hold to your order.' Does that interest you, Mr. Moxley?"

The amount was exactly what he had stolen from the bank! Staring at the smiling teller, Moxley's cheeks were ashen.

"I—that can't be for me!" he stammered. "You—I never had anything to do with any stocks. You ought to know that—"

"Excuse me!" And the teller leaned forward. "You seem to forget," said he, "that I know *everything!*"

The cashier half rose from the rug. All at once he understood. It all came back to him what sort of story he had told when he was first picked up in the safe suffering from the effects of the blow he had given himself which had dazed his brain.

He recognized the irony of the teller's smile. It dawned on him that he had given himself away.

He had hit himself too hard.

JONES, OF CONNECTICUT.

BY HARTRIDGE D. TYLER.

A Hospital Mix-Up That Made a Husband Mad and Sadly Perplexed a Wife.

THE car whizzed around the curve.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The motorman put all his weight on the brake and strove to stop. A well-built, nicely-dressed, middle-aged man, with grayish hair, was hurrying across within a foot of the fender.

Clang! Clang!

The motorman yelled: "Git off, you fool!"

But his car was already upon the pedestrian. It was too late. With a smash the fender struck him, and a husky policeman leaped over the tracks and caught the man just before he struck the pavement.

The motorman, his car at a dead standstill, removed the controller and jumped down to the street. The conductor came running up from the rear.

"The fool wouldn't get out of the way. I warned him with the bell," cried the motorman.

"It's a nasty corner," agreed the policeman.

"Bad hurt?" asked the conductor, thrusting himself in between them with ready notebook and pencil.

"Ain't dead!" replied the policeman, feeling the man's chest and getting an erratic heart-beat.

"Pretty bad smash; I seen him get hit," put in a bystander.

"Ring for an ambulance," ordered the policeman, turning to one of his brother officers who had run up.

The call was sent in. The usual crowd collected, the policeman pushed back the eager curiosity-seekers with his accustomed growl of, "Stand back an' give him air. Anybody ought to have sense enough to stand away. Give him air!"

The conductor meantime had begun searching the pockets of the prostrate man for something with which to identify him, it being his business to write out a report of the accident and hand it in at the end of his run.

"Better wait!" the policeman told him, coming back after pushing the crowd away at least two inches. "They'll search him at the hopsital."

"Sure, that's right," said the conductor, stopping in his search abruptly and helping to push back the crowd.

In his efforts he dropped his pencil and stooped to pick it up. It had rolled near the insensible form on the curb and he had to pull aside the coat to find it. At that moment an ambulance raced around the corner.

It bore on its side in gilt letters, "Gramercy Hospital," and the energetic little intern jumped down and, with the aid of the policeman, lifted the prostrate form of the injured man into the swinging cot within.

"I'll go along," said the policeman, "my relief's over there, an' as the body ain't identified yet I'll have to get the particulars for my report."

"All right. Jump in," cried the intern, signaling his driver to be off.

With a clatter and clash they dashed through the crowd and whirled up the street.

The conductor had already started back to his car. The motorman stooped and picked up something, calling to his car-mate, "Here's your pencil, Bill."

"No, I picked it up," answered the conductor, jumping aboard and giving the signal to go ahead, and in five minutes the ambulance reached the hospital.

They diagnosed the case at once. It was a hard blow, and the doctors agreed that the man's stupor might last for hours.

The upshot was that the doctors were puzzled and advised that the relatives of the man be notified at once, for fear something of a serious nature should result.

The intern who had brought in the case turned to the policeman.

"Got his name and address yet?" he asked.

"No. He hasn't been searched."

"Here," one of the doctors threw the officer the man's coat, and he went through it with practised fingers.

"Well, whom shall we notify?" asked one of the interns, coming back to where the policeman stood rummaging the coat and trousers.

"There ain't a thing on him but a watch without initials—and this," replied the officer, holding out a slip of paper.

The intern opened it quickly and found it to be a telegraph form.

"Why," cried the policeman, looking over his shoulder, "it's one of them new night letter telegrams, fifty words for the price of ten, ain't it?"

"Yes. See. Here's an address," cried the intern, and he read the following penciled message:

> MRS. HENRY PARKER, 350 RIVERSIDE DRIVE:
> Awfully sorry your husband is in Gramercy Hospital. Best wishes and hopes for a speedy recovery. Will return to the city on Tuesday. Be of good cheer and wire anything of importance. JONES, CONNECTICUT.

"Gramercy Hospital!" cried the policeman. "Well, luck's right with us. I thought he'd be hard to identify. But here he's got a friend right in the hospital."

"Yes, I know the case. Henry Parker."

"I'd read that night telegram again first," said the officer in a perplexed tone. "It doesn't just look as though this Henry Parker ought to know about the telegram; you see it's addressed to *Mrs.* Parker."

"But the fellow signs himself 'Jones, Connecticut.' It looks all right to me," answered the intern.

"That's a pretty vague address," said the policeman, "I'll bet there's as many as three or four Joneses in the little State of Connecticut."

"But we've got to do something, and I don't think it's anything that would cause Mr. Parker alarm. It looks proper enough."

"Better call up Mrs. Parker first," suggested the policeman.

"Maybe that *would* be best."

The intern went off to the telephone at once and had Mrs. Parker on the wire.

"There's a gentleman been brought into the hospital here, Mrs. Parker," he explained. "He's a middle-aged man, gray suit, wears spectacles, and has grayish hair. He has a telegram in his pocket addressed to you. It is signed, 'Jones, Connecticut.' Do you know the gentleman?"

"Why, no," she answered after a pause. "How peculiar. I know several Mr. Jones but none who answer that description."

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"But how could he come by that telegram. He was just going to send it to you, evidently. It is worded in such a way that one would think he knew you well."

"I certainly do not know any man of the name of Jones answering that description."

"Maybe we had better have your husband, who is here, look at him. He might be able to identify him."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't do that?" cried Mrs. Parker.

"Why not? It is very important. The man might die, and his relatives must be notified."

"Oh, awful. I can't understand it. I'll be right down," she cried in answer. "But don't trouble Mr. Parker with this case. He might get a set-back from it."

"Well, if it becomes imperative we'll have to. It is the only means of identification at hand."

The intern hung up the receiver as the lady assured him in a nervous tone that she would be there immediately.

"Now this is a nice mix-up," he said, turning to the officer. "This Jonesy, of Connecticut, must be a smooth one. It's a wonder he wouldn't carry something more with him for identification than a telegram to another man's wife."

At that moment one of the head doctors entered the room

"Have you notified the relatives on that medulla oblongata case?" he asked nervously.

"Why, no," answered the intern in a puzzled manner. "There's nothing on him to show who his relatives are. This is all."

He handed the message to his superior and stood waiting for a comment.

"Well, why don't you show the man to Mr. Parker, he's in good shape now."

"But Mrs. Parker doesn't want us to say anything to Mr. Parker about it. Can't you see, the telegram is a rather delicate thing to handle."

"Delicacy be hanged!" cried the chief doctor. "Bring Parker in to identify the man. We can't lose any time."

So the intern went off and soon returned with a thin little elderly man in a wheel-chair. He brought the chair to a standstill before the unidentified one's cot.

"Can you tell me the name of this gentleman?" he requested.

"No. I never saw him before," was the positive answer, after one look.

"You don't know him?" cried the intern.

At that moment a telephone bell rang in the ward, the intern answered and heard Mrs. Parker's voice.

"Oh," she cried. "about that telegram and 'Jones,' in Connecticut. I have just thought. I have a friend, Albert Jones, his wife and I are great friends. I just recalled that they are spending the week-end at their farm in Connecticut. But Albert Jones doesn't answer the description of your patient in any way. I am coming right down."

She hung up and the intern turned back to Mr. Parker, who sat stupidly looking at the white, motionless face on the cot before him.

"I have just received a message from your wife. She says she knows Mr. Jones, but that the Jones in Connecticut does not answer the description of this man."

"My wife! What are you talking about? Are you crazy, young man," cried Mr. Parker irascibly.

"No, here!" The intern shoved the telegram into Mr. Parker's hand.

"Good Lord!" the patient cried as he finished reading it. "I don't know any Jones in Connecticut. Who can the fellow be that's wiring to my wife like this while I'm locked up in this infernal hospital?"

"Be calm, Mr. Parker. You must know this man. Your wife says she is a great friend of the wife of Mr. Albert Jones, who is spending the week-end on his farm in Connecticut."

"So she is," he answered. "But this isn't Al Jones. Al and I went to school together. I never saw this—this impostor before."

He glared at the dead-white, fixed face before him and went very red as he clenched his fists.

The policeman touched the intern on the arm.

"I told you not to say anything," he remarked softly. "There's something wrong all right. I didn't like the way that telegram was worded. It was foolish to show it to Mr. Parker; his wife won't be thankin' you for it, you can bet."

"But who the deuce is this other Jones, of Connecticut, lying on the couch here," cried the intern, turning back to Mr. Parker. "This is the Jones who signed the telegram, and your wife says she knows an Albert Jones in Connecticut but that he doesn't look anything like the man here."

"Of course he doesn't," cried Mr. Parker. "Al Jones is over six feet tall and he's twice as broad as that shrimp lying there."

"Well, we'll have to wait till your wife comes, then. She must know him. He may be some other Jones of Connecticut, but she'll know him all right. The wire is addressed to her; there's no mistake about that."

"Oh, no. There's no mistake about that," sneered Mr. Parker. "Yes, we'll wait till my wife comes, she'll explain, she'll *have* to explain," he finished with a snap.

At that moment the patient began to show

signs of coming to. The chief doctor motioned to the intern to take Mr. Parker away just as Mrs. Parker rushed into the hospital and was admitted to the ward where the hurt man lay.

"Do you know the man?" asked the doctor, pointing to the cot.

"No," said Mrs. Parker, looking into the blank eyes. "I never saw his face in my life before."

She flushed as she spoke, for at that moment Mr. Parker was wheeled back into the ward.

"Be good enough to explain about your friend who sends you intimate telegrams while I'm sick in the hospital here," he cried, looking very coolly at his wife.

"Oh, Henry," she exclaimed. "I never saw him in my life. You know I didn't. I thought it might be Al Jones. But it isn't."

"He seemed to know your name and address rather well for a stranger," sneered the irritable Mr. Parker.

"Can't you believe me," she said calmly. "I wouldn't lie to you. I never saw him before, Henry."

"Then explain how he got your name and address, and knew all about me and was making an appointment to meet you in the city Tuesday."

"Oh—" she threw out her hands toward him. "I can't, Henry. There is some awful mistake here."

"And it's up to you to explain it. First you say you think you know the man and now you deny it completely."

"I don't deny anything. Oh, I never saw or heard of him before."

The patient made a move on his narrow cot and all eyes turned toward him.

"Be quiet. He's going to speak," said the doctor, motioning to silence them.

The man's mouth opened and his eyes began to light up.

"I—I say," he drawled.

"Yes," said the doctor, bending close. "You say what?"

The room was as silent as death, not a breath, not a whisper; every ear was tuned to catch the unidentified man's faintest whisper.

"I say, what's all this about?" he finished vaguely, looking around the room with wondering eyes.

"You were hit by a car. You are in a hospital."

"Oh, was I?" he answered with a vague smile. "I thought maybe it was Mr. Jones's automobile. I don't seem to remember anything but riding in that. Yes, yes, I did come back to the city."

"Mr. Jones!" cried the Parkers, the policeman, and the interns in unison.

"Yes, Albert Jones, his name is. I can remember that, but I can't—"

"Can't what?" cried the doctor, as his patient seemed to slip back to a blank state.

"What is your own name?" cried Mr. Parker in a hard tone.

"That's just it," drawled the patient, "I can't—I can't remember my own name. But I live in the city here somewhere. Wait a minute. There's something seems to turn black every time I try to think of my own name or—"

"But can't you think of your address?" cried Parker, leaning forward in his wheelchair."

"No, you see, I know I live in the city. It's somewhere near here." He was getting stronger now and talked more easily. "I see the name printed on the card hanging up there. 'Gramercy Hospital,' I live somewhere near here. Twenty—Twenty-Seventh Street. That's it!" he cried happily.

"But can't you remember your name?" demanded Mr. Parker. "Why are you sending telegrams to my wife and signing them 'Jones' unless that is your name? Is Jones your name?"

"Oh, no," the other smiled; "I'd know my name in a minute if I could hear it. But it isn't Jones. I think it begins with an 'H.'"

"But—" cried Mr. Parker, rising in his chair and gripping the handles.

The doctor cut him off and said in a low voice:

"Give him time. He'll remember shortly."

"Yes," said the patient weakly, almost to himself, as he gave a little laugh, "I think my name begins with 'H.' Isn't it funny, not to know your own name?"

"It's funny if you look at it that way," growled Parker under his breath, glancing up at his wife, who seemed even more nervous now that the man was beginning to remember.

"Let him rest a few minutes; all of you come away," ordered the doctor.

He drew them to a corner of the room and put a white screen around the cot.

"I guess it'll take some time for him to come to," said the policeman to the intern. "I'll have to be getting back. Will you call me up at the station when you find out his name? I'll want it for my report?"

"Why, yes, but you'd better wait! He may come to his senses at any minute."

"No, I'll have to be goin'. But say, can I use your phone? I promised to call up the conductor on the car that hit him."

"Sure, you can use the phone," said the intern, showing him the way to the booth.

While the policeman was thus engaged the head doctor was trying to help the unidentified man remember his name. He tried all the names beginning with "H" that he could think up, but no welcome sign of intelligence answered these suggestions.

"Well, we'll have to give it up for the night," said the doctor. "Maybe he'll be rested enough in the morning to remember."

"I'd like to have this matter settled at once," growled Mr. Parker. "He's playing a game, that's all. He knows who I am and he's afraid to say who he is because he can't explain why he was sending that telegram to my wife."

"Oh, Henry, you mustn't be so—"

"Now, I'll have to ask you people to wait," the doctor cut them off.

They started to leave the cot when the policeman burst from the telephone booth and rushed to them. All turned back in wonder and listened as the officer stooped down beside the patient and asked:

"Isn't your name Hudson, and don't you live at 89 East Twenty-Seventh?"

"Why, yes," the man's face lit up with joy. "Why, yes, that's it, my name is Hudson. William Wardlaw Hudson. William Wardlaw Hudson," he repeated it with great satisfaction. "And I live at 89 East Twenty-Seventh Street. That's right. William Wardlaw Hudson, that's me."

"And you're a playwright?" put in the officer, looking around at the astonished group for applause.

"I do write plays, yes," answered the patient with a joyful smile.

"Good Lord!" cried Parker, dropping back weakly in his wheeled chair.

His wife rushed to his aid, fearing the surprise had been too much for him.

"But how did you know my name?" cried the patient, who seemed to be fully recovered now.

"I just found out over the telephone. The conductor of the car that knocked you down asked me to phone him when we found out your name. I called him up and told him you was unidentified. He laughed at me an' said he'd put in the report of the accident to the boss at the barns ten minutes ago. Then he gave me your full address an' the address he had found in the telephone directory."

"But how did he find out my name?" cried the patient, while all the others drew closer and listened tensely.

"Why, it seems he dropped his pencil after he started to search your clothes, an' when he started to pick it up it had rolled under you. He picked up a pencil that had fallen out of your pocket. He didn't notice it till after the motorman found his own pencil. Then he looked at the one he had picked up. It was yours."

"Why, of course, how simple," smiled the playwright.

"But I don't understand," put in Mr. Parker.

"*My name was on the pencil,*" answered William Wardlaw Hudson with a broad smile.

"Your name was on the pencil?" echoed Parker.

"Yes, you see, it's a souvenir. I belong to the Pen and Pencil Club. We had a little banquet the other night and each guest was presented with a little box of pencils with his name stamped in gilt upon them."

"So you are really William Wardlaw Hudson," smiled Mrs. Parker, going over and taking his hand. "I am so glad to know you at last. I have heard the Joneses speak of you often."

"Al always wanted us to meet," Parker forced a smile and reached out his hand to the playwright.

"I'm glad to know both of you. I've heard the Joneses speak of the Parkers so often. I was out at their farm to-day, we covered over a hundred miles in the motor and I think that helped put my head off. I guess I was in more or less of a daze when I arrived in the city."

"But say," put in Parker, "how on earth did you happen to be carrying that telegram of Al's?"

"Why, you see, they just heard of your husband's illness and Al wrote the wire for the whole family, you know."

"Yes, I see," put in Mrs. Parker; "I was so confused by the telegram when the intern read it to me over the phone. I didn't think of the Joneses being off in Connecticut."

"But how did you get the telegram?" repeated Mr. Parker with a smile.

"Why, the service is so poor out there, I told Al I'd send it from the city for him as soon as I got in. I had just come up out of the Subway and was crossing the street to the telegraph office to send the message to your wife when that blundering car came along and struck me amidships."

Proud of the heating

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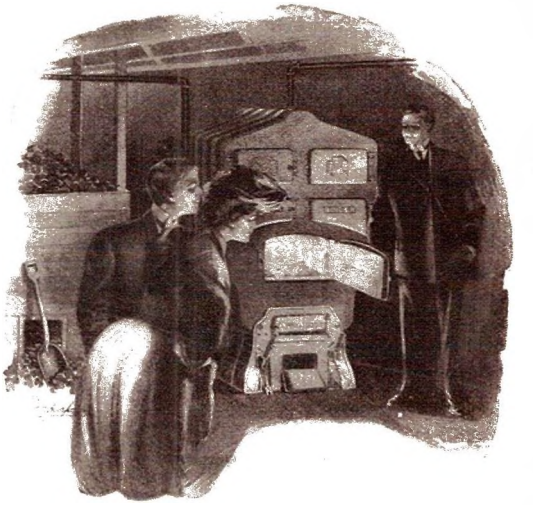

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The world-wide, rapidly increasing use of IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators proves that they are the most economical in fuel consumption of all heaters yet made and the simplest to care for. They are an investment — not an expense — as the savings they bring about soon repay their cost.

A No. 2118 IDEAL Boiler and 270 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing owner $135, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.

A No. A-241 IDEAL Boiler and 461 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing owner $215, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.

At these prices the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which installation is extra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.

If you want to make your home a haven of warmth, don't wait until you build, but comfort your present house with an outfit of IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators. Put in now without disturbing your old heaters until ready to start fire in the new.

Ask for book (free) "Ideal Heating" which tells all the advantages of the world-famous IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators. Showrooms in all large cities.

Write Dept. A34 **AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY** CHICAGO

Are You A Time Improver

Mark well the group of pictures on the left and the group on the right. One shows men who have utilized their spare time and gained positions of influence and worth. The other shows the class of men who are ever struggling along in poor "jobs." They have just as much spare time as the time improver, but they waste it. Some waste it on the corner, in the pool room, at the theater, or otherwise.

Every man is entitled to some pleasure and recreation, but as time is an asset more valuable even than money, every man owes it to himself to utilize a certain portion of his spare time for self improvement.

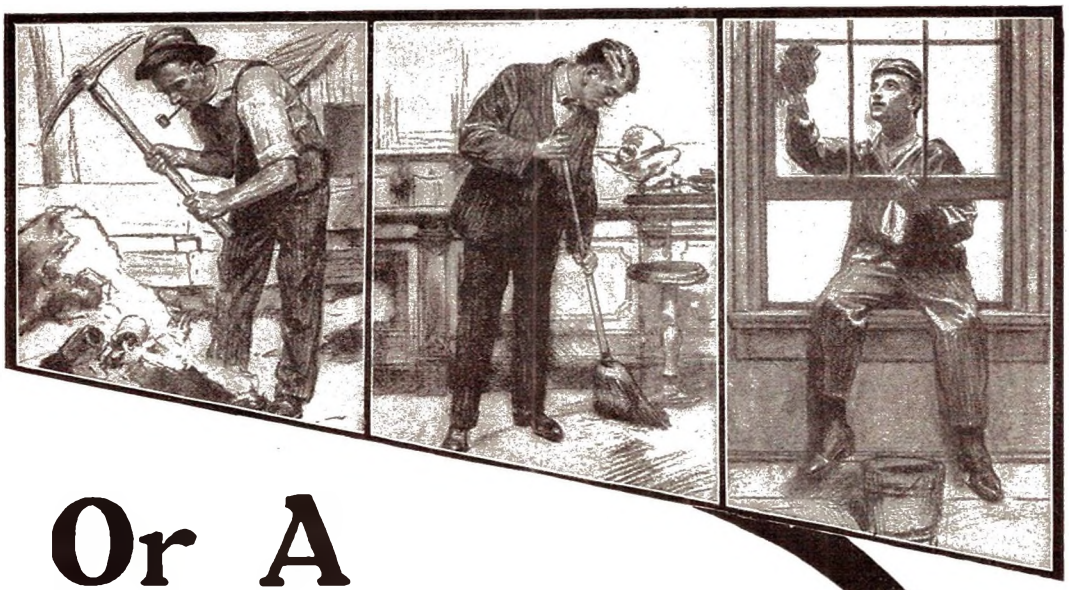
If you have two hours a day unoccupied, we guarantee that one hour of that time properly applied under I. C. S. direction will qualify you for a good position at double, triple or quadruple your wages.

This is not a mere statement for you to believe or not believe as you choose; it is backed up by a world of proof that no one can deny. We can send you the names and addresses of thousands of men who have advanced from lowly positions to some of the most prominent places in business, science and art.

For instance, Ernest Murphy, who used his spare time under I. C. S. direction, was advanced from carpenter to Assistant Consulting Engineer; J. J. Loud jumped from laborer to Assistant Electrician; Joseph Worden, telegraph operator to draftsman; Wilson P. Hunt from apprentice to President of a large manufacturing concern; S. G. Brinton from janitor to the position of Assistant Postmaster.

These are only a few of thousands, the names and addresses of whom you can have on application, so you can ask them for yourself. You will find they had no more brains than you; that they had no greater ability; that they had no more spare time; that they had no more spare cash; but they did have the ambition and common sense to use their time to advantage instead of wasting it.

It is easy to find out how this can be done. It is simply up to you.



Or A Time Waster

There is not a poorly-paid but ambitious man in the world that the I. C. S. cannot help, provided he can read and write. Have *you* enough *real* ambition to mark the attached coupon and learn of the I. C. S. way that fits *your* case? It makes no difference *who* you are, *what* you do, *where* you live, *what* you earn, or *what* your age,—if you are ambitious, the way is open. Do you want to? Then mark the attached coupon *to-day* opposite the occupation you like best. The I. C. S. will then tell you how you can be helped *at home—in your spare time*—without encroaching on your working time—and on such easy terms that you will be able to meet them easily.

Do You Want To?

Here, then, is the opportunity that proves whether your ambition is real or not. Mark the coupon. This, at least, costs you nothing. Mark it and learn how you can join the host of successful I. C. S. men who, at the rate of 300 every month, VOLUNTARILY report advancement in salary and position *as the direct* result of I. C. S. help. 307 were heard from during August.

Do You Want To?
Of Course You Want To.
Mark the Coupon.

International Correspondence Schools,
Box 858 SCRANTON, PA.

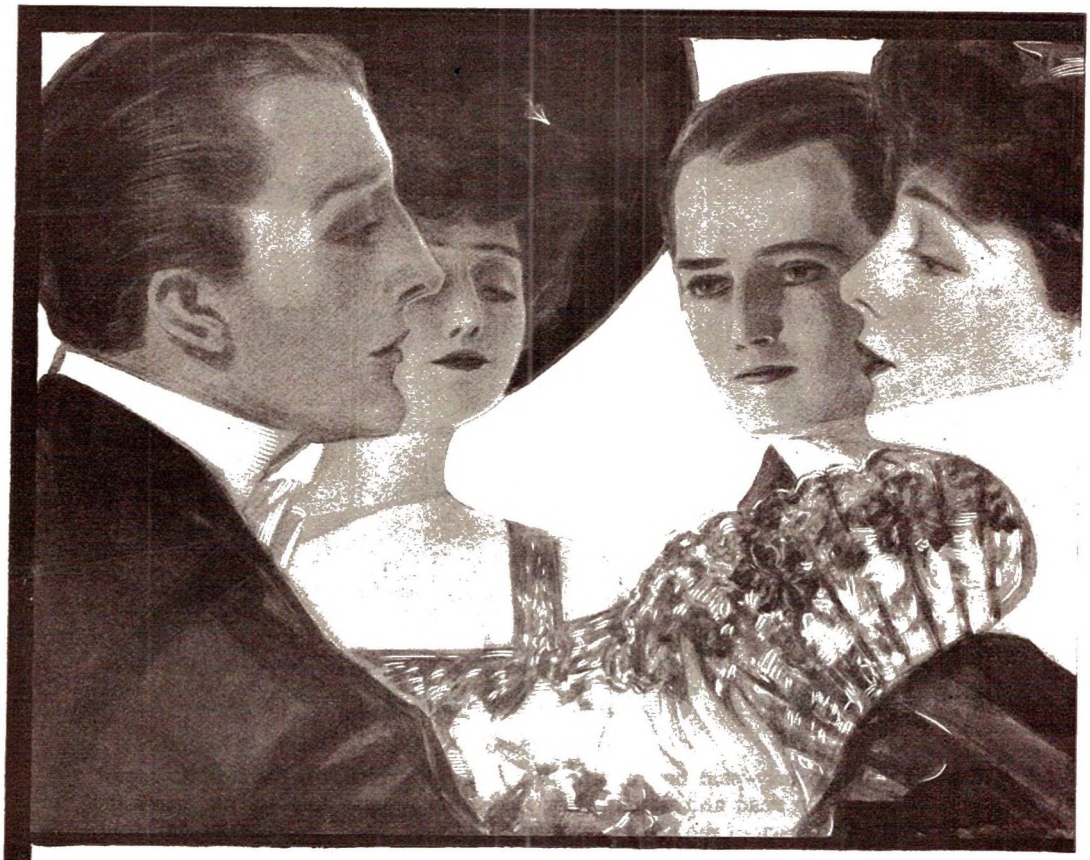
Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position, trade or profession before which I have marked X.

Automobile Running	Civil Service
Mine Superintendent	Architect
Mine Foreman	Chemist
Plumbing, Steam Fitting	Languages—French, German, Italian
Concrete Construction	Banking
Civil Engineer	Building Contractor
Textile Manufacturing	Architectural Draftsman
Stationary Engineer	Industrial Designing
Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating
Mechan. Engineer	Window Trimming
Mechanical Draftsman	Show Card Writing
Electrical Engineer	Advertising Man
Elec. Lighting Supt.	Stenographer
Electric Wireman	Bookkeeper

Name_____

Street and No._____

City_____ State_____



Woman is the great civilizer.
If it were not for her man would revert to whiskers and carry a club.

Woman does much for the Gillette because it is her presence, her influence, that puts the emphasis on good clothes, clean linen, and a clean shave.

She admires the clean, healthy skin of the man who uses a Gillette. She does not approve the ladylike massage-finish of the tonsorial artist. The massaged appearance ceased to be "class" largely because she said so.

There is something fine and wholesome about the Gillette shave. It does not reek of violet water and pomades.

GILLETTE SALES COMPANY, 26 W. Second Street, Boston
New York, Times Building Chicago, Stock Exchange Building Gillette Safety Razor, Ltd., London
Eastern Office, Shanghai, China Canadian Office, 63 St. Alexander Street, Montreal

4

The use of the Gillette has a decidedly good effect on the skin. It gives a healthy look that suggests the outdoor rather than the indoor man.

Then think of the comfort—the convenience—the morning shave in less time than the morning dip.

A million men will buy Gillettes this year. Now is the time to get yours.

Standard Set with twelve double-edge blades, $5.00. Regular box of 12 blades, $1.00; carton of 6 blades, 50c.

King C. Gillette

GILLETTE SALES COMPANY, 26 W. Second Street, Boston
Factories: Boston, Montreal, Leicester, Berlin, Paris

You pay no more

for a pound package of Kingsford's Corn Starch—made by an exclusive process for over sixty years.

Ordinary corn starch can be made in a few days, while it takes as many weeks to produce

KINGSFORD'S OSWEGO CORN STARCH

You are asked just as much for the low-grade corn starches that cannot give you the result in your cooking—because they lack Kingsford's delicacy and purity.

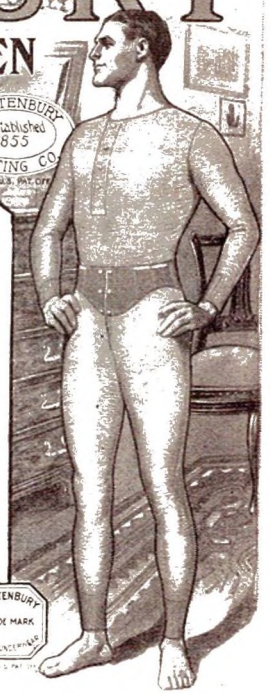
Don't you think it would pay to insist upon Kingsford's?

The Cook Book "D" tells "What a Cook Ought to Know about Corn Starch." 168 of the best recipes you ever tried. *It's free*—just send your name on a post card.

T. KINGSFORD & SON
Oswego, N. Y.
National Starch Co., Successors

GLASTENBURY

HEALTH UNDERWEAR FOR MEN



Over Fifty Years the Leader

One of the highest types of underwear produced in America. Made of pure Australian wool.

Guaranteed Unshrinkable

Famous for its perfect fit, special finish and non-irritating qualities. Every garment shaped to the figure—no cramped chest, shoulders or armholes—drawers do not bind at seat or crotch—result, comfort. No guessing as to size—exact chest measurement on every shirt, exact waist measurement on every pair of drawers.

Glastenbury Merino Underwear

Australian Wool and Fine Carded Cotton.
A sensible light weight garment suited to all seasons.

All Glastenbury Underwear is very elastic. It evaporates perspiration, keeps the skin dry and prevents chilling of the body.

Made in five grades heavy weight and five grades light weight, natural grays and camel's hair effects. Price 60% under imported goods of equal quality. $1.00, $1.25, $1.75, $2.00, $2.50 per garment.

Our trade marks mean perfection in every detail. For sale by leading dealers everywhere. Write for booklet.

GLASTONBURY KNITTING CO.
Dept. H, Glastonbury, Conn.
Mills at Glastonbury and Manchester, Conn.

"Next time I will buy GLASTENBURYS" "GLASTENBURYS always fit like this"

BAYSIDE, L. I.
August 2, 1910.

Gentlemen: Since purchasing my first Ostermoor Mattress of you, **sixteen years** ago, I have bought several others and have recommended them widely to my friends.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Ostermoor is the most uniquely comfortable mattress ever made. My sixteen year old mattress is still in service without renovation of any kind and is certainly good for sixteen years more, as far as I am able to judge.

Yours very truly,
WILLIAM H. JOHNS.

16 Years Here

"Built—not Stuffed"

Ostermoor $15.

On Land and Sea Supreme for Over Half a Century

From the Commodore of the New York Yacht Club

NEW YORK, June 29, 1910.

Gentlemen:

Ostermoor Mattresses and Cushions have always given me entire satisfaction in every respect, and proved all you claimed them to be.

Their use throughout my yacht *Aloha* was such a comfort and pleasure, and we found them so much better than the very best of hair, we would use nothing else but Ostermoor Cushions throughout, and Ostermoor Mattresses in all the staterooms of the new *Aloha*. Very truly yours,
ARTHUR CURTISS JAMES.

IT is a conspicuous fact that there are many imitations of the Ostermoor Mattress, and of Ostermoor advertising, but *not one* of them imitates Ostermoor by **offering proof of service.**

They can't do it! They haven't the service back of their goods to show. We defy any other mattress maker, regardless of name, material or price, to show letters from users attesting that after fifteen to fifty years' service their mattresses are as comfortable as when new.

Think of this when you buy a mattress, especially if you are shown an imitation which is said to be "as good as Ostermoor."

Think how much better it is to get a mattress that is built for everlasting service and comfort, instead of simply stuffed, and likely to develop soon into a mass of sleep-disturbing lumps and bumps.

The Ostermoor is the cleanest, most sanitary, most comfortable of all mattresses. It is dustless, germ proof, vermin proof, proof against odors and dampness. It never needs remaking or renovating, except an occasional sun bath.

MATTRESSES COST
Express Prepaid
Best blue and white ticking
4'6" wide, 45 lbs., $15
In two parts 50 cents extra
Dust-proof, Satin-finish Ticking, $1.50 more.
Mercerized French Art Twills, $3.00 more.

Send for Our 144-Page Book and Samples Free

The Ostermoor is not for sale generally, but there's an Ostermoor dealer in most places, the livest merchant in town. Write us and we'll send his name. We will ship you a mattress by express, prepaid, same day your check is received, where we have no dealer in town, or he has none in stock. Thirty nights' free trial granted; money back if wanted.

Get the genuine Ostermoor; the trademark on the end is your guarantee.

OSTERMOOR & CO.
110 Elizabeth St.
New York

CANADIAN AGENCY:
Alaska Feather & Down Co., Ltd.,
Montreal

Remington
Autoloading Rifle

Remington Guns won five of the last ten Interstate Handicaps—as many victories as all the guns of other manufacturers combined. These winnings conclusively demonstrate Remington superiority and prove that these guns of the day lead all other makes.

Remington Autoloading Rifle, the most advanced and efficient rifle of the big game world—solid breech, hammerless, ejects, reloads and cocks by recoil without the loss of an ounce of muzzle energy—Safest and best of big game guns. Send for folder.

UMC

BIG GAME CARTRIDGES

UMC Steel Lined Shells made a clean sweep at the firing line in 1909 and 1910, winning every Interstate Handicap—ten successive victories by amateurs shooting UMC Steel Lined Shells, thereby proving UMC quality and their right to every shooter's preference.

UMC cartridges—for all calibres and special types of rifles—like UMC Steel Lined Shells are the highest achievement of ammunition production in this field. UMC cartridges have greatest shocking and killing efficiency by reason of the great mushrooming expansion of the bullet and the velocity given it by the load.

New UMC hollow point bullets are now in the hands of all dealers. Do not fail to include them in your Fall equipment.

Are you up to date on the game laws in your favorite hunting section? Let us send you a copy of our new

1910 Game Laws—FREE

Write to-day to any of the addresses given below, telling us the kind of gun and ammunition you use, and receive a ***free copy*** of our 1910 Game Laws and Guide Directory.

UMC and Remington—the perfect shooting combination.

Sold by all first-class dealers. Do not accept a substitute. Communicate with us if your dealer does not carry UMC or Remington.

The Union Metallic Cartridge Co., Dept. 11 J, Bridgeport, Conn.
The Remington Arms Co., Dept. 11 J, Ilion, N. Y.
Agency, 299 Broadway, Dept. 11 J, New York City.

SAME OWNERSHIP SAME STANDARD OF QUALITY SAME MANAGEMENT

Write for our new catalog, free—A valuable sportsman's handbook.

The Famous
Meister Piano

In Your Own Home 30 Days Free
And We Pay the Freight

Shipped on this basis to any home in America. If you don't like it send it back and we'll pay the return freight, too.

Price $175.00
$1.00 a Week or $5.00 a Month

No Cash Payment Down—No Interest—
No Freight—No Extras.

HANDSOME STOOL AND SCARF FREE.

Rothschild 10-Year Guarantee Bond with Each Instrument.

Just to prove to you the splendid worth of this MEISTER piano, let us send it to you on thirty days free trial. It won't cost you a penny or a moment of bother. **First,** send for our beautifully illustrated MEISTER catalog and see how the Meister is made and the materials used in its construction. Read therein the testimony of delighted owners. Select the style you like and send in your order. We'll do the rest. The piano will be shipped to you promptly, freight prepaid, no matter where you live. Try it a month at our expense. You will be under no obligation until you decide to buy. Then you may take full advantage of our easy-payment plan which makes it easy for any man of modest income to own this famous instrument.

SOLD DIRECT FROM FACTORY TO YOU

—We deal only with the people direct and sell more pianos than any other firm in the world. We are sole makers of the MEISTER piano. It is produced in our own magnificently equipped factories and sold direct from the factory to you **minus** the usual profits of jobber, retailer and special salesman. There is only one small profit and that is ours. We were obliged to secure extra factory facilities this year because of an enormously increased demand and we are doing the finest work in the history of piano making. This instrument is made of the very finest materials by men who have earned their way because of efficiency, and is fully guaranteed for ten years.

This Is the Best $175 Piano in the World, but we manufacture other and more elaborate styles which are illustrated in the catalog. If you don't find it to be precisely as we have represented—if it doesn't perform to your entire satisfaction—if you don't regard it as the richest toned instrument you have ever heard then we'll take it back after the month's free trial and it hasn't cost you a cent.

ROTHSCHILD & COMPANY—total resources exceeding $3,000,000—conducting one of the largest and most successful commercial institutions in the world—do not sell to dealers except as individual purchasers and make no deviation from regular terms and prices as published.

The MEISTER PIANO CO.
Rothschild & Company, Sole Owners
State, Van Buren and Wabash Ave.
Dept. 23A, CHICAGO, ILL.

$18
In U. S.

Bennett Portable Typewriter
(A product of the Elliott-Fisher factory)

Guaranteed One Year

SOLD ON APPROVAL

The **"Bennett"** Typewriter will double the efficiency and output of anyone now doing his writing by hand. It is a practical, durable machine, with standard keyboard, and has ALL OF THE ESSENTIALS, also DOES ALL THE WORK of a high-cost machine. It is the only low-priced, portable typewriter using a ribbon—it is as small as an efficient machine can be (11 x 5 x 2 inches — weight 4½ pounds in case). Simplicity makes possible its low cost. The publishers of this magazine endorse every claim made for the **"Bennett."** Sent express prepaid to any part of the United States. If the **"Bennett"** does not wholly meet your requirements, and is returned within ten days of its receipt by you, your money, less express charges, will be refunded.

Send name and address for free illustrated catalog.

Agents wanted for a few unfilled territories. Inquire price in foreign countries.

N. L. Bennett Typewriter Company,
366 Broadway, New York, U. S. A.

Irrigated Land

In the Best Fruit and Alfalfa Valley in America

is now open for settlement at Fort Stockton, Tex. Richest soil in Pecos Valley, limestone formation, (no gyp) natural flow of pure spring water exceeding 55,000,000 gallons per day for irrigation and domestic use; irrigation system completed and in full operation now; no waiting for water; assured profits of from $100 to $1,000 per acre; no drought; no crop failures; finest all year 'round climate in the United States; altitude 3,050 feet above sea level.

Natural Location for Largest City of Southwest Texas

Fort Stockton is county seat of Pecos County and important division point on the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway, now building into Fort Stockton. Has 36,000 acres of the finest irrigated land the sun shines on; adjacent to town. Population now 1,000, will soon be a city of from 10,000 to 15,000. Greater opportunities for homeseekers and investors than were offered in the older irrigated districts, where orchards are valued at from $2,000 to $5,000 per acre. Those who have investigated irrigated districts of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, etc., say this is the finest body of irrigated land they ever saw.

This is one irrigation project where the water supply has not varied in 50 years; where every drop of water used for irrigation is good to drink and where there is water in abundance for every acre of land that is irrigable. Choice locations open to those who investigate now. You cannot afford to buy land anywhere without seeing Fort Stockton. Low rate excursions the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Write for full particulars today.

REFERENCES: First National Bank, Kansas City, Mo., First State Bank, Fort Stockton, Texas.

Prospectus, map and illustrated folder describing these lands free to all who address

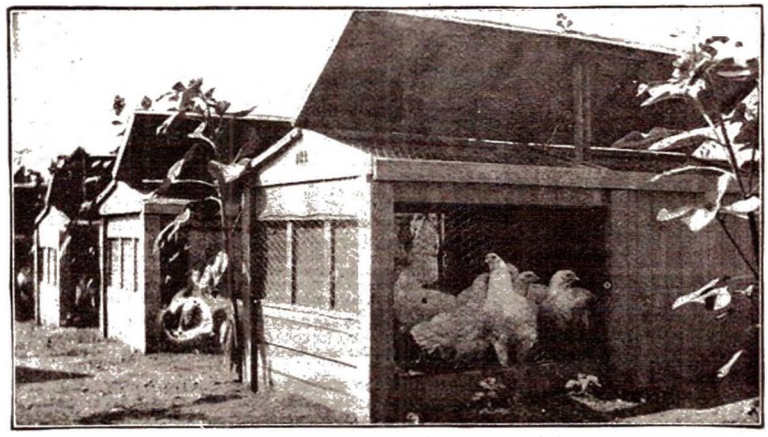
Fort Stockton Irrigated Land Company
666 Fidelity Trust Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

A LIVING FROM POULTRY

$1,500.00 from 60 Hens in Ten Months on a City Lot 40 Feet Square

TO the average poultryman that would seem impossible, and when we tell you that we have actually done a $1500 poultry business with 60 hens on a corner in the city garden 40 feet wide by 40 feet long, we are simply stating facts. It would not be possible to get such returns by any one of the systems of poultry keeping recommended and practiced by the American people, still it can be accomplished by the

PHILO SYSTEM



Note the condition of these three months old pullets. These pullets and their ancestors for seven generations have never been allowed to run outside the coops.

THE PHILO SYSTEM IS UNLIKE ALL OTHER WAYS OF KEEPING POULTRY

and in many respects just the reverse, accomplishing things in poultry work that have always been considered impossible, and getting unheard-of results that are hard to believe without seeing.

THE NEW SYSTEM COVERS ALL BRANCHES OF THE WORK NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS

from selecting the breeders to marketing the product. It tells how to get eggs that will hatch, how to hatch nearly every egg and how to raise nearly all the chicks hatched. It gives complete plans in detail how to make everything necessary to run the business and at less than half the cost required to handle the poultry business in any other manner.

TWO-POUND BROILERS IN EIGHT WEEKS

are raised in a space of less than a square foot to the broiler, and the broilers are of the very best quality, bringing here 3 cents a pound above the highest market price.

OUR SIX-MONTH-OLD PULLETS ARE LAYING AT THE RATE OF 24 EGGS EACH PER MONTH

in a space of two square feet for each bird. No green cut bone of any description is fed, and the food used is inexpensive as compared with food others are using.

Our new book, **The Philo System of Poultry Keeping**, gives full particulars regarding these wonderful discoveries, with simple, easy-to-understand directions that are right to the point, and 15 pages of illustrations showing all branches of the work from start to finish.

DON'T LET THE CHICKS DIE IN THE SHELL

One of the secrets of success is to save all the chickens that are fully developed at hatching time, whether they can crack the shell or not. It is a simple trick, and believed to be the secret of the ancient Egyptians and Chinese which enabled them to sell the chicks at 10 cents a dozen.

CHICKEN FEED AT FIFTEEN CENTS A BUSHEL

Our book tells how to make the best green food with but little trouble and have a good supply any day in the year, winter or summer. It is just as impossible to get a large egg yield without green food as it is to keep a cow without hay or fodder.

OUR NEW BROODER SAVES 2 CENTS ON EACH CHICKEN

No lamp required. No danger of chilling, over-heating or burning up the chickens as with brooders using lamps or any kind of fire. They also keep the lice off the chickens automatically or kill any that may be on them when placed in the brooder. Our book gives full plans and the right to make and use them. One can easily be made in an hour at a cost of 25 to 50 cents.

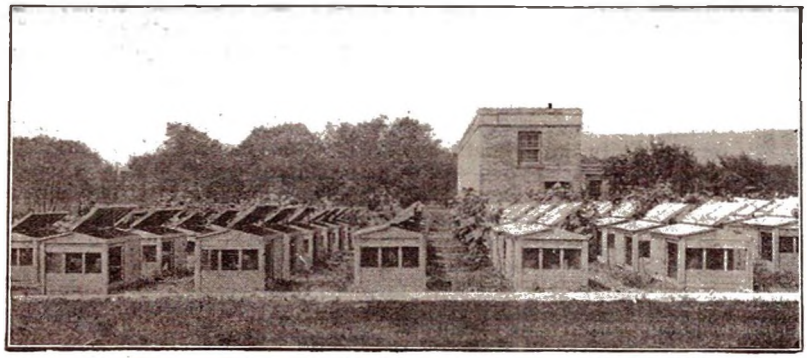
TESTIMONIAL

South Britain, Conn., April 19, 1909

Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—I have followed your system as close as I could; the result is a complete success. If there can be any improvement on nature, your brooder is it. The first experience I had with your System was last December. I hatched 17 chicks under two hens, put them as soon as hatched in one of your brooders out of doors and at the age of three months I sold them at 85c. a pound. They then averaged 2½ lbs. each, and the man I sold them to said they were the finest he ever saw and he wants all I can spare this season.

Yours truly, A. E. Nelson.



Photograph Showing a Portion of the Philo National Poultry Institute Poultry Plant, Where There Are Now Over 5,000 Pedigree White Orpingtons on Less Than a Half Acre of Land.

SPECIAL OFFER

Send $1.00 for one year's subscription to the Poultry Review, a monthly magazine devoted to progressive methods of poultry keeping, and we will include, without charge, a copy of the latest revised edition of the Philo System Book.

E. R. PHILO, Publisher

2532 Lake St., Elmira, N. Y.

Two Days End the Corn

The way to relieve and **remove** corns is this:

Place the downy felt ring of a Blue-jay Corn Plaster about the corn. That will protect it from chafing, stopping the pain at once.

It also allows a wonderful bit of medication to rest on the corn and go to work.

48 hours after, you can lift the corn out in its entirety. No pain—no harm—no inconvenience—no dangerous liquid—no nasty salve—no soreness.

Safe, simple and neat, yet immensely effective.

About forty million people know Blue-jay.

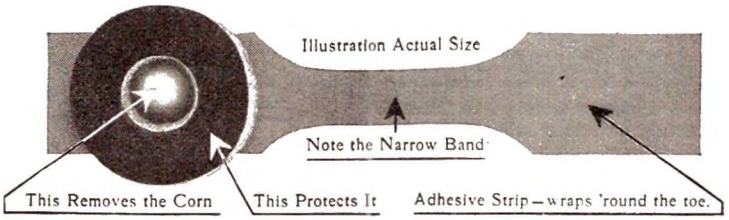
Every day more than ten thousand buy it.

Try a package. All druggists everywhere sell it.

If you wish to be further convinced before spending even fifteen cents, ask us to mail you a sample—free.

Blue-jay Corn Plasters

Also Blue-jay Bunion Plasters



15c and 25c per Package

Bauer & Black, Chicago and New York—Makers of Surgical Dressings, Etc.

(60)

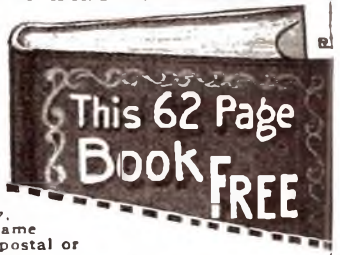
$3,000 to $10,000 Per Year For You

I can make you prosperous. If you want to earn more money—if you want to establish yourself in an independent business requiring no capital—send me your name and address on coupon below, (or a postal will do) and I will mail you, **free**, our **Big 62-Page Book**, fully explaining just how you can fit yourself to earn big money in the **Real Estate, Brokerage and Insurance Business.** Our thoroughly tested successful system not only equips you fully on every point of Real Estate, Brokerage and Insurance, we also give you, free, a valuable course in Commercial Law. Our Free Book is of great interest to anyone, but is of vital importance to Clerks, Book Keepers, Salesmen, Agents, Solicitors and others who are ambitious to be in a good paying business of their own.

International Realty Corp., 4449 Manhattan Bldg., Chicago

Successors to The Cross Co. and H. W. Cross & Co.

This Book Shows You How to Succeed in Real Estate, Brokerage and Insurance



Send no money, but merely your name and address on a postal or on the Coupon below.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

BARNEY & BERRY ROLLER SKATES ICE

SKATING

The peer of all winter sports, is made doubly enjoyable with a pair of strong, graceful

BARNEY & BERRY SKATES

Quality made the name famous. Only the best steel used in their construction. Sold wherever water freezes—by the best dealers.

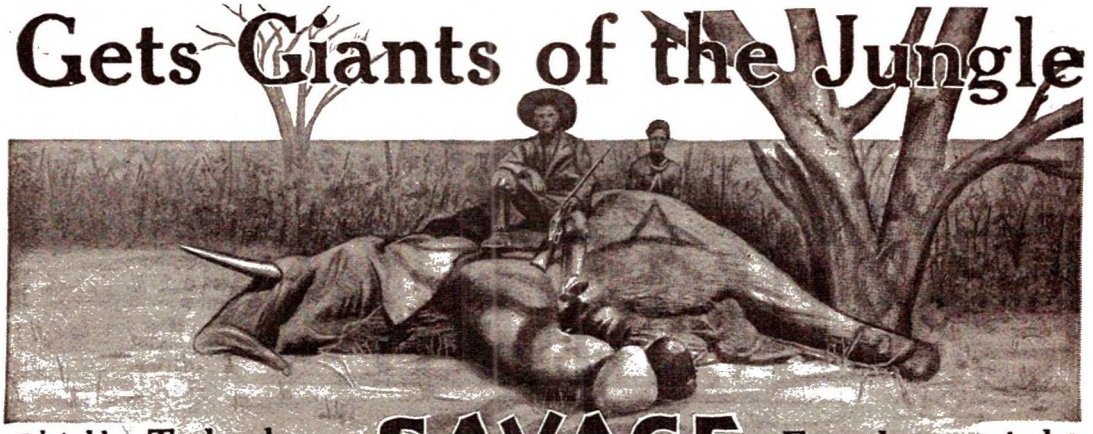
BARNEY & BERRY

Makers of Ice and Rolle Skates

105 Broad Street

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

Gets Giants of the Jungle



6¼ lb. Takedown SAVAGE Featherweight

This ideal, light, compact hunting arm with one 20 inch round barrel, costs $25.00; extra barrel $10.00.

To bring down a bull elephant with one vitally planted 303 bullet —that is sport! And the thrill of the sport is ***not*** extinguished at each shot by a knock-out recoil shock.

The lightest high-power rifle in the world is the new Savage Featherweight.

Hunters of big game in Africa, Asia and America have found this 6¼ pounds rifle powerful enough, in 303 and 30.30 calibre, for the giants of the animal kingdom. The same rifle gets smaller game by merely changing barrels. Remove foreend, and insert a 25.35 calibre barrel.

Savage Arms Company, 8611 Savage Avenue, Utica, N. Y.

Our new rifle catalog describes this rifle. Free. If you don't write for it now, you'll forget about it.

INTERCHANGEABLE BARRELS IS AN EXCLUSIVE SAVAGE FEATURE

The Cigaret you can smoke all day without a trace of "nerves"—because it's just pure, clean, sweet tobaccos, blended by artists. Prove it.

MAKAROFF RUSSIAN CIGARETS

15 cents and a quarter
AT YOUR DEALERS

Makaroff - Boston

Mail address—95 Milk Street, Boston

How Much Longer?

THE same old job year after year. It's neither advancing you nor training you. You are a cog in a wheel. And you will remain a cog until you train yourself to be something more.

How much longer will you put off success, bigger salary and larger prospects, when the Sheldon School stands ready to lift you up from the rut. In your spare time at home Sheldon methods will equip you for the big things in business. You **can** be all that you hope for and **soon.** Don't be content with non-success or only partial success a day longer. Learn how the Sheldon School will develop your **possibilities** into **actualities.**

THE SHELDON SCHOOL

You possess latent power that is valuable. The Sheldon School will cultivate it. The Sheldon School will make the most of your special ability, and teach you how to avoid the mistakes made by untrained men. The Sheldon School will tell you **in your spare time** how to **fit yourself** for the **best positions** that are always waiting and eagerly seeking **the man who knows**—the Sheldon-trained man. Don't delay or put off your start toward the big business success that will be yours. Start now—to-day. **Write on a postal card, "Send me the Sheldon Book and full information regarding Sheldon methods."** Address the postal to

THE SHELDON SCHOOL, 1072 Republic Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

$50 TO $100 A WEEK

THEY'RE MAKING IT AND TELL YOU HOW.
HARD FACTS THAT MAKE YOU THINK.
A NEW THING THAT'S MAKING PEOPLE RICH.

W. H. Morgan, Pa., says: "Sold 75 in 9 days," (profit, $318.75). T. A. White, Ill.: "Sold 15 in 4 hours," (profit, $63.75). F. E. Poole, Mass.: "Sold 6 first day," (profit, $25.50). C. E. Goff, Mo.: "Sold 5 first day," (profit, $21.25). The writer was in the office of this new, successful, big money-making business. He saw hundreds of letters like these. People are making more money in a day than they did before in a month.

Enormous sale of the **New Home Vacuum Cleaner** smashes all records. **Newest, Easiest, Surest Seller.** Make $4.25 on every sale. New, powerful, double action vacuum cleaning machine. Sells for $8.50. Weighs 9 lbs. Easy to carry. Nothing else like it. Does same work as the $100 kind. **No motors, no electricity.** One person operates.

$8.50

Constant terrific suction gets all dirt and dust from carpets, rugs, etc. **No more sweeping or dusting. No more house cleaning. Costs nothing for repairs.** Saves time, labor, money. Saves health. Saves taking up and beating carpets. The New Home Vacuum Cleaner is truly a wonder. Astonishes everybody. **Customers all delighted and praise it.** They wonder how they ever did without it. Mrs. F. Goodell, Ind., writes: "Home Vacuum Cleaner is certainly a wonder. Does away with the drudgery of sweeping and dusting. I am so pleased that I can't give it justice." F. R. Sears, Ohio, "Home Vacuum Cleaner is a little giant. My next door neighbor has one that cost $25. They say they would rather have the Home." Chandler & Rich, N. Y., "Find you did not overestimate Home Vacuum Cleaner. Did not praise them enough." Henry Rubin, N. Y., "Home Vacuum Cleaner brightens the carpets. It's the grandest machine ever invented for the home." To try the Home Vacuum Cleaner means to want it, then to keep it. Takes every family by storm. Women have watched, wished, longed for it. No wonder it's a live wire. **A powerful double action Suction Cleaner for $8.50.** Not sold in stores. Sell 9 out of 10 families. Send postal today for agency. Full description. Free sample. Address,

R. ARMSTRONG MFG. CO.,
1164 Alms Bldg., - - - - - Cincinnati, Ohio.

I Was Deaf 25 Years

NOW I HEAR WHISPERS

G. P. WAY
Inventor

with my artificial Ear Drums in my ears. **I never feel them**—they are so perfectly comfortable, and no one sees them. I will tell you the true story of How I Got Deaf—and How I Made Myself Hear. Address your letter to me personally at 38 Adelaide St. This is important, as letters sent to other addresses often do not reach me. **I stand back of every claim made for MY drums.**

Medicated Ear Drum
Pat. July 15, 1908

GEO. P. WAY, 38 Adelaide Street, DETROIT, MICH.

REAPING THE FRUIT OF LONG TERMS ON

WATCHES AND DIAMONDS

ASK FOR BOOK
SHORT TALKS — $25.00 — $1.00 A WEEK
LONG TERMS — $50.00 — $1.00 A WEEK
$100.00 — $2.00 A WEEK

TIMES WATCH & DIAMOND CO.
TIME PAYMENTS
AT TIMES SQUARE — 206 W 42d St. NEW YORK — Write Dept. D.

Sweetest Music in the World

You can play any number of different tunes, popular songs, old time melodies and hymns on the wonderful self-playing

MIRA MUSIC BOX. 10 days Free Trial

in your own home. Sent anywhere. Write for **Free Trial Offer** and Catalog

JACOT MUSIC BOX CO.,
12 West 35th St., New York City.

IF IT LEAKS Get MENDETS

A PATENT PATCH

They mend all leaks instantly
In granite ware, hot water bags, tin, copper, brass, cooking utensils, etc. No heat, solder, cement or rivet. Any one can use them. Fit any surface. Perfectly smooth. Wonderful invention Household necessity. Millions in use. Send for sample package, 10c.
Complete pkg, asstd sizes, 25c. postpaid. Agts wanted
COLLETTE MFG. CO., Box 116 Amsterdam, N. Y.

BARODA DIAMONDS

Flash Like Genuine
at 1/40 the cost--IN SOLID GOLD RINGS

Stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. **See them first—then pay. Special Offer**—14k Tiffany ring 1 ct. $5.98. Gents ring 1 ct. $6.98. 14k Stud 1 ct. $4.86. Sent C.O.D. for inspection. **Catalog FREE**, shows full line. Patent ring gauge included, 10c. **The Baroda Co., Dept. A19 888 N. State St., Chicago**

SENT ON APPROVAL. SEND NO MONEY
WE WILL TRUST YOU TEN DAYS. **$2.00 Hair Switch**

Send a lock of your hair, and we will mail a 22-inch short stem fine human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain, remit $2.00 in ten days, or sell 3 and GET YOUR SWITCH FREE. Extra shades a little more. Inclose 5c postage. Free beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, pompadours, wigs, puffs, etc.

ANNA AYERS, Dept. 432 19 Quincy St., Chicago.

AGENTS 200% PROFIT

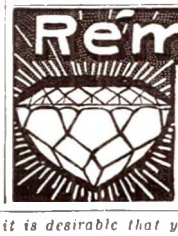
Handy, Automatic

HAME FASTENER

Do away with old hame strap. Horse owners and teamsters wild about them. Fasten instantly with gloves on. Outwear the harness. Money back if not satisfactory. Write today for confidential terms to agents.

F. THOMAS MFG. CO., 709 Wayne St., Dayton, Ohio.

Remoh Gems



Looks like a diamond—wears like a diamond—brilliancy guaranteed forever—stands filing and fire like a diamond—has no paste, foil or artificial backing. Set only in solid gold mountings. 1-20th the cost of diamonds. A marvelously reconstructed gem. Not an imitation. Guaranteed to contain no glass. Sent on approval. Write for catalog, it's free.

Remoh Jewelry Co. 415 N. Bdway, St. Louis

FOSTER'S IDEAL SPRING

Is the highest standard of excellence in spring bed construction. *Mechanically, hygienically,* it is supreme, and because of our process of tempering the springs, it will last a lifetime *without sagging.* So *comfortable* that, once tried, always satisfies.

Try It 30 Nights On Approval

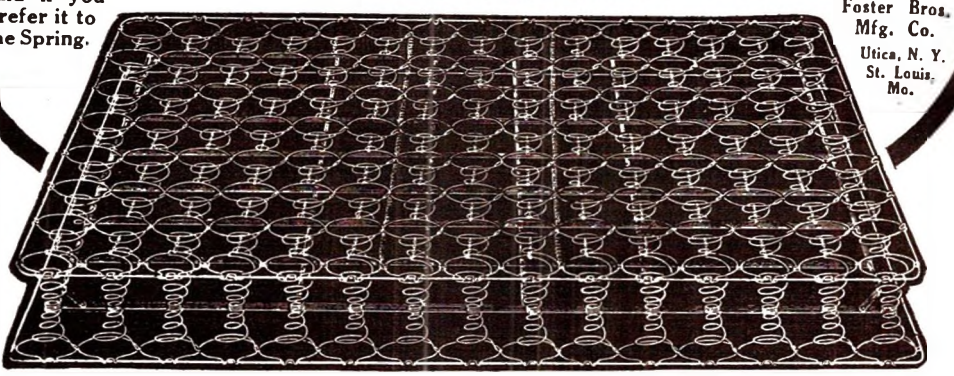
Every Foster Ideal Dealer is authorized to sell it on 30 days' approval and then refund price paid if you prefer it to the Spring.

Brass Name Plate

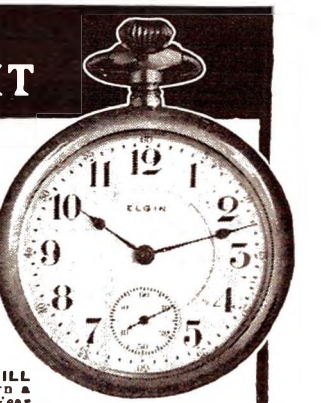
On Each Genuine IDEAL

The Ideal is so *luxuriously restful,* it sells itself when tried. Don't buy *any* Spring until you have tried Foster's IDEAL.

Foster Bros. Mfg. Co.
Utica, N. Y.
St. Louis, Mo.



ELGIN WATCHES ON CREDIT



$11.45 Buys This 17-Jewel Elgin

In a Fine 20-Year Gold Filled Case

Sent Prepaid on FREE TRIAL at Our Bed Rock Wholesale Price.

BIGGEST BARGAIN EVER OFFERED

Only $1 a Month

Our Elgin Watches are so well known and our CREDIT PLAN so easy, that no matter where you live or how small your wages, **WE WILL TRUST YOU,** so that you and every honest man and woman can own a Diamond or High-Grade Elgin Watch in a beautiful Guaranteed 25-Year Gold Case and wear it while paying for it in such small payments that you never miss the money. **WRITE TODAY FOR OUR BIG FREE WATCH AND JEWELRY CATALOG.** It tells all about our easy credit plan and how we send **Elgin 19-Jewel B. W. Raymond and 21 and 23-Jewel Elgin Veritas** everywhere on Free Trial, without security or one cent deposit. **Positively Guaranteed to Pass Any Railroad Inspection.**

HARRIS-GOAR CO., Dept. 1388 MONADNOCK BLDG., CHICAGO, ILL. Or, 1388 WALNUT STREET, KANSAS CITY, MO.

The House that Sells More Elgin Watches than Any Other Firm in the World.

Ten Days' Free Trial

allowed on every bicycle we sell. We **Ship on Approval and trial** to anyone in the U. S. and *prepay the freight.* If you are not satisfied with the bicycle after using it ten days, ship it back and *don't pay a cent.*

FACTORY PRICES *Do not buy* a **bicycle** or a pair of **tires** from *anyone* at *any price* until you receive our latest **Art Catalogs** of high grade bicycles and sundries and learn our *unheard of prices* and *marvelous new special offers.*

IT ONLY COSTS a cent to write a postal and everything will be sent you **FREE** by return mail. You will get much valuable information. **Do Not Wait; write it Now!**

TIRES, Coaster-Brake rear wheels, lamps, parts, repairs and sundries of all kinds *at half usual prices.*

MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. T 31 CHICAGO

AGENTS—$1.33 Per Hour

Comer made it, so can you. Swain says, "Best thing I ever struck." Easy money maker. **High School boy sold 36 boxes in 2 days—profit $12.60.** Agents get big repeat orders—build up steady business. Everybody wears hosiery. Guaranteed for 4 months against holes in heels and toes. Send right back to us if not perfectly satisfactory. **J. R. Valentine sold 600 pairs in 50 hours**—you can do as well—yes—better. Worn goods replaced free—no experience needed—we teach you everything. Here's your one big chance—don't lose it—write today. Free samples.

THOMAS MFG. CO., 1909 Wayne St., DAYTON, OHIO

CLOSING DAYS OF A GREAT PIANO OFFER

January first this year we perfected certain plans for a twelve months' campaign.

These plans involved the placing of at least one Schmoller & Mueller Piano in each new community in the United States.

Up to that time many neighborhoods—many communities—knew about this Sweet Toned Piano.

But where there was one such community—we realized there was doubtless a hundred which knew nothing of the merits of this superior instrument.

Of this piano—which had satisfied music lovers in all walks of life—the humble cottager and family—

As well as those who enjoy more largely of this world's goods.

Thus our problem for this year of grace, 1910—was to make better known the superior qualities of the Schmoller & Mueller Piano.

To bring about its successful introduction into new neighborhoods—new communities everywhere.

We realized at the outset that the task was a large one—one which only a well-organized business institution could successfully bring to a happy conclusion.

Our estimated output for the year was 5,000 Schmoller & Mueller Pianos. Five thousand homes must be found into which we could place a

Schmoller & Mueller Sweet Toned Piano

Five thousand neighborhoods and communities to find—five thousand sales to be made. Had we other than a high grade—a sweet toned—a well-built—a fully guaranteed piano to offer—the task we set ourselves to thus accomplish would have been insurmountable.

But with a piano like the Sweet and Mellow Toned Schmoller & Mueller—with years' record back of it—giving the greatest of pleasure in the homes of thousands of satisfied music lovers—and with a well-organized company to handle the business—this problem was lessened to the question embodying the plan of selling.

We evolved a selling plan which has been most enthusiastically received.

A plan when explained is easily understood by every intending buyer.

Briefly, here is our plan.

To give the first buyer in each new community or neighborhood this year a Close Wholesale First Buyer's Price.

A Schmoller & Mueller Piano in each community and neighborhood is the best advertisement we desire for our Piano.

One Schmoller & Mueller Piano sold in a new neighborhood has time and again brought about the sale of 3, 4, 5, 6 and more Schmoller & Mueller Pianos—within a short time thereafter.

Giving the First Buyer a Close First Buyer's Price would work to the more surely and quickly accomplish the desired end—the placing of 5,000 Schmoller & Mueller Pianos in that many new communities.

To date the result has been gratifying.

Faster and faster orders have come to us this year.

New communities have been quickly supplied.

Prospective buyers have seen the manifold advantages of our plan and coupled with that the high and guaranteed quality of the Piano offered—they have not held back in accepting our proposition.

This year is rapidly passing. Soon the twelve months will have gone. Soon our plans made the first of the year will have been perfected.

Soon the 5,000 Schmoller & Mueller Pianos set aside for that many new communities and neighborhoods will have been sold.

Perhaps your community has not as yet welcomed into its midst the First Schmoller & Mueller Piano—

If so—the opportunity is yet before you to buy the best Piano at a price never before heard of as being made on a fully guaranteed instrument.

The least you can do—interested music lover—is to hasten back to us the coupon inquiring for Catalogue and Full Details concerning the First Buyer Introductory Offer.

It is a simple matter to fill that coupon and mail it today.

Remember, we positively guarantee the Schmoller & Mueller Piano for 25 years—we back this up with our entire Capital Stock and Surplus of Half a Million Dollars.

We save you the most money on the Schmoller & Mueller Piano you buy under our present offer and under our plan of payments.

Placing within the reach of all intending piano buyers this Schmoller & Mueller Piano—

No home need longer be deprived of the harmonizing, the educational influences of music.

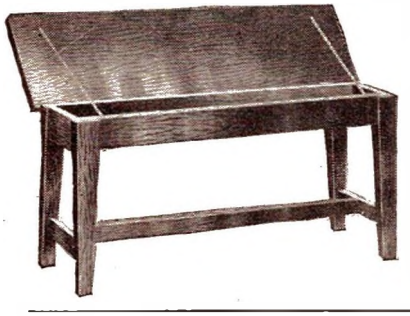
For Fifteen Cents a Day will take care of the small monthly payments we require.

Send the Coupon to us today—don't permit some other music lover in your community to be the First Buyer of a Schmoller & Mueller Piano.

Secure our proposition on a Schmoller & Mueller Piano—delivered to your nearest station.

Send the coupon—if you please—now.

Schmoller & Mueller Piano Co. *Dept. A G 011* Capital and Surplus, Half a Million Dollars **Omaha, Neb.**



This Handsome Bench Free

With every Schmoller & Mueller Piano we regularly supply—free—a Stool—a Handsome Scarf—a Complete Instruction Book. All orders received from Argosy readers this month will include—if desired in place of the stool, the above Handsome Duet Bench. This has a complete music compartment in the top—where sheet music can be kept free from danger of soiling. Bench will be selected to match your Schmoller & Mueller Piano in Circassian Walnut, San Domingo Mahogany, or Quarter Sawed Golden Oak. No charge for the bench—if you order this month.

Schmoller & Mueller Piano Co.,
Dept. A G 011, Omaha, Neb.

You will please send to me immediately all information about the Schmoller & Mueller Piano—your First Buyer Proposition and your Complete Catalogue. This involves no obligation on my part to purchase.

Name.....

Address.....

BURROWES BILLIARD AND POOL TABLES

$1.00 DOWN

Puts into your home any Table worth from $6 to $15. $2 a month pays balance. Higher priced Tables on correspondingly easy terms. We supply all cues, balls, etc., free.

BECOME AN EXPERT AT HOME

The BURROWES HOME BILLIARD AND POOL TABLE is a scientifically built Combination Table, adapted for the most expert play. It may be set on your dining-room or library table, or mounted on legs or stand. When not in use it may be set aside out of the way.

NO RED TAPE—On receipt of first installment we will ship Table. Play on it one week. If unsatisfactory return it, and we will refund money. Write to-day for catalogue.

E. T. Burrowes Co. 22 Spring St. Portland, Maine

PAY NOW AND THEN

We will send for your approval a genuine ¼ **Karat, commercial white, perfect diamond,** in any style 14 karat solid gold mounting, **express prepaid, for $30—$5 down and $3 per month;** or a ⅜ **Karat diamond** of like quality for **$60; $10 down and $5 per month.**

If you are interested in a reliable watch, we offer a **gentleman's** O. F. 12, 16, or 18 size, or **lady's** 6 size, plain or engraved, **20-year guaranteed gold filled case,** fitted with genuine **Elgin** or **Waltham movement at $12.50; $3 down, $1.50 per month.** With hunting case **$16.75.**

Write to-day for free catalog No. T 24 Remit first payment with order or have goods sent C. O. D.

Herbert L. Joseph & Co

Diamond Importers—Watch Jobbers

217-219 (T24) State Street, Chicago

Mailed on receipt of price until your dealer sells it.

Razor Blade Sensation!

Hollow-Ground Thin Blades.

Monopoly Broken—Better Blades For Less Money

It is not necessary to pay high prices for unsatisfactory blades. Clark's Hollow-grinding is the master-cutler's edge that permits correct diagonal stroke, and stays sharp twice as long. Until your dealer stocks them, will mail postpaid on receipt of price and dealer's name. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.

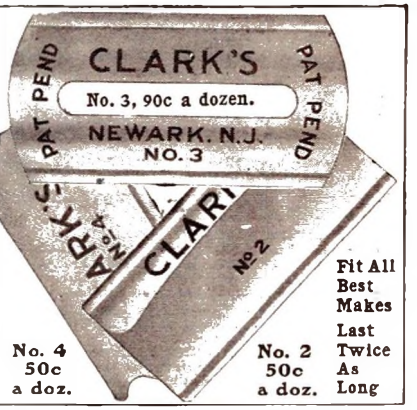
KING $1 Razor

Complete with 7 Clark Blades.

Best looking, easiest shaving dollar razor made—bar none. Packed in neat leatherette case with the hollow-ground blades.

Clark Blade & Razor Co., 68 Summer Ave., Newark, N.J.

Dealers Wanted Everywhere.



No. 4 50c a doz.

No. 2 50c a doz.

Fit All Best Makes Last Twice As Long

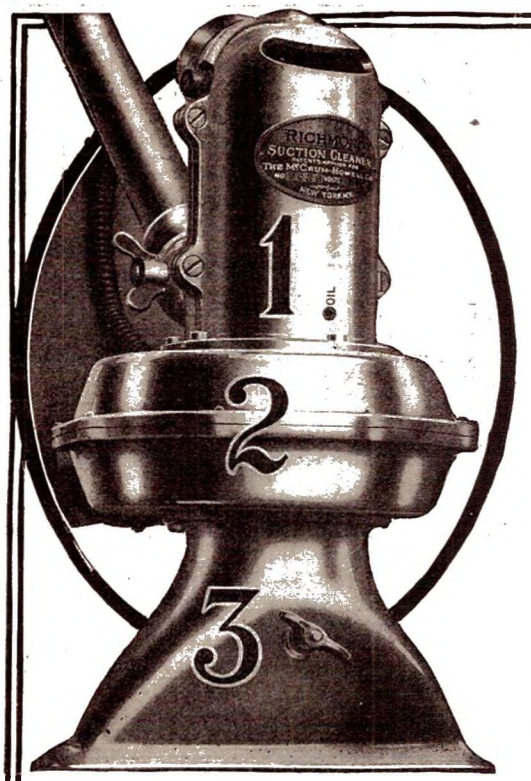
Two Booklets

for advertisers, present or prospective:

1. The Story of an Extraordinary Advertising Service
2. A New Force in Business

Either, or both, sent anywhere on request

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York



This is a reduced reproduction to show detail. The actual height of the machine is 12 inches.

YOU see here the lightest and simplest suction cleaner *ever designed.*

1.—is the motor—not a "stock" motor, but one built expressly to operate the powerful suction fan to which it is directly connected, under

2.—a suction fan which embodies the best of all that was learned in two years of steady, scientific experiment.

3.—is the suction nozzle which is pushed over the surfaces to be cleaned—or to which can be attached a twelve foot hose for high wall, drapery and upholstery cleaning

The "RICHMOND" Suction Cleaner enables you, now for the first time, to clean by electricity without lugging a sixty to eighty pound machine from room to room—upstairs and down.

It represents as great an advance over heavyweight vacuum cleaners as these cleaners represented over brooms and carpet sweepers.

But light weight and easy operation are but two of the "RICHMOND'S" exclusive superiorities. There are many more.

The vibrating brush, which taps the caked dirt out of otherwise uncleanable rugs and carpets—the hair-drying and pillow-renovating attachments—the seven special tools which make the "RICHMOND" the most complete cleaner ever offered.

One Dollar

puts the "Richmond" Suction Cleaner in your home.

One dollar forever frees you from brooms, mops and dusters—and the backaches and drudgery they bring.

One Dollar forever stops the expense and the nuisance of Spring and Fall house cleaning.

One Dollar enables you to do, *easily*, by electricity, the *worst work* a woman has to do.

And One Dollar is the only cash outlay.

It will bring you the "RICHMOND" Suction Cleaner complete—ready for instant use.

The balance you pay for month by month out *of the actual money you save.*

For Vacuum Cleaning is the greatest of all household economies.

You are paying the price of a suction cleaner, *right now*—whether you have one or not.

You are paying its price out in twice-a-year house cleaning alone—for a "RICHMOND" makes house cleaning needless.

You are paying its price out—many times over—in the hard labor of sweeping and dusting which the "RICHMOND" makes unnecessary.

You are paying its price out again and again in the damage which dust does to your furniture, to your carpets, to your hangings, to your clothing—to YOU.

You are paying the price of a "RICHMOND" when a single dollar would save the waste.

Manufactured Exclusively for the Richmond Sales Co. by

THE McCRUM-HOWELL CO.
Park Ave. and 41st St., NEW YORK

Manufacturers of
"Richmond" Boilers and Radiators
"Richmond" Enameled Ware, Bath Tubs, Sinks, Lavatories, "Richmond" Suds Makers, "Richmond" Concealed Transom Lifts, and "Richmond" Stationary Vacuum Cleaning Systems.

Five Factories: Two at Uniontown, Pa.—One at Norwich, Conn.—One at Racine, Wis.—One at Chicago, Ill.

Inquiries regarding built-in-the-house Vacuum Cleaning systems should be addressed to The McCrum-Howell Co., New York or Chicago.

Limited Offer

The Dollar Offer is limited. It is made to show our unbounded confidence in the "RICHMOND".

But by its very liberality, it is bound to swamp the factory. And when the limit of factory output is reached, the offer must be withdrawn.

So send the coupon today while the opportunity is still yours! Don't wait. Do it NOW.

THE RICHMOND SALES CO.
Dept. 47, 160 Broadway, New York

DOLLAR COUPON

The Richmond Sales Co.
Dept. 47, 160 Broadway, N. Y. City

I hereby order one "Richmond" Suction Cleaner, complete with the following attachments: 1 Hose Attachment Shoe; 1 12-ft. covered Suction Hose; 1 Book and Wall Brush; 1 10-in. Drapery Tool; 1 3-in. Suction Tool; 1 Felt-Faced Floor Tool; 1 Adjustable Wall Brush; 1 30-ft. Electrical Cord; 1 Complete Hair Drying Attachment—for which I agree to pay to your order, $1.00 herewith, and $6.00 on the first day of each of the next 12 consecutive months. Title to be given me when full amount is paid.

Name.....

Address.....

Amberol Records

4minute Records

Records for October

Edison Amberol Records stand today as the greatest triumph in record-making.

They have brought to Phonograph owners songs and music never before offered in record form.

Prior to the perfection of Amberol Records much of the world's best music was too long to be put upon a record. If offered at all, it was spoiled by cutting or hurrying.

The Amberol Records, playing four and a half minutes, offer such music, executed as the composer intended, and each selection is complete.

Before you buy a sound-reproducing instrument, hear an Edison Phonograph play an Amberol Record. Look over the Edison Record list and see the songs and selections offered exclusively on Amberol Records and remember that it's the Edison Phonograph that plays both Amberol (4½-minute) and Standard (2-minute) Records.

There is an Edison Phonograph at whatever price you wish to pay, from the Gem, at $12.50, to the Amberola, at $200.00.

The owner of an Edison Phonograph has the advantage each month of two long lists of Records from which to choose. Here is offered the real song hits of the moment, musical selections by famous soloists, bands and orchestras, tuneful bits from musical attractions and arias from grand opera—each on a Record of the right playing length to faithfully and completely reproduce it.

Run over this list of Edison Amberol and Edison Standard Records. Then go to an Edison dealer on September 24th and hear an Edison Phonograph play those to your liking.

There are Edison dealers everywhere. Go to the nearest and hear the Edison Phonograph play both Edison Standard and Amberol Records. Get complete catalogs from your dealer or from us.

Edison Amberol Records

U. S., 50c; Canada, 65c.

520 Medley Overture—Haviland's Song Hits
Edison Concert Band
521 Boy o' Mine ..... Frank C. Stanley
522 When the Daisies Bloom
Miss Barbour and Mr. Anthony
523 Jere Sanford's Yodling and Whistling Specialty
Jere Sanford
524 Cupid's Appeal ..... Charles Daab
525 Auld Lang Syne ..... Marie Narelle
526 Fading, Still Fading ..... Knickerbocker Quartet
527 Humorous Transcriptions on a German Folk-Song
Victor Herbert and his Orchestra
528 Gee! But There's Class to a Girl Like You
Manuel Romain
529 "Mamma's Boy"—Descriptive
Len Spencer and Company
530 Kerry Mills' Nantucket . New York Military Band
531 Come, Be My Sunshine, Dearie
Billy Murray and Chorus
532 Hope Beyond ..... Anthony and Harrison
533 Just for a Girl ..... Edward M. Favor
534 You Are the Ideal of My Dreams . W. H. Thompson
535 Mandy, How Do You Do?
Ada Jones and Billy Murray and Chorus
536 The Premier Polka ..... Arthur S. Witcomb
537 When the Robins Nest Again
Will Oakland and Chorus
538 Trip to the County Fair ..... Premier Quartet
539 Temptation Rag ..... New York Military Band

Edison Standard Records

U. S., 35c; Canada, 40c.

10426 Strenuous Life March ..... U. S. Marine Band
10427 Sweet Italian Love ..... Billy Murray
10428 The Bright Forever ..... Edison Mixed Quartet
10429 I've Got the Time, I've Got the Place
Byron G. Harlan
10430 Cameo Polka ..... Charles Daab
10431 I'll Await My Love ..... Will Oakland
10432 Yucatana Man ..... Collins and Harlan
10433 Play That Barber Shop Chord...Edward Meeker
10434 The Mocking Bird ..... Roxy P. La Rocca
10435 Oft in the Stilly Night....Knickerbocker Quartet

Edison Grand Opera Amberol Records

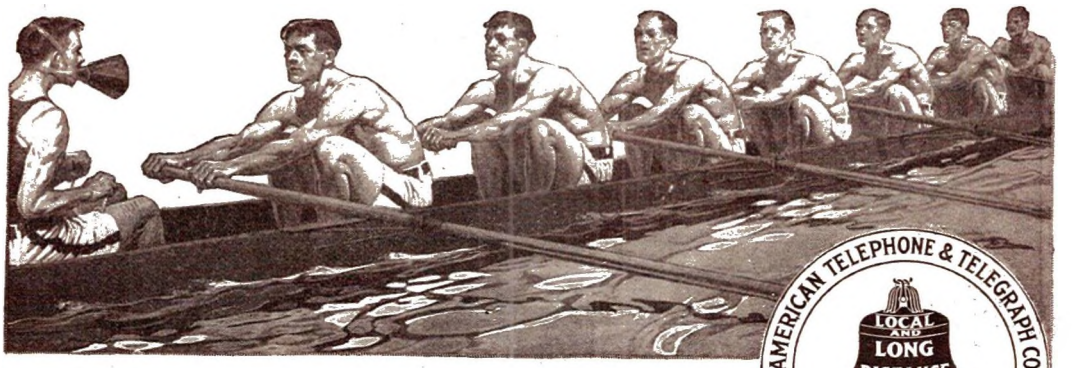
40027 Andrea Chenier—La mamma morta (Giordano)
(Sung in Italian) Orchestra Accompaniment
U. S., $2.00., Canada, $2.50 Carmen Melis
40028 Faust—Cavatina, Salut! demeure (Gounod)
(Sung in French) Orchestra Accompaniment
U. S., $2.00. Canada, $2.50 Karl Jorn
40029 Gioconda—Voce di donna (Ponchielli)
(Sung in Italian) Orchestra Accompaniment
U. S., $2.00. Canada, $2.50 Marie Delna
40030 Pescatori di Perle—Aria (Romanza) (Bizet)
(Sung in Italian) Orchestra Accompaniment
U. S., $2.00. Canada, $2.50 Giovanni Polese
80029 Favorita—Una vergine (Donizetti)
(Sung in Italian) Orchestra Accompaniment
U. S., $1.00. Canada, $1.25 Florencie Constantino

Amberol Record by Sarah Bernhardt

85007 L'Aiglon—La Plaine de Wagram
(Edward Rostand) (In French)
U. S., $1.50. Canada, $2.00 Sarah Bernhardt

NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH COMPANY
35 Lakeside Avenue, Orange, N. J.

With the Edison Business Phonograph you are not dependent upon any one stenographer. Any typist in your office can transcribe your work.



The Work that Counts

There is no wasted energy, no lost motion in the work of the 'Varsity Crew. Perfect team work, co-operative effort and uniform action are strikingly exemplified.

The same principle of intelligent co-operation exists in telephone communication in its broadest application.

In handling the talk of the nation the Bell operators respond to millions of different calls from millions of different people, twenty million communications being made every day.

Ten million miles of wire, five million telephones and thousands of switchboards are used to handle this vast traffic.

More than a hundred thousand employees, pulling together, keep the entire system attuned. Unity is the keynote. Without this harmony of co-operation such service as is demanded would be impossible.

One policy, broad and general, in which uniformity of method and co-operation are the underlying principles, results in universal service for nearly a hundred million people.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

"One Policy, One System, Universal Service"

(C)

(A)

(B)

(D)

"Love at First Sight!"

Note—Pictures now ready for delivery

"Why so much frowning?" asked a friend as he paused at the door of the writer's office.

"Because I can't find the right words to tell the magazine readers how really beautiful and valuable are the 1911 'Pompeian Beauties' in colors. You see, each 'Pompeian Beauty' is really worth $1.50 to $2.50," I replied.

"Oh, I see," he laughed, "can't make the public understand how you can give a $1.50 picture in colors for 15 cents, eh? Well, charge 'em a dollar. Maybe that will make 'em sit up and observe. Let's see the pictures." I pointed to the wall behind him. "Those! Those for 15 cents apiece!" His voice indicated his own unbelief.

"There you are!" I laughed. "Won't believe me yourself. Just 15 cents apiece. But which is your choice?"

"That one for me!" he said. "No, wait a moment. That one! No, I—I—say—I love 'em all! They're great! They're wonderful! Just say in your ad that it's a case of love at first sight for every single one of them! They are all heart-breakers! If the public could only see them in their real sizes and colors you'd be swamped!"

Yes, it is a case of "love at first sight" for those who see them in their true and exquisite colors. Then the question is: Which "Pompeian Beauty" would you rather have on your walls? Any one is worthy of a fine frame. Yes, you may order several if you can't decide on one. You run no risk. Read our "money back" guarantee.

Why $1.50 is not charged: The manufacturers of Pompeian Massage Cream want to make you so delighted with each picture you get that you can never forget who gave it to you, for each picture is practically a gift, the 15 cents being charged to protect ourselves from being overwhelmed. We get our reward through years to come, and from the good will and confidence thus established. *You* get *your* reward at once.

MEN—**DON'T**—WOMEN

"Don't envy a good complexion; use Pompeian and have one." This is the advice of men and women (in a million homes) that use Pompeian Massage Cream. At all dealers; trial jar sent for 6 cents (stamps or coin). You may order pictures, trial jar, or both.

Our 1911 Pictures. Each "Pompeian Beauty" is in colors and by a high-priced artist, and represents a type of woman whom Pompeian helps to make more beautiful by imparting a natural, clear, healthy complexion.

Our Guarantee. If you are not satisfied that each copy of any "Pompeian Beauty" has an actual art store value of $1.50 to $2.50, or if for any reason you are disappointed, we will return your money.

NOTE—The handsome frames are only printed (but in colors) on pictures A and B. All four have hangers for use if pictures are not to be framed. Only artist's name-plate on front as above.

Pompeian Beauty (A) size 17"x12"; (B) size 19"x12"; (C) size 32"x8"; (D) size 35"x7".

NOTE—Pompeian Beauty D went into a quarter of a million homes last year, and the demand for it is still heavy.

Final Instructions: Don't expect picture and trial jar to come together; don't expect reply by "return mail" (we have 20,000 orders on some days). But after making due allowance for distance, congestion of mails, and our being overwhelmed at times, if you then get no reply, write us, for mails will miscarry and we *do* replace all goods lost or stolen. Write plainly on the coupon only. You may order as many pictures as you wish for yourself or friends.

POMPEIAN Massage Cream

All Dealers
50c. 75c. and $1

Read this coupon carefully before filling out your order.

THE POMPEIAN MFG. CO., 31 Prospect Street, Cleveland, O.

Gentlemen:—Under the letters (or a letter) in the spaces below I have placed figures (or a figure) to show the quantity I wish of one or more of the four "Pompeian Beauties." I am enclosing 15c. (stamps or money) for each picture ordered.

Pictures	A	B	C	D
Quantity				

P. S.—I shall place a mark (x) in the square below if I enclose 6c. extra (stamps or coin) for a trial jar of Pompeian. ☐

Write *very* carefully, fully and plainly on coupon only.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

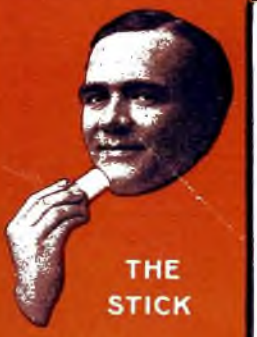
Fairy Soap is White to Stay White

Other soaps are white in name — stay white for a time — but turn yellow as saffron with age, because of the cheap ingredients and refuse greases used in their making. Fairy Soap is *always* white, first, last and all the time. It needs no coloring matter or high perfumes to disguise the quality of the edible products from which it is made. This handy, floating, oval cake of skin comfort costs but 5c.

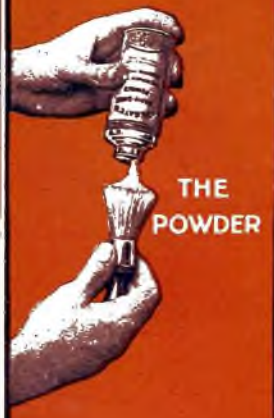
THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY
CHICAGO

"Have You a little 'Fairy' in Your Home?"

COLGATE'S SHAVING LATHER



THE STICK



THE POWDER

THE CREAM

Stick–Powder–Cream

Your choice of three methods with the certainty of one result—a perfect lather.

Colgate's Shaving Lather—whichever way you make it—is softening, soothing, sanitary. It is best in its lasting abundance. Best in its antiseptic qualities and in freedom from uncombined alkali. (See chemist's report below.) And best in its skin-refreshing effect that leaves your face so delightfully cool and comfortable. Do not ill-treat your face and handicap your razor by using an inferior lather.

"I have made careful examinations of Colgate's Shaving Stick, Rapid-Shave Powder and Shaving Cream. I find that all of these Shaving Preparations are notably free from uncombined alkali and in the form of shaving lather, all are germicidal."

(Signed) FRANK B. GALLIVAN, Ph.D.
August 25, 1910. Hathaway Bldg., Boston, Mass.

THREE METHODS—ONE RESULT

Colgate's Shaving Stick: In the original nickeled box.
Colgate's Rapid-Shave Powder: The powder that shortens the shave.
Colgate's Shaving Cream: The perfected cream.

Trial Size of Stick, Powder or Cream sent for 4c.

COLGATE & CO., Dept. 52, 55 John St., New York (Estab. 1806)

Makers of the famous Cashmere Bouquet Toilet Soap, Talc Powder and Perfume

3 KINDS OF BEST

THE MUNSEY PRESS, NEW YORK.