BLUEBEARD'S VESTIBULE COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY FOR OCTOBER

Single Copies, 10c. ⁞⁞ THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK. ⁞⁞ By the Year, $1.00

Economy

PEARS' is the most economical of all soaps. It wears to the thinness of a dime. Moisten the thin remainder of your old cake and place it in the hollow of the new one where it will adhere, thus you will not lose an atom, and will see that PEARS' IS NOT ONLY PURE, BUT ECONOMICAL.

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

The Page-Davis School is the Original and Genuine Advertising School of the World.
Notice to Employers—*Concerns desirous of engaging competent ad. writers are requested to communicate with us. This service is gratis.*

LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS

Earn from $25 to $100 a Week

ARE you satisfied to be one of the "eight o'clock crowd" all your life? Are you waiting with hopes that some day you will do better? Have you ever stopped long enough to think what a slim chance you have of ever doing better unless you do your part by preparing? If you learn to write advertisements with the Page-Davis School by correspondence the chances will come to you the same as the chances came to the hundreds of others who are to-day making from $25 to $100 a week. ¶ Never in the history of this institution have there been greater demands upon it for men who could fill advertising positions that pay from $25 to $100 a week. ¶ No matter what your present salary is, you can increase it through a knowledge of advertising. We will teach you by correspondence. If you want to work up in the firm you are with, this knowledge will open the way.

A short time ago the largest coffee house in the world set aside nine hundred and fifty dollars to be given to the seven Page-Davis students who would submit the best plans to advertise their coffee. The first prize was five hundred dollars, won by a young man in the coal business in Brooklyn, N. Y.

¶ Send in your name and we shall be glad to demonstrate to you how thousands of men and women have increased their incomes from 25 per cent. to 100 per cent., and we will also tell you what we can do for you.

Page-Davis School

Either Office { Address { Dept. 1041, 90 Wabash Avenue, Chicago
Dept. 1041, 150 Nassau Street, New York

The second prize in this great contest was given to Mrs. J. A. Hogan, an accomplished violinist, residing in Junction City, Kans. This shows that you can make money in advertising and remain right at home. Other women are doing so right along. Concerns want good ideas for their advertising and will pay you liberally for them.

CREDIT GIVEN TO EVERYBODY

We ship goods everywhere in the U. S. and give the most generous credit that allows the use of goods while paying for them. Why not trade with us, **America's Great Original Housefurnishing Concern,** who for over a quarter of a century has furnished satisfactorily thousands of happy homes?

OUR GREAT CATALOG *FREE*

Sewing Machine Catalog No. 70 Just Out. Get it now. FREE.

simply for the asking. It gives all information and tells you how to save money on housefurnishings, such as **Furniture, Carpets and Rugs in actual colors, Curtains, Stoves, Washing Machines, Crockery, Silverware, Office Desks, Baby Carriages, Refrigerators, Fireless Cookers, Musical Instruments, etc.**

Send us **$1.00** and we will ship this exclusive design, large and roomy, handsome Kitchen Cabinet. Made of hard white maple, fitted complete with all necessary compartments for labor and space economy. Base is 40 x 24 inches, exactly like cut. **Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.** Price only **6.95**

Pay $1.00 Cash, 75c Monthly

Send us **$1.00** CASH and we will ship this elegant, massive Rocker, golden quarter sawed oak finish, elaborately carved. The front of seat and sides of back are ruffled, upholstered with Boston Leather. Exactly like this illustration. **Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.** Order Chair No. 1142. Price **4.65**

Pay $1.00 Cash, 50c Monthly

STRAUS & SCHRAM Inc.
1070 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

COLONIAL PERFECT FITTING

UNDERWEAR and KNIT JACKETS

Buy Direct from us, save the middleman's profit.

Best quality and perfect fit guaranteed.

Colonial Underwear, the climax of perfection, is offered direct to you from the mills entirely on its merits as the biggest value in the world.

Colonial Underwear is reinforced where the wear comes—not only fits right, but **wears longer** and is **made better** than all other garments of its kind. Send for our

FREE CATALOGUE

tells all about Underwear and Knit Jackets for men, women and children.
Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.

COLONIAL KNITTING MILLS, 200 Wabash Ave., Chicago

A1

A2

The Argosy for October

One Complete Novel

Six Serial Stories

Fourteen Short Stories

THE NOVEMBER ARGOSY

will contain some great stories. "By Bullet Persuasion" is the Complete Novel, its scene laid in the West and its action made up of steady-fire thrills. Two New Serials will start, one of them, "From Flag to Flag," a yarn that will not only hold breathless attention from the very outset, but will give the reader the surprise of his life at the end; the other, "An Elusive Legacy," taking a photographer through a series of happenings that range all the way from a flashlight that failed to what occurred when he had a whole town athirst to get even with him. And among the short stories, don't fail to read "Money to Burn."

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.

ENTERED AT THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

$1.50 a line. For Argosy and All-Story combined $2.25 a line. Minimum space four lines; maximum space twelve lines. Ten per cent. discount for six consecutive insertions.

As it is impossible for us to know each advertiser personally, we ask the cooperation of our readers in keeping all questionable advertising out of these columns

Forms for Nov. close Sept. 23d

AGENTS AND SALESMEN WANTED

EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY now being allotted for *Little Giant Household Pump*. Only thing of its kind, it has free field wherever there's plumbing. Removes all stoppages in pipes, saves plumbers' bills, prevents noxious gases. Everyone wants it, everyone can afford it, everyone can operate it. As strong in business world as among homes. Selling at top speed. 50,000 already in use. I can grant you absolute monopoly and fix you for life, if you are the right man. Address at once, J. E. KENNEDY, 803 Callowhill St., Philadelphia, Pa.

WRITE US AT ONCE for the best Soap & Toilet Article Combinations put up in the Country for Agents. All our soaps made by the French process. See our new Red Cross packages. PIERCE CHEMICAL CO., Desk 11, 152 5th Ave., Chicago.

LADIES WANTED TO SELL DRESS GOODS, silk, and waistings. No capital required. Large elaborate sample outfit Free. IDEAL DRESS GOODS COMPANY, Dept. M., 338 Broadway, New York.

PHOTO PILLOW TOPS. Portraits, Frames and Sheet Pictures at very lowest prices. Refects credited. Prompt shipments. Samples and catalog free. We trust honest agents. JAS. BAILEY CO., 73 Potomac Ave., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS—$25 A WEEK EASILY MADE selling our 14 new patented articles. Each one a necessity to every woman and a rapid seller. No Scheme. Sample free to hustlers. A. M. YOUNG & Co., 204 Howland Bldg., Chicago.

OUR SOAP & TOILET ARTICLE propositions have them all beat.—Attractive appearance, A1 quality, popular prices. Almost sell themselves. Just what the people want. Our agents doing better than ever. There's a reason. Investigate. DAVIS SOAP WORKS, 70 Union Park Ct., Chicago.

AGENTS CAN EASILY MAKE $10.00 A DAY selling our Gold Window Letters, Novelty Signs, and Changeable Signs. Enormous demand. Merchants must have them. Catalogue free. SULLIVAN CO., 403 W. Van Buren St., Chicago.

WANTED—Man capable of earning $5,000 yearly to open branch office for *Dinzo*, the new disinfectant. Your subagents can make $10 a day. Enormous sales. Amazing profits. Exclusive territory. PARKER CHEMICAL CO., Chicago.

AGENTS make big money selling our new sign letters for office windows, store fronts, and glass signs. Any one can put them on. Write today for free sample and full particulars. Metallic Sign Letter Co., 55 N. Clark St., Chicago.

Agents—Our Swiss Embroidered Shirt Waist Patterns and other Novelties sell at sight. $25 to $50 weekly easily made. Write today for our Illustrated and sworn to Catalog. U. S. EMBROIDERY MFG. CO., Dept. P., 96 E. B'way, N. Y.

RESPONSIBLE MEN WANTED to handle the most complete and up-to-date line of gasoline lighting systems on the market. Salesmen protected in territory. ACORN BRASS MFG. CO., Dept. H, Chicago.

SUPPLY YOUR TOWN Kushion Komfort Shoes—big profits—permanent trade—no expense. Satisfied wearers buy again. Write for agency. Bully chance for hustlers. KUSHION KOMFORT SHOE CO., Desk 10, Boston, Mass.

MONEY IN MUSHROOMS. Cheaply grown by either sex, in cellars, stables, boxes, etc., whole year; great demand; big profit. Send for free booklet and learn this profitable business. Dept. F. NAT'L SPAWN & MUSHROOM CO., Boston.

Agents wanted in every county to sell transparent handle pocket knife. Taft or Bryan pictures on handle. Big commission paid. From $75 to $300 a month can be made. Write for terms. NOVELTY CUTLERY CO., No. 77 Bar St., Canton, O.

Agents: Here's your opportunity; new household articles. Sell everywhere. Good money and expenses easily made. No capital required; for full information and samples address DEXTER SUPPLY CO., 334 Dearborn St., Chicago.

WE WANT ONE MAN OR WOMAN in every town to introduce our new household necessity; every woman seeing it is interested; our agents remarkably successful. Write for particulars. IMMEN MFG. CO., Hoboken, N. J.

FLOOR POLISH

BUTCHER'S Boston Polish is the best finish made for floors and interior woodwork. Not brittle; will not scratch or deface like shellac or varnish. Send for free booklet. For sale by dealers in paints, hardware and housefurnishings. THE BUTCHER POLISH CO., 356 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

LEARN MORE AND EARN MORE. We teach Business Correspondence, Law, Engineering, Accounting, Oratory and 150 other subjects. Noted and famous teachers. Low cost. Easy payments. Ask for catalog G. Name course wanted. INTERCONTINENTAL UNIVERSITY, Washington, D. C.

MAKE $2500 to $7500 yearly without capital. We teach you the real-estate and general brokerage business by mail; appoint you our special representative; furnish you readily salable real-estate and investments; help you secure customers and make you quickly prosperous. Particulars free. Interstate Sales Co., 255 Times Bldg., N. Y.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS: Start Mail-Order Business at home; devote whole or spare time. We tell you how; very good profits. Everything furnished. No Catalog outfit proposition. For "Starter" and *free* particulars address, A. R. KRUEGER Co., 155 Wash. St., Chicago, Ill.

$3,000 to $10,000 yearly easily made in real estate business; no capital required; we teach the business by mail, appoint you special representative, assist you to success. Valuable book free. THE CROSS CO., 1976 Reaper Block, Chicago. See our other advertisement in this magazine.

WE START YOU in a permanent business with us and furnish everything. Full course of instruction free. We are manufacturers and have a new plan in the mail order line. Large profits. Small capital. You pay us in three months and make big profit. References given. *Sworn statements*. PEASE MFG. CO., 245 Pease Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y.

MAKE MONEY operating our new Vending Machines. They earn 300%. Only a small investment needed to start earning handsome income. Write quick for plan. CAILLE, Detroit, Mich.

BUILD A $5,000 BUSINESS in two years. Let us start you in the collection business. No capital needed; big field. We teach secrets of collecting money; refer business to you. Write today for free pointers and new plan. AMERICAN COLLECTION SERVICE, 11 State, Detroit, Mich.

START MAIL-ORDER BUSINESS—Sell goods by mail; cash orders, big profits. Conducted by anyone, anywhere; we supply everything. Our plan positively successful; satisfaction guaranteed. Write for free booklet and sample catalogue. CENTRAL SUPPLY CO., Kansas City, Mo.

"DOLLARS & SENSE" (Col. Hunter's great book) free with *Advertisers Magazine* one year at 50 cents. Indispensible to business men who advertise. Best "Ad-School" in existence. Sample magazine free. ADVERTISERS MAGAZINE, 736 Commerce Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

MERCHANTS AND SALESMEN wanted to become our representatives in the custom-made fall and winter clothing line. Suits and overcoats from $10.00 up; trousers from $3.00 up. You make 33 1-3% commission, which means a nice income. We furnish you a large line of attractive samples, free. Write for further information and territory. A. L. SINGER & Co., Dept. R, Chicago.

FOR MEN

SHAVING COMFORT is experienced by using the famous Mah Razor; 300,000 in use in British Army and Navy. Dwarf $1.50. Booklet free. MAH COMPANY OF AMERICA, 1346 Monroe St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

BOATS AND MACHINERY

Electric Supplies and Novelties. Catalog of 200 free. If it's Electric we have it, and we undersell all. Ohio Electric Works, Cleveland, O., world's headquarters for electric toys, books, fan motors, dynamos, batteries. Fortune for Agents.

MOTOR BOATS AND YACHTS OUTFITTED:—My new catalogue, No. 21, showing flags in colors and illustrating every necessity for Yachtsmen, with Mail Order Discount Sheet, sent free. HOPKINS, 119 Chambers St., New York.

MISCELLANEOUS

IF YOU WANT TO GET WELL AND STAY WELL, you can—without any drugs or medicine. My free booklet, "The What, The Why, The Way," proves that most human ailments are due to one cause, and tells you how to remove it. Write CHAS. A. TYRRELL, M.D., 321 D Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

REAL ESTATE

$100 cash and monthly payments secures 10 acres near Los Angeles, cultivates it, gives income second year, independence, competence. New plan. Write NATIONAL HOMESTEAD ASSN., Chamber of Commerce Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal.

RICH FARM LANDS in the Dakotas and Montana now sell from $15 an acre upwards. Homestead lands are still plentiful close to the towns on the new Pacific Coast line of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. Fertile soil; mild climate; ample rainfall; no irrigation required; long growing seasons; convenient markets. Books describing the present opportunities along this new line are free for the asking. F. A. MILLER, General Passenger Agent, Chicago.

GARY—THE NEW STEEL CITY. Home of United States Steel Corp. Lots $100 to $575. $5 and up monthly. No interest. No taxes. Titles guaranteed by Chicago Title & Trust Co. Cement sidewalks and accepted city streets. For maps and booklets address, UNITED STATES LAND CO., Inc., 600 Amer. Trust Bldg., Chicago.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS. *I procure patents that protect.* Advice and books free. Highest references. Best results. WATSON E. COLEMAN, Patent Lawyer, Washington, D. C.

PATENT WHAT YOU INVENT.—Our books giving full information on Patents and a list of what to invent mailed free. Patent obtained or fees returned. Patents advertised free. Conscientious service. Ask for our references. WOODWARD & CHANDLEE, 1287 F St., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT.—Our three books for inventors mailed on receipt of six cents stamps. R. S. & A. B. LACEY, Washington, D. C. Established 1869.

PATENT SECURED or fee returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. *Guide Book* and *What to Invent*, with valuable list of Inventions Wanted, sent free. *One Million Dollars* offered for one invention; $16,000 for others. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress; sample free. EVANS, WILKENS & CO., Washington, D. C.

SMOKERS' ARTICLES

PAINE'S PERFECT PIPE. Best in the world. No tobacco juice—no dust—no slugs in the mouth. Write for free illustrated catalog. FRANKLIN T. PAINE, Duluth, Minnesota.

GAMES

FLYING TOY—Great Excitement—A toy flying machine any child can operate. Guaranteed to fly or money back. Price 25 cts. Postage prepaid. PACIFIC NOVELTY WORKS, 78 Haight St., San Francisco, Calif.

TOILET ARTICLES

MAKE YOUR OWN PERFUMES—1 oz. of oil makes 8 ozs. of the best perfume on earth. Oil of Jicky, Violet, White Rose, &c. $1.00 per oz. postpaid. THE SUNSET PERFUME CO., 420 East 41st St., Los Angeles, Cal.

ADHESO-DENT makes your false teeth stick up. Don't throw away comfortable old set because of looseness or dropping while talking, etc. (Used by Dentists to make new teeth adhere.) Trial 35c. Reg. size box 50c. "Money back without question." Guaranteed under Food and Drug Act. ESTES CHEMICAL & SALES COMPANY., 75 Fifth Ave., New York.

SINGERS

Diaphragmatic breathing, indispensable for best results, fully explained. 11 illustrations, $1. Money returned on request. Singing Primer 10c, Reader 50c, Sheet Music 10c a copy. Catalog. Testimonials. W. P. SCHILLING, Music Publisher, 131 W. 23rd St., New York.

TELEGRAPHY

Telegraphy—taught quickly. R. R. wire in school. Living expenses earned. Graduates assisted. Correspondence course if desired. Catalog free. DODGE'S INSTITUTE OF TELEGRAPHY, 36th St., Valparaiso, Ind. Established 1874.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

$5.75 paid for Rare Date 1853 Quarters.—Keep all money coined before 1875 and send 10 cents at once for a set of 2 Coin & Stamp Value Books. It may mean your fortune. C. F. CLARKE & CO., Dept. 15, Le Roy, N. Y.

HELP WANTED

WANTED—MAN. Must be willing to learn and capable of acting as our local representative. No canvassing or soliciting. Address NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE REALTY CO., Dept. I.A.I., Washington, D. C.

MEN—Our free illustrated catalogue explains how we teach barber trade in few weeks; graduates paid $12 to $20 weekly; tools given, diplomas granted; positions or locations waiting. Write nearest Branch. MOLER SYSTEM OF COLLEGES, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Atlanta, Omaha, Dallas or San Antonio, Tex.

WANTED—Men and women, every county, to solicit orders for fruit and ornamental trees, plants, etc. No delivering or collecting. Big commissions payable weekly. Experience unnecessary. Outfit free. PERRY NURSERIES, Rochester, N. Y.

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES are paid well for easy work; examinations of all kinds soon. Expert advice, sample questions and Booklet 18, describing positions and telling easiest and quickest way to secure them, free. Write now. WASHINGTON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL, Washington, D. C.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BE A DOCTOR OF MECHANO-THERAPY, the wonderful new system of healing. $3000-$5000 a year. We teach you by mail. Greatly superior and more simple than Osteopathy. Authorized diplomas to graduates. Special terms now. Write today for prospectus free. AMERICAN COLLEGE OF MECHANO-THERAPY, Dept. 940, 120-122 Randolph St., Chicago.

FOR THE DEAF

DEAF PEOPLE.—Normal hearing can be permanently restored in cases of Catarrhal deafness by the Massacon, a scientific electrical massage for the inner ear. Enables your ears to do their own work without dependence on any mechanical device. Endorsed by physicians everywhere. Thousands in successful operation. Write for free booklet. MASSACON SALES CO., Suite 851, 534 Sixth Ave., New York.

THE ACOUSTICON MAKES THE DEAF HEAR INSTANTLY. No trumpet, unsightly or cumbersome apparatus. Special instruments for Theatres and Churches. In successful use throughout the country. Booklet, with indorsement of those you know, free. K. A. TURNER, 1265 Broadway, New York City.

PHOTOGRAPHY

WE MAKE one 8x10 Bromide Enlargement for 25c, 5 for $1, or one 11x14 for 50c, 5 for $2, from any size film or plate negative. All work guaranteed or money refunded. Send us a trial order. F. T. KING & CO., 51 A Bromfield St., Boston, Mass.

EXCHANGE

WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF ARTICLES on our lists. Would you like to exchange that article you don't want for something you do? Write for plan. UNIVERSAL EXCHANGE, 632 Baltimore Bldg., Chicago.

PIANOS

YOUR JUDGMENT in buying a Piano ends with "seeing" and "hearing," and you must rely on the maker for the rest—how it wears, stays in tune, etc. Here's where the "Pease" 63 year record counts. Special prices, free delivery anywhere, easy payments. Many fine bargains, used pianos, leading makes, $125 up, full guarantee. Write for catalog and bargain list. PEASE & CO., 128 West 42d St., New York.

ELOCUTION AND DRAMATIC ARTS

Acting, Elocution, Oratory. We teach this fascinating and profitable art by mail and prepare you for the stage or speaker's platform. Booklet on Dramatic Art Free. Chicago School of Elocution, 834 Grand Opera House, Chicago.

PICTURE POST-CARDS

IMPORTED COLORED POST CARDS (No Comic or Trash) from all over the world. Send 10 cts for Samples and catalogue of over 10000 subjects, Historical, Scenic, etc. STANDARD CARD CO., Haverhill, Mass.

POST CARD EXCHANGE—Join the best one and get cards from everywhere; 50 cents a year. UNITED POST CARD EXCHANGE, 466 Clinton Ave. N., Rochester, N. Y.

Advertising Positions for the Ambitious.

Is the advertising business a good one to adopt?

Does it offer men and women of reasonable education greater income inducements than almost any other?

What is the best plan for becoming a skilful ad writer—correspondence instruction or so-called office experience?

Every ambitious person who has been attracted to the great and growing advertising profession has asked these leading questions a hundred times—perhaps a thousand.

Let us consider the facts:

The advertising field has constantly expanded, except during a few months of the panic period when everything momentarily paused. No other business compares with advertising in possibilities—

Especially for young men and women who are determined to win in the shortest time.

Salaries Range from $1200.00 to $6,000.00 Yearly, and Over.

For about seven years I have been in the closest touch with the advertisers of America, and I know that their demand for trained ad writers has marvelously increased as business generally has increased. Live merchants and manufacturers everywhere now understand that holding or gaining supremacy means a great, big reliance on sensible, catchy advertising.

They understand, too, that mere business ability does not qualify them, or their salesmen, or their bookkeepers, to prepare and plan important advertising on which a fortune may be staked.

For this vital reason the trained ad writer and manager has become a permanent fixture — he's here to stay.

The question, then, is not "will the demand for skilled advertising service hold its own?" but rather, if you are attracted to the business, "how can I secure the best training?"

And the answer: through the Powell System—

The World's Best Instruction System.

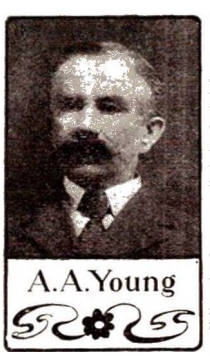
The Powell System is far better than any so-called oral instruction for many reasons. It supplies the necessary instruction books and pamphlets which the ordinary ad man can't. It relies on exhaustive analysis and exhibits where the ad man relies on makeshift "points" thought up on the spur of the moment. It supplies practical ad work for the student which he must in any event do in solitude, and not in a class.

But the Powell System of Correspondence Instruction goes far deeper into practical detail than has ever been attempted by any other, and as a result it has long been recognized by the advertising authorities of America as the standard and best.

Its employed graduates are everywhere—in stores, factories, newspaper offices and advertising agencies, so thoroughly qualified that they command higher salaries year after year.

I shall be glad to mail my two free books—the elegant Prospectus and "Net Results"—to subordinate workers who are ambitious for more salary, and business men who are ambitious for more business.

GEORGE H. POWELL, 1017 Metropolitan Annex, New York.



Another Newspaper Advertising Manager Testifies

Mr. A. A. Young, advertising manager of the *Enterprise*, High Point, N. C., under date of June 18th, 1908, has this to say of the world's best system of advertising instruction:

"It is my duty and a very great pleasure to tell you how much I am indebted to you and your valuable course of Correspondence Instruction.

"After completing it I secured a position as Advertising Manager of the Association of Furniture Mfrs. Later I received the appointment of advertising manager of the daily and weekly *Enterprise*, a position I could not possibly fill without the thorough training I secured from the Powell System. It is practical, complete and up-to-date, and any man, young or old, after completing it, need never be idle.

"Refer all inquirers to me if you wish, and I will gladly tell them my experience"

17

THE ARGOSY

Vol. LVIII OCTOBER, 1908. No. 3

BLUEBEARD'S VESTIBULE.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN,

Author of "In Savage Splendor," "The Peril of the Paladin," "A Month in Masquerade," etc.

The time and place for disappearing, only the selected wealthy desired, but detectives sent on their trail not disdained.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

SPEAKS OF ANGELS.

WHETHER Mr. Richard Bridger's inner office measured up to the popular idea of a private detective's sanctum is a question.

There was certainly no display of captured weapons or of fragmentary portions of the human anatomy carved loose in the course of duty; also, there were no portraits of criminal types.

Instead, the walls displayed three or four very excellent little paintings in oil, and the bronze figure which held a cluster of electrics over the big desk was really an art work.

And on this particular morning, Bridger himself, as he leaned back and perused the paper, looked as little like the foremost detective of New York as could well be fancied.

The paper, apparently, was interesting.

Bridger yawned as he regarded it. He folded it to a particular spot and read aloud:

> "The management of Firwood Inn, Wylesdale, New York, begs to announce that, owing to the pressure of advance bookings, it can consider no applications for accommodation for which negotiations were opened later than the 20th of June."

The paper dropped to his knee. Bridger squinted at the bronze figure.

"Now, is that cold fact, or just plain brass?" he inquired. "Has that outfit managed to cook up such a swell resort on a fifteen-dollar-a-day basis that it's positively turning away business?"

He scratched his smooth-shaven chin and meditated further.

"They say, though, it's the cream of everything in the way of comfort and luxury," he reflected. "I wonder—"

He ceased to wonder aloud. He picked up his paper and turned to the society columns.

"The Standish Van Andens have left for a fortnight at the new Firwood Inn, at Wylesdale in the Adirondacks," he read pensively. "Um!"

His eyes wandered farther down the column; he started a little as he read again:

> "Mr. and Mrs. Stuyvesant Cressley and Miss Elsie Cressley will pass the latter half of this month at the new Firwood Inn, at Wylesdale. This latest of mountain resorts is gathering to a remarkable degree its quota of New York's exclusive set."

Bridger dropped the paper altogether.

"Well, I should say it was," he remarked thoughtfully. "It seems to be roping in about all that's wealthiest in the city. I wonder—"

In the doorway of the adjoining office appeared the figure of Corliss, his nearest friend and his most trusted assistant in the conduct of the Bridger Detective Agency. The newcomer was grinning as he remarked:

"That's the second time I've heard

you wondering in the past five minutes, Dick! What's it about?"

The head of the agency frowned with mock severity.

"Why the dickens aren't you dictating the afternoon orders for a variety of operators?" he inquired.

"Because I'm tired of the job for the present, and I want to know the cause of all this active wondering."

"Well, to be absolutely candid," smiled the detective, as his companion took a chair, "I was speculating as to whether the boss of this outfit was justified in taking a week's vacation at the Firwood Inn, in the Adirondacks."

"The new joint that's reputed to be the last limit of luxury?" said Corliss. "The one where you press a button and have an automatic electric manicure slide out from under the bed and do your nails before you get up—the place where they furnish two valets or two maids for every guest?"

"Precisely."

"Then, if you want my opinion, go!" advised Corliss seriously. "If ever a man stood in need of a week off, you're the man. And it's a good time, too—second week in July. Things are hotter than the devil here, and they'll be cool up there; and you can luxuriate for a week or two and freshen up generally. Pack up and get out, Dick."

"And—the business?"

"I can attend to anything that can't lay over, old man."

"I don't know whether you can or not," said Bridger, with charming frankness. "That Farley case may come up in court this week, and I'll have to be there if it does. Then there's that matter of Benham's. I can't get away. There's the Dundford case, too, and—"

"Let them all go to blazes and get out and take a rest," broke in Corliss. "The world managed to turn around pretty decently for several million years before you were born. And—"

"I know, but I didn't have to make a living in it during that unhappy period," smiled the detective. "Confound it! I'd like to go up there, too. It's no use, though. I'm tied here till August at the very best."

"Only because you choose to be tied," remarked Corliss sagely.

"They say it's a great place," Bridger went on. "Everything under the sun that human ingenuity can devise for comfort. They say there isn't a New York hotel equal to it—and that's going some. If we could get that Dundford case out of the way, and the Townsend affair, too, and the Blakely business, and the—"

"Smith, Jones, Brown, and Robinson cases," Corliss intoned wearily, as he rose and strolled to the window. "Cut 'em out, Dick—that's all. Go off for a week or two and forget it all. You'll be better off in the end, and—phew!"

"Eh?"

"Style—elegance—wealth—luxury—jiminy!" said Corliss.

"What is it all?" Bridger asked idly.

"Come and take a look, Dick."

The chief of the agency sauntered to his assistant's side and glanced down into the street, three stories below.

At the curb stood one of the raciest automobiles that the mind of man could devise. The bonnet section of the affair seemed to consume more than three-quarters of its entire length; behind it were two seats, with a third at the extreme rear.

There was a glare of white paint, too, in the midday sunshine, and a glitter of brass and nickel; and from the whole dazzling outfit came a loud, insistent whirring.

The chauffeur, booted and gloved to the dictates of minute before last, leaped out. Following him came a taller figure of a man, perhaps fifty-five, iron-gray and dignified.

He shed his gloves and duster hastily, and stepped across the pavement to the entrance of the building and disappeared; and Corliss sighed a little.

"Dick, why the dickens don't you get one of those things as a permanent institution? It'd be nice for me to ride around in." He grinned at his chief. "Do you know who that was?"

"It looked to me like Calderford—Reginald Calderford," said Bridger. "I haven't seen him for a year or two, but—"

"But that's just who it was," remarked Corliss. "I wonder what he's doing in this building? Dick! That fellow is the brother of one of the wealthiest men in New York. Wouldn't it be great to

get hold of a cuss like that, right here in this office—some one we could charge properly, right up into the thousands? Wouldn't—"

Bridger laughed aloud.

"What's struck you this morning?" he asked. "Got the romancing fever or—"

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said the stenographer behind them, in a rather awed tone.

Both men turned suddenly and faced the young woman.

There was a light almost of excitement in her eyes as she proffered a card.

"Mr. Reginald Calderford is waiting," she said softly. "He says that his business is most urgent."

"Eh? The individual with the automobile?" Bridger muttered. "What—"

"Have him in! Have him in! Don't keep him waiting!" cried Corliss, rather excitedly.

The chief of the agency nodded. The stenographer vanished; and a moment later the tall figure entered the private office.

CHAPTER II.

MYSTERY IN HEAPING MEASURE.

"MR. BRIDGER?"

"Yes."

The visitor seated himself hurriedly and glanced toward the door. Corliss closed it hastily.

"My name is Calderford. You know me, I think," the newcomer went on rapidly. "You may recall that a year or two ago you recovered certain bonds for our house in Wall Street?"

"Yes. I recall it," smiled Bridger.

"Good. I'm afraid that I have need of your services again, Mr. Bridger, and at once."

The detective nodded quietly.

"Anything that we can do, Mr. Calderford—" he smiled.

The visitor came nearer to the desk and his voice lowered. He leaned forward earnestly, and the detective noted that there was a light of considerable anxiety in his eyes.

"It is about my brother Benjamin—Mr. Calderford. You know him, too, I think—you know of him, at least?"

Bridger nodded once more, and barely suppressed a smile as he reflected that probably no man, woman, or child capable of reading the Sunday papers was unaware of Mr. Benjamin Calderford's existence, of his motors, his racing stable, his Wall Street operations, or his country houses.

"My brother, sir, has disappeared absolutely," announced the visitor.

"*What?*" The detective sat up suddenly.

"It may be I'm wrong in saying that he has disappeared. At least, he seems to have passed out of the realm of sane communication, Mr. Bridger. I'm not prepared to say he hasn't lost his mind—although I can't find ground for such a belief. That, sir, is something you'll have to determine speedily, if you will."

"Very well, sir. If you'll give me the details, I'll do my best," said Bridger briskly.

The visitor's brow contracted as he laid aside his hat, and he sighed a little. Veteran business man and financier that he was, he still seemed to be searching for the most concise explanation of his trouble; and presently the words came.

"Three days ago, Mr. Bridger," he said, "my brother left for the Adirondacks, with his wife and two children."

"What part, please?"

"Wylesdale, New York. They were going to the new Firwood Inn."

A smile came to Bridger's lips for a moment. The visitor seemed not to notice it.

"It was Benjamin's intention to settle the family there, with the maids, and leave for New York the same night. There is—er—a certain business matter, which I am not at liberty to discuss, which demanded his attention yesterday morning."

"Urgently?"

"To the tune of nearly ten million dollars, sir," said Calderford dryly.

"Um, um!" muttered the detective. "Well?"

"He hasn't come back — that's all there is to it, sir," snapped the visitor.

"You've wired him, I presume?"

"I have. And the answers I have received have been absolute damned nonsense, Mr. Bridger."

"In a word, entirely unlike what

would have been expected from the man?"

"So entirely unlike my brother that I am prepared to swear he never wrote them. Just a moment. Here's one."

The visitor went hurriedly into his pocket.

"I wired early yesterday morning to learn why he hadn't returned the previous night. This reply, ostensibly signed by him, says simply: 'This is too good to leave. Attend to matters yourself!'"

"Matters which you are unable personally to attend to?"

"I'm just as well qualified to attend to them as you are, Bridger," the visitor responded. "These are things which demand Benjamin's attention personally and his signature. There are papers involved in this little affair which mean millions to him."

"And you're entirely certain that he couldn't possibly have changed his mind and decided to remain where he is?" Bridger went on probingly.

"I'm so certain, Bridger, that I'm prepared to bet a thousand dollars against a bad cent that my brother is being detained against his will at this confounded Firwood Inn."

"That," said the detective, "is a reasonably strong statement, Mr. Calderford. You've wired him more than once?"

"Good Heaven, sir! It seems to me I've been wiring him for the last year. I sent a message as soon as I received this answer. The reply came within two hours—" He produced another telegram. "It says only: 'Hold matters until I decide to return.'"

"Which is palpably nonsensical—eh?"

"Worse, Bridger. It's criminal. This affair has been cooking for months. We've brought it to a head at last—just this week. With Benjamin here, it could have been closed to-day easily enough. Without him—bah!"

He gnawed his mustache for an instant.

"Well, I telegraphed him again. There was no reply until this morning. Then this one came: 'If you feel unable to handle matters, wire me to that effect. I wish to spend the week here.'"

"And you replied?"

"That, as he knew perfectly, I couldn't handle matters without him, and that he would please wire me upon what train he would return."

"And—"

"And half an hour ago I received this last one, to the effect that he would not be back until Saturday, at the earliest. And to-day's Monday, and—"

The visitor choked to a standstill. The detective pursed his lips and squinted at the other.

"In a word, Mr. Calderford, you hold the opinion that some one else is sending these replies?"

"That's a conclusion that I've half worked around to, sir," replied the visitor, in some astonishment. "Personally, I can't believe it. I can't see what can have overtaken my brother. You know, perhaps, that he is the most evenly balanced mortal that ever walked this city. If ever a man were made of iron, both in his physical and his nervous organization, Benjamin is the man. It's—bosh! It's absolutely incredible that he should do anything of this sort."

"He showed no signs of a nervous breakdown when he left?"

"Not the slightest."

"Um—um!" The detective thought for a moment. "You haven't tried communicating with his wife, have you?"

"I have done that, too, Bridger, and I have received no answer whatever."

"Ah!" The detective scratched his chin and smiled. "You seem to have encountered something a little bit extraordinary. Why don't you go up there yourself, Mr. Calderford?"

"Because I cannot possibly take the time, my dear man. I can't leave things here to take care of themselves, and I can't make a move without my brother. He knows, even better than I do, the importance of this affair. He's had his heart in it for months. He's been counting on the climax for nearly a year. And now he seems to have settled down up there, just when we need him, and—"

The younger Calderford ended with an exasperated gasp. The detective smiled again.

"So that, to bring it down to a word, your brother has either gone mad or has encountered some altogether abnormal influence?"

"Exactly."

"Well—" The detective glanced at Corliss and smiled faintly. "This Firwood Inn seems to be a rather attractive place, doesn't it? I—I don't know just what to say to you, Mr. Calderford. The proper thing would be for me to go in person and investigate, I presume; but, like you, I have certain matters that I can't leave just now. If I should send—um. Let me see. There's Bland. I could spare him for a week, I suppose. Then there is—"

He ceased speaking suddenly.

Unannounced, the trusted stenographer of the office entered suddenly.

"There is a lady and a gentleman—" she began, in some slight excitement.

The door behind her opened again.

Through it came a young woman of twenty, and after her a man of perhaps four-and-twenty. The face of the latter was grave; the face of the former denoted agitation. Clad in the very height of fashion, unaware apparently of other people in the room, the girl came straight to Bridger.

"Mr. Bridger, you must do something!" she cried, almost incoherently. "You *must!* I had a feeling about the place at the very beginning. I had—"

The detective was standing now, his eyes somewhat wider; and he laid a soothing hand upon her arm.

"My dear young woman," he said quietly, "we'll do everything we can, but—but *what* place?"

"Why, that wretched Firwood Inn!" cried the visitor.

CHAPTER III.

WORSE AND MORE OF IT.

An agitated, absent-minded handshaking process seemed to be going on between the latest comers and Mr. Calderford.

Bridger watched it with marked interest.

He was thoroughly familiar with the identity of this particular couple.

They were Evelyn and Howard, daughter and son, respectively, of the Wesley Vandercourts. They represented, probably, some fifty millions of yet-to-be-inherited money; they represented also the very cream of New York society. And as such, they had a marked attraction for a detective anxious to make a reputation.

Bridger reseated himself with commendable calm. Corliss brought forward chairs, and the couple settled into them; and the young man laid aside his hat and leaned toward Bridger with:

"I hope we're not intruding on Mr. Calderford's business?"

"Mr. Calderford's business has also to do with the Firwood Inn," smiled the detective.

"What?"

The brother of the capitalist hesitated for an instant.

"My brother Benjamin has gone up there, and something seems to have happened to him," he said briefly.

"And father and mother—" broke in the young woman.

Her brother held up his hand.

"If you will allow me, Evelyn, I may be able to explain matters more rapidly," he said, and turned to Bridger.

"Mr. Bridger, three days ago my mother, my father and sister and myself went to this Firwood Inn, at Wylesdale, for a week or two."

"Ah!"

"We were assigned to rooms, and, being rather naturally weary, we all went to bed somewhat earlier than usual. We awoke in the morning—rather, Evelyn and I did. We dressed and went down to the veranda."

"Yes?" Calderford was leaning forward interestedly.

Young Mr. Vandercourt leaned back with a sigh.

"We had no more than seated ourselves when a bell-boy appeared with a typewritten note, apparently signed by my father. It stated that, after midnight, he had received a telephone message which necessitated his instant return to the city, and that mother had decided to accompany him. He said further that we might stay or follow, as we wished."

"I see,"

"We couldn't quite understand it, Mr. Bridger. We decided that the best thing would be to return to the city and see what was wrong, for the note was very indefinite, at the best. We tried to get the house on the phone; but that seemed

to be impossible, for the servants are all down at our summer place on Long Island. At all events, we came down yesterday—and since then we have been trying to find our parents."

"They were not at home?" said Bridger curiously.

"They were not. The caretaker said that they had not returned at all."

"And — pshaw! Undoubtedly, they are at one or another of the hotels."

Mr. Vandercourt smiled slightly.

"On the contrary, Mr. Bridger, they are not," he said. "By telephone, we have communicated with practically every hostelry in the city, large or small. No one by the name of Vandercourt has registered in the past three days. In a word, my mother and father seem to have dropped out of existence."

"But that's absurd, you know," smiled the detective. "I—"

"It may be absurd, but it's fact," said Vandercourt. "Personally, I have exhausted all the ideas that have occurred to me. I want to put the matter in your hands, Mr. Bridger. I want you to send a man up to that inn—"

"And I *knew* that something was going to happen when we went there," said his sister. "I had a premonition that something awful was going to occur. I said to mother when we parted for the night, Howard—you remember that—"

"Well, that's a little aside from the main proposition, Evelyn," smiled her brother. "Mr. Bridger would probably prefer to deal with the basic facts of the case."

"Undoubtedly," said that gentleman. "Let's get down to them. Do you happen to know whether your father had any business pending which might have called him away?"

"I am entirely certain that he had not," said the young man flatly.

"Absolutely?"

"Absolutely."

"Then why the dickens did he leave?" rejoined the detective. "Is there any one in your family ill—dangerously ill, I mean?"

"No."

The detective's dry smile broadened.

"And he wasn't anywhere near a nervous breakdown?" he went on.

"Bosh!" said Mr. Vandercourt.

"I'll vouch as thoroughly for John Vandercourt's soundness as I will for that of my brother Benjamin," remarked Mr. Calderford. "There can't be a doubt about either of them, Bridger."

"But they seem to have adopted rather eccentric tactics."

"Have they or—?"

"Or what?"

"That's what we'd like you to determine, Bridger," said Calderford.

"And I presume that, since it's up to me to determine it, I'll have to tackle the job," smiled the detective. "Let's see, now. We have three people here—two, we'll say—Mr. Calderford the elder and Mr. Vandercourt. They go to this Firwood establishment — and immediately something goes wrong. That would seem to indicate—" He broke off with a dry laugh. "That would seem to indicate that if we want to learn anything we'd better get a man on the ground as soon as possible. That's about all."

"But haven't you any notion of what could have happened to—" Miss Vandercourt began.

"My dear young lady, I might formulate fifty different theories, and not one of them might be anywhere near the truth," smiled Bridger. "The best—and the only thing—is to get a man on the ground. I wish most sincerely that I could go in person. Since that is impossible, however, I will try to send—"

He was cut short.

The door from the outer office all but flew open, and the stenographer entered.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bridger," she said breathlessly. "There is a lady here who says that she must see you at once, and—"

"And so I must," broke in a clear voice from the doorway.

The detective started to his feet.

Swiftly, rushingly almost, a rustle of silk petticoats came through the doorway. Bridger found himself face to face with a woman of perhaps thirty, of remarkable beauty and perfect attire.

It seemed to be the morning for fashionable patronage.

The detective caught his breath as he stared at the newest comer. Her cheeks were red, her eyes glittered feverishly. She came straight at him, and, unaware of everything save him, she cried:

"I am Mrs. Denton Dallingshire. Mr. Bridger. You know me—"

"I have—er—heard of you," the detective admitted somewhat dazedly.

And who on earth hadn't heard of Mrs. Denton Dallingshire, the beauty of two seasons, the wife of Dallingshire the copper man and millionaire! The—

"Oh, Mr. Bridger, you must help me! You *must*, I say. I'm sorry if you're busy, but—oh, you *must!*"

"Well, my dear madam—"

Corliss also was out of his chair. The lady took it unceremoniously—drew it nearer to the desk—settled into it.

"It's about that Firwood Inn, Mr. Bridger," she said, with palpable difficulty.

Something very nearly akin to a chorus of gasps went up about the inner office. For Bridger's part, he was forced to catch his breath, and he was past controlling his round-eyed stare.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DETECTIVE LOSES A POINT.

"THE Firwood Inn seems to be pretty much in evidence to-day," Bridger remarked. "This lady and these two gentlemen are here in connection with the same—"

"Denton and I went there three nights ago," Mrs. Dallingshire went on, with a cheerful disregard of the interruption. "We took a suite of two bedrooms and bath, Mr. Bridger. And in the morning Denton was gone! Gone! Do you understand? Gone!"

"Yes, I understand perfectly," Bridger said quietly. "Where had he gone?"

"That's what you must discover, Mr. Bridger. We were going up the hill for a walk in the morning—Denton and I. In the morning the clerk sent a boy to my room with word that Mr. Dallingshire had been called by the telephone during the night and had left for the city."

"A note?"

"Just—just a verbal message," said Mrs. Dallingshire, with some difficulty, as the tears began to well into her eyes.

"Um! And—?"

"I couldn't fancy what had occurred to take him off without even waking me to say good-by. I tried to find out from the clerks, but they seemed to know nothing. Then I came down."

"And didn't find him?"

"He isn't home, Mr. Bridger, and there has been no word from him. He isn't at either of his clubs, and there is no trace of him at the hotels. And I have phoned to the office, and he hasn't been heard from there; and I've phoned to all his business friends, and they don't know anything about it, and—"

Mrs. Dallingshire's calm gave way. Her handkerchief came out and covered her eyes; and the lady herself laid her head on Bridger's desk and sobbed:

"And I know something has happened to him. I know that everything isn't right. I *know* it, Mr. Bridger, and—"

"Well, now, my *dear* lady—" the detective protested, somewhat weakly.

He moistened his lips and looked at the animated eyes of Corliss. He gathered himself then and cleared his throat.

"Mrs. Dallingshire," he said gently, "there seems to be a considerable amount of trouble lately dating from this Firwood Inn. Mr. Calderford, here, has lost track of his brother, and Miss and Mr. Vandercourt seem to have lost track of their parents; while you state—"

"*What!* Is it possible?" The latest visitor raised her tear-stained face and stared at the others. "Has any one else—"

"It would seem so," said Bridger. "It would also seem that the time had come for some pretty energetic action. Ladies and gentlemen, have any of you notified the police?"

"No!" answered a somewhat astonished chorus.

"Good! Then I'll have a man up there on the first train and endeavor to discover whether we're dealing with a remarkable series of coincidences, or whether something is really radically wrong?"

"But what will the man do, Mr. Bridger?" Mrs. Dallingshire inquired, somewhat helplessly.

"The man, my dear lady, will endeavor to learn what is what, and also why," smiled the detective. "I have several operators here who are well fitted for the task. I will start the best of them—"

"But if he shouldn't find Denton?" wailed the latest visitor.

"Well, as yet we haven't any real means of knowing whether Mr. Dallingshire is up there or down here. We'll have to determine—"

The lady ignored him suddenly as she turned to Calderford.

"Why don't *you* go?" she asked.

The gentleman of wealth started a little.

"I, madam? It's impossible for me to leave here. That's why I came to consult Mr. Bridger."

"But you're a man of wealth, influence, power — everything," the lady urged with all the enthusiasm of her new inspiration. "The people at the inn might do more for you—I mean, they might tell you things they wouldn't tell an ordinary private detective, you know. I mean—oh, that they'd be more afraid of you and—and all that sort of thing. Won't you go?"

Calderford smiled doubtfully.

"Well, madam—" he began.

"Do go, Mr. Calderford," implored Mrs. Dallingshire. "Something tells me you are the man for the task." She turned impulsively to Bridger. "Don't *you* think so, Mr. Bridger? Couldn't Mr. Calderford accomplish more than a plain detective?"

Her great eyes were very appealing; her inordinate beauty was also nearly past resisting—and Bridger's teeth closed upon a rather two-edged remark he had been about to make.

If there was one thing which he especially abominated, it was the kindly suggestions of clients as to the conduct of their cases. He believed, with considerable justice, that when mortal reaches the point where appeal to a secret-service investigator becomes necessary, the matter should be left in the hands of that investigator.

Ordinarily, as Corliss, watching, knew very well, one or two extremely pithy sentences would have settled the case definitely, one way or the other.

But now, as Bridger met the eyes of Mrs. Dallingshire, as he surveyed the very much moneyed gathering in his office, he hesitated. There are times when a man, in any line of business, hesitates to offend the wealthiest customers he has enjoyed—and this was one of the times—and—

"*Do* ask him to go, Mr. Bridger."

The detective leaned back.

"Under certain circumstances," he said slowly, "it is possible that Mr. Calderford could accomplish a great deal more than the ordinary detective operator. But I'm afraid those conditions would include a prolonged training for such matters, and that Mr. Calderford hasn't enjoyed—or suffered, as you choose to regard it. If he could bring to bear the methods of the trained detective—"

"But he could, and he could do more," urged the charming Mrs. Dallingshire. "He could go up there and make people understand—"

"And I'll be bound to say, I believe you're right, madam!" exclaimed Calderford suddenly. "I—I believe I'll go."

"Oh, if you will—"

Mr. Bridger pursed his lips. Some years of contact with human nature had eliminated many childlike qualities. He had more than a suspicion that the luminous eyes of young Mrs. Dallingshire had prompted Calderford's decision more than any other single consideration.

He was greatly inclined to doubt the wisdom of the move, but—matters seemed to have taken the bit in their teeth, for Calderford was on his feet.

"I can get the Albany express within fifteen minutes," he said crisply. "That will allow me to connect with the afternoon train for Wylesdale, and bring me there about midnight. I can wire ahead for a carriage, I presume."

"They have several motors which they send to the Jamesville Junction, where you leave the train," interjected Miss Vandercourt.

"And I can wire for one to meet you, Calderford, if you're really going," broke in her brother.

"All right; if you'll do that it will save me the bother." Calderford picked up his hat with a certain remarkable determination. "It's the best thing — don't you think so, Bridger?"

"I'm not prepared to say it isn't," answered the detective, somewhat evasively. "It seems to be the most desired thing, however. Mr. Calderford."

"Well?"

"If you'll step into the outer office with me before you leave, I want to give you a hint or two."

"All right. I haven't but a minute, Bridger, if I'm going to make that train, you know, and—"

He was bowing to the assembled company. Bridger cut the performance short by propelling him gently through the doorway.

In the big outer room he took the gentleman of wealth to a far corner and talked earnestly.

"Mr. Calderford," he said, "you're going on a mission for which you may or may not be fitted. I can't give an opinion on it, because I haven't had time to look into a thousand details and think out a thousand more. Personally, I'm inclined to think that it's the job for a very capable operator; at the same time, you may meet with perfect success."

"That train—"

"All right. There's only one thing I want to say. Do the best you can, Mr. Calderford. When you get there—at the inn, I mean — and seem to be all right, send a wire here. Say—say—oh, say simply 'Cheese.' You understand? 'Cheese!' I'll look for that before noon to-morrow. If anything goes wrong, send me another, say 'Crackers and cheese,' and I'll send a man there or come myself at once. It sounds silly, but—is it clear?"

"Entirely clear and somewhat absurd," smiled Calderford, as he held out his hand. "I'll be going now."

"And remember—"

"I will," said the visitor, as he made for the door. "Good-by. I'll report in full."

He was gone.

Bridger scratched his head with a somewhat rueful smile as he returned to the private office.

The trio were standing now, and Corliss seemed to be talking soothingly to them in the fashion he understood so well. Also, they seemed to be on the point of departure, for Mrs. Dallingshire rustled to Mr. Bridger and clasped his hand with:

"I know Mr. Calderford will do everything!" she exclaimed. "But if he does not accomplish everything—if he doesn't learn anything—you'll send the best man you have, Mr. Bridger, won't you? Or you'll go up yourself?"

"Madam," said Bridger solemnly, "I will. Meanwhile—"

"Oh, I'll try to be as calm as I can," the lady assured him. "But when Denton has absolutely disappeared—"

"And when my father and mother seem to have passed out of existence without any sane explanation—" young Vandercourt put in.

The detective licked his lips.

"By noon to-morrow," he said, "we shall undoubtedly be able to solve the whole problem." He tried hard to beam upon them collectively. "Meanwhile, all we can do is to wait."

"And trust in you," observed the charming Mrs. Dallingshire.

"Precisely," smiled the detective. "And I hope the trust won't be misplaced."

Mr. Vandercourt picked up his straw hat. Miss Vandercourt prepared to leave. Mrs. Dallingshire gave a last, trustful look at the detective—and after another series of hand-shakings the visitors were gone and Corliss and Bridger were alone.

The detective seated himself with something that sounded much like a groan.

"My boy," said he, "this seems to be a blamed fool business all around."

CHAPTER V.

RESISTANCE BEGINS.

"UPON which point," said Corliss, "I'm inclined to believe that you are altogether right."

Bridger tilted back and glanced at the closed door to the outer office.

"What the dickens do you make of it, anyway?"

"Nothing as yet."

"Eh?"

"We haven't details enough."

"Well, you're right," said the detective dryly. "We've got a quantity of basic facts for a working basis, but nothing short of a personal investigation of the premises could furnish the details."

"Whatever became of the missing people, Dick?" Corliss asked earnestly.

"Not being a clairvoyant, I can't say."

Bridger crossed his legs and lighted a cigar. "They went there in apparently sound and normal condition. All of them, I mean."

"Yes."

"And they all disappeared in an abnormal fashion."

"And—"

"And that's all we know, old man." The detective blew a ring or two and smiled ruefully. "Just think of it! Calderford's brother—both of the Wesley Vandercourts—and young Denton Dallingshire! That's a pretty swell group to disappear all at once, isn't it?"

"Yes, and it's still sweller to have their relatives trot in here to have things investigated," remarked the practical Corliss. "Not to put too fine a point on it, I'm inclined to think we've captured as good a morning's business as any detective agency in New York."

"Oh—there's money in it, but that doesn't count for so much," the detective mused. "What puzzles me is: Is it all coincidence or—isn't it?"

"If it is coincidence, it's about the strangest manifestation I've seen in some time."

"And yet that's the logical conclusion, as affairs stand," observed Bridger. "These are all people of affairs. They have money by the ton—endless business and social connections—probably relatives galore. There's no real reason for supposing that they couldn't be called up in the night and summoned back to the city. Neither is there any real reason for assuming that a decent man would not have sufficient feeling for his wife or his children to leave them sleeping peacefully after a long railroad journey."

"But these things all seemed to have happened at the beginning of the visit."

"But 'these things,' at their worst, are only three in number, my boy," smiled Bridger. "I'm inclined to think that we've collided with a bunch of coincidental happenings, although—" and he paused.

"Exactly. Although—" smiled Corliss.

"Although be hanged!" snapped the detective. "The fictional twist in my mind suggests all sorts of things; but the practical side of it seems to point to mere coincidence. I think we'll let Calderford go ahead and do his own investigating—and that'll be the end of it. By the time he trots back here, everything will be nicely explained, I fancy. Meanwhile, without supporting evidence of something really wrong—"

He stopped, as the telephone-bell rang violently. He picked up the receiver and said:

"Hallo!"

"This is Mr. Lawrence Darmore," spoke the voice through the instrument breathlessly. "You know of me?"

Bridger's hand went over the mouthpiece, and the detective grinned.

"Society is still lining up, Corliss," he remarked. "This is young Darmore, son of the late Peter Darmore, who owned seventeen railroads and ninety-eight steamship lines and— Yes, Mr. Darmore?" he ended, as the hand was removed.

"I wish to consult you," went on the voice. "Will you be in your office all afternoon?"

"I expect to be, although I may be called away. What's wrong?"

"I want a man sent to the Firwood Inn, at Wylesdale, New York," said the voice. "You know the place?"

"Yes."

"My brother Harold and his wife and children went there several days ago. He meant to return day before yesterday, after seeing the family comfortably settled. I have been unable to communicate with him—at least, knowing him to be a man of sound mind and a total abstainer, I believe I have been unable to communicate with him."

"Yes?" said Bridger, with an almost breathless interest. "He had made definite arrangements to come back?"

"Certainly. His presence here is imperative at this time, and he is more fully aware of it than any other mortal."

"Ah! And he has shown no signs of coming back?"

"On the contrary, all I have been able to get from him has been the most tomfool collection of telegrams possible to the human mind."

The detective drew a long breath.

"And what conclusion have you reached?" he asked curiously.

"Either that my brother has gone mad, or that somebody's writing tele-

grams for him," said the crisp voice. "At all events, I must have him here; or, if he is ill, I must find out what is wrong with him. Can you send a man at once to investigate?"

Bridger came near to smiling aloud.

"A man has started for that same inn within fifteen minutes," he reported. "There seem to be several cases like your own, Mr. Darmore, and—"

"What?"

"I say, several more people of your own station in life appear to have taken to eccentricity at this Firwood Inn within the past week, and a man has gone to see what is the matter."

"But my brother—"

"Will be looked after with the rest," said Bridger quietly. "I'll do everything that can be done, I assure you. Can you call here?"

"I hope to do that this afternoon," replied the voice. "It may be impossible and it may not. But meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile," said the detective, rather soberly, "we have a—er—an investigator on the ground, and by to-morrow morning I should receive a report from him. If you'll drop in here and give me some further details—"

"I'll try to," said the voice. "Good-by."

A click indicated that the conversation had come to an end. Bridger hung up the instrument and smiled at Corliss in some bewilderment.

"Without knowing the necessary particulars," he remarked dryly, "it's beginning to look to me as if Firwood Inn was absorbing or driving mad all New York's best society. By all the rules of this business, we ought to have a good man up there to look things over and decide—"

From the door of the outer office a knock sounded.

Corliss rose and opened the portal, and the stenographer entered. Her face wore a smile of very genuine and very unaccustomed interest as she proffered a card to the head of the agency.

"The lady says that, if possible, she must see you at once," she said.

Bridger scanned the card.

"Mrs. Denton Dallingshire," he read. "Why, she was here not fifteen minutes ago. Why—"

"But it isn't the same woman," said the stenographer softly.

"What?"

"That was Mrs. Dallingshire who left here a little while ago?"

"Certainly."

"This lady looks no more like her than she does like you, Mr. Bridger."

The detective's eyes narrowed curiously.

"Well—that's rather a peculiar statement," he commented. "Are you quite certain that this is the card the lady gave you?"

"It hasn't left my hand since, Mr. Bridger."

Bridger straightened up.

"Ask her to come in here, please," he said; and then, as the girl disappeared, he turned to Corliss. "You sit back and hold tight, and don't say anything, old man," he remarked gently. "This seems to be the morning for freak happenings, and—"

He bit off the words and rose suddenly, for through the doorway had come a young woman of beauty quite as startling as that of the other Mrs. Dallingshire.

In hair, in complexion, in attire, they were not unlike; yet this particular Mrs. Dallingshire bore no more actual resemblance to the former caller than the sun does to the moon.

The detective bowed profoundly. The lady sank into the chair by his desk, and a tiny handkerchief went momentarily to her red eyes.

"Mr. Bridger," she said hastily, "I have come to consult you about my husband. I—"

Her voice broke in a sob. Bridger waited, athrill with as violent a curiosity as he could recall since childhood.

A moment or two, and the visitor had recovered her self-possession, and was speaking rapidly:

"Mr. Dallingshire has disappeared, Mr. Bridger. I can tell you very little more than that bare fact, but I know—oh, I *know* something has happened to him. Three days ago we went to the Firwood Inn—the new place at Wylesdale, New York—and—I beg your pardon—"

"I—I did not speak, madam," said Bridger, as he swallowed the gasp that had almost come into being, and stared

at his visitor in mild bewilderment. "Pray continue."

"We—we took a suite of two bedrooms and a bath, and we retired early," pursued the lady. "It had been a rather long trip, you know, and we meant to take a walk up the mountain in the morning. And that—that was the last I saw of Denton, Mr. Bridger."

She stared mournfully, dazedly, at him for an instant; then:

"In the morning the management of the inn sent me word that Mr. Dallingshire had left on the earliest train—that he had received a message over the long-distance telephone which made it necessary for him to return immediately to the city. I couldn't understand why he should have left without awaking me. I tried to communicate with him in the city during the day, and failed altogether. Then I came down myself—and I can hardly tell you more, Mr. Bridger, save that Mr. Dallingshire never reached home, and has not been heard of at his clubs or his office, or elsewhere."

"And you know of nothing which could have necessitated his sudden recall to New York?" the detective asked, almost monotonously.

"There *was* nothing," cried the lady. "What business matters were on hand were in charge of his secretary, who was fully qualified to handle them. Besides, Mr. Dallingshire's brother was to have attended to anything like an emergency—and I know that Denton left strict instructions that he was not to be sent for in any case."

She sighed quiveringly and looked at Bridger.

"Will you do whatever you can to find my husband, Mr. Bridger?" she asked quietly.

The detective drew a long breath. His fingers, tip to tip, drummed out a little tune upon each other for a time before he replied:

"Mrs. Dallingshire, may I ask you a question—er—without your asking several in return?"

"I—why—yes."

"Are you prepared to prove that *you are* Mrs. Denton Dallingshire?" demanded the detective; and then, hastily, as he saw an angry flush rising: "My dear lady, I cannot explain that rather extraordinary request—it involves matters of which I am not at liberty to speak just now. But I assure you that it is necessary in the extreme, and I assure you at the same time that I should be the very last one to offer offense to you. If you don't mind—"

Bridger was genuinely distressed. The lady smiled rather forlornly.

"I can take you home with me, if you like, and have the servants identify me. Or I can take you to a hundred or so people in the immediate neighborhood who can assure you that I am indeed I, Mr. Bridger."

"But—but you have been about this morning, Mrs. Dallingshire," Bridger said. "What, for example, was the last place you visited?"

"Nickerson & Wells's office—my husband's attorneys."

"And would it offend you if I should call them up on the phone and ask for a description of yourself and your dress? In this case it is *actually* necessary."

"I don't mind, Mr. Bridger."

The detective took to the telephone. A minute or so, and he was talking to Nickerson himself—a gentleman not altogether a stranger.

Yes, Mrs. Dallingshire had been there within a half-hour. For a description?

Well, she was a young woman of twenty-five, of remarkable beauty, chestnut hair and blue eyes. Very blue eyes, in fact—and Bridger nodded, with a grunt. She was dressed in a light-blue gown—silk, Nickerson should have said it was; and over that was a coat—sort of a tan coat, probably also of silk—little, light thingamajig—long and loose—the kind women wear when they're riding in summer.

And she had a white hat, with some kind of blue flowers—and that was about Nickerson's limit as to description.

It was a limit altogether satisfactory to the detective. He hung up the telephone and turned with a smile.

"Mrs. Dallingshire," he said, "I believe that you are identified. I believe also that we can settle your case in a very few words. There has been more trouble than yours at this Firwood establishment, madam, and in the course of this morning some of it has found its way to this office. I have—er—rather, a man has

gone up to investigate matters and discover what is wrong. Inasmuch as there are several cases, yours can very easily be looked after with the rest."

"But is he a *good* man?"

"He's a personal friend of your own, I think," the detective answered dryly. "He seemed to be convinced that he could unravel several other peculiar disappearances."

"So there *have* been others?"

"There have, dear lady, and I can't tell you a thing about them, for the confidences of the detective business are as sacred as those of the doctor or the lawyer," laughed Bridger. "Be sure that everything will be done for you, Mrs. Dallingshire, and don't worry. If one man had disappeared mysteriously, there would be ground for fear; but when several people drop out like this, I don't believe anything very serious has happened to them.

"Sounds silly, does it? Never mind. I think that Mr. Dallingshire is perfectly safe, wherever he may be. One last question, though. You haven't a solitary idea of any business, personal or otherwise, to which he might have been called?"

"There was absolutely nothing which could have taken him away," said Mrs. Dallingshire flatly.

Some ten minutes later she was gone, and Corliss and Bridger were alone in the office. The former smiled a little dazedly as he said:

"What the dickens do you make of it?"

"I don't make anything of it yet, except that there's something afoot, my boy. *Who in thunder* was the first Mrs. Dallingshire?"

"I'll pass on that."

"She wasn't the real Mrs. Dallingshire, because Nickerson identified this last lady perfectly. Therefore, she was somebody else. Therefore, being somebody else, she had a distinct purpose in coming here and spinning her tale. And that purpose, I am beginning to suspect, is our opening point for a pretty deep plot."

"But what kind of a plot?"

"I don't know that, but I *do* know that this Firwood establishment has been making a pretty strong bid for fashionable and moneyed patronage. They've sent circulars to about all the really wealthy people in New York and to no one else, and—oh, I say! Calderford's no man to be on that job. I'm going to send Bland to the ground and find out something definite."

He pressed a button and the stenographer entered. A word and she was gone again; and some two minutes later a short and very ordinary appearing individual appeared and stood silently by the desk.

Bridger looked up at him for a minute.

"Bland," he said, "I want you to go to Wylesdale, New York, and to a place called the Firwood Inn. Several very wealthy people seem to have come to grief there in one way or another. Get your things packed and be here inside of half an hour. By that time I shall have a history of the case and full directions typewritten for you. I want you to find out what has become of the people you'll find described, and to wire me in our regular cipher. That's all. Hustle!"

The man vanished. The button was pressed again—and Corliss sauntered out.

There was going to be some rapid dictation done in that private office in the next few minutes, and Bridger preferred to dictate alone.

For perhaps ten minutes he talked rapidly, while the stenographer turned page after page of her note-book. Thereafter there was a humming of typewriter-bars in the outer office—and Bland appeared ready for the trip.

Five minutes of oral orders and the man was gone, with the typewritten matter stowed carefully in his pocket and the knowledge that he could report some satisfactory work or consider himself as good as out of the Bridger agency.

And one hour later came a telephone call from police headquarters.

Bridger answered it in person, and he heard:

"This is headquarters. You've got an operator named Bland?"

"Yes."

"Was he going somewhere this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Well, he was sandbagged just beside the cab-stand at the Grand Central Depot, and his wits were knocked out."

"What!"

"He's in Bellevue now, unconscious."

"Well, who did it?" Bridger asked. "Who on earth—"

"We don't know yet. He made a clean getaway, whoever he was. Two of the men there went after him, but he must have ducked through the train-yards. We'll get him, all right."

"Perhaps," said Bridger thoughtfully. "Is Bland badly hurt?"

"The report says he may have a fracture and a bad one. They haven't made a complete examination yet. He's all bunged up, anyway."

"Did they take anything from him?"

"Not a thing. It was straight assault. Somebody with a grudge, I guess."

"Thanks," said the detective. "I'll go up and see him. Good-by."

He put aside the instrument and stared at Corliss.

"There *is* a plot," he remarked gravely.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FUN CONTINUES.

It was past five when Bridger returned from the hospital.

Corliss, with a very lively interest, was waiting for him in the private office. The chief of the agency threw aside his hat and settled down with almost a groan.

"Well, they've passed poor old Bland a pretty strong one," he observed.

"Not dead?"

"No, but they say he would have been if the blow had landed half an inch higher. He's unconscious still, but he has a pretty good chance of recovery, the doctors think."

Bridger found a cigar and leaned back.

"From all I can gather, it was a clear case of putting Bland out of business, without any other intention," he went on thoughtfully. "The police say—that is, the officer who was across the way at the time, says—that Bland was almost on the point of entering the station when a fellow darted out from behind one of the cabs, gave him one very well-judged blow, and vanished toward the train-sheds before anybody could lay hands on him. The officer started across the way, and was blocked by a surface-car — and by the time he crossed the street, about all that was left for him was to call an ambulance. The man made a clean getaway. Um!"

He tilted farther back and gazed into the clouds of smoke.

"Bland didn't look like a man with a lot of money," Corliss observed.

"Not only that, but whoever gave him that blow wasn't after money," said Bridger. "The police managed to obtain several witnesses, and they all agree that there was no attempt to snatch anything from Bland. Corliss, that job has a very direct and intimate connection with this Firwood affair."

"Pshaw!"

"There's no 'pshaw' about it. It has," insisted the detective positively. "There is only one logical deduction that I can make: somebody or other didn't want Bland to go to that confounded inn."

"I don't believe it."

"You don't have to," smiled Bridger. "It's so, just the same, though."

"Then, let's try starting another man—"

The head of the agency was not listening. Instead, he had tilted back to the point of a fall, and was thinking deeply. After some ten minutes he dropped the end of the cigar and spoke.

"I want time to think this all out, Corliss. Moreover, we may as well give Calderford a little chance. I should hear from him by noon to-morrow. If I do not—well, we'll get busy, that's all."

He rose suddenly.

"Put on your things, old man, and let's clear out," he remarked. "We'll have dinner up-town, and they say there's a great show on at that new roof-garden."

There is such a thing as waking chronically in the neighborhood of three in the morning and reviewing past, present, and future with a clearness little less than astounding.

It was one of Bridger's habits, and its manifestation came next morning as usual.

The thinking process this time centered firmly upon the Firwood Inn; and the

actors came in swift procession across his mind as he stared at the black ceiling.

Calderford and his story — the Vandercourts and their story—the spurious Mrs. Dallingshire and her story—the real Mrs. Dallingshire and the identical story again.

There was a trend to them all of almost monotonous sameness. That seemed to indicate that they sprang from a common cause. And the cause—the cause?

In the blackness and quiet of the room, Bridger thought on and on; and when the first tinge of the warm summer dawn began to show in the sky, the detective began to suspect that he had a very fair, if somewhat rudimental, notion of what was afoot. And he rolled over and slept soundly again, with a satisfied smile upon his countenance.

At nine he was at his desk once more.

There were telegrams this morning, to the number of seventeen or eighteen, but not a word from Calderford.

Search as he would through the pile of yellow slips, that reassuring word. "Cheese," declined to put in an appearance.

He rapped his teeth with his fountain pen and thought hard.

Calderford was a man of method, certainly a man of intelligence; emphatically he had understood the meager instructions given him. He should have wired late last night, if all were well; and the message should be here by now, for there was a private wire in the inn.

And still, there was a chance that he had left it until morning. Perhaps—

Ten o'clock came and no message.

Eleven finally chimed out from the clock in the corner — and a uniformed messenger hurried into the private office and delivered the familiar yellow envelope to the detective.

Bridger signed for it and opened it hurriedly. Before him lay:

> Evidently all a mistake. Everything satisfactory and all accounted for.
>
> CALDERFORD.

For a matter of five minutes the detective stared at the sheet. Corliss sauntered in.

"Fatal message arrive from Calderford?" he inquired.

"A message appears to have reached here. What do you make of it?"

Corliss studied it with a smile. He looked then at Bridger's frowning face.

"I suppose that astute mind of yours has deduced that all parties concerned have been slaughtered, drawn and quartered and hung upon the several pine-trees which probably surround the inn," he observed. "But so far as I can see this means that the whole affair was simply a bunch of coincidences and that everything's all right, Dick."

"And I can't be sure that it does at all," said Bridger irritably. "I told that gentleman particularly to wire one word—'Cheese'—when he arrived. He hasn't done it. Why?"

"Because he doesn't care for cheese and thought you'd as soon have some other kind of diet, I presume," Corliss replied flippantly.

"Bah! He understood. He must have understood, Corliss. I—say! Tell that boy to come here on the double!"

He reached for his pad of telegram-blanks and scribbled:

> If satisfied, wire as agreed.
>
> BRIDGER.

He directed it to Calderford at the Firwood Inn, and enclosed it in an envelope as the boy entered. He instructed the youngster to make time to the Western Union office around the corner, and he picked up the telephone and called for the manager of the office itself.

There are certain unusual things which a recognized and prosperous detective agency can do which are denied the average mortal. One of them is the rapid putting through of telegrams. A request to the manager of the office was enough.

Bridger laid aside the phone and stared absently at Corliss.

"It's eleven now. It'll take them fifteen minutes, at the outside, to get the Firwood wire, for there's nothing heavy going over the trunk lines now. That means that Calderford should receive the message by half past eleven. He should answer on the spot—probably he will. That means that, at the best, we ought to hear from him by twelve; perhaps by one; certainly by two. At any rate, we'll give him till three."

"And then?"

"And then, if we haven't heard something definite and reassuring—well, we'll see what we shall see."

Corliss scratched his head reflectively.

"Darmore was in this morning before you landed."

"Ah!" Bridger started a little. "Any further particulars of his case?"

"Only that communication with his brother seems to have ceased entirely. He said that the Frederick Kelstons seemed to have dropped out of existence there, too, though."

"What?"

"Um—um!" Corliss grinned excitedly. "More of the very moneyed bunch, Dick."

"Are you—sure?"

"Fernand, Kelston's partner, has been manipulating the telephone and the telegraph for two days, trying to reach him. He hasn't succeeded yet, Darmore said."

Bridger thought long and earnestly. In the end he grinned rather sourly.

"This is an age of trusts and monopolies, Corliss," he said at last. "That inn seems to be getting a corner on the really wealthiest section of New York society and to be annihilating them as they land. That's about all I can see at the moment. I wish to goodness Calderford would answer in a hurry, though. I'd like to get you or myself started in that direction, if there's really going to be something doing."

"I'd just as soon start now."

The head of the agency reflected again.

"We'll wait till three," he said. "That'll give you a chance to hit the three-ten Montreal express, and I presume you'll be able to make some kind of connections at Albany, or north of there."

The wait was quite unnecessary.

Some few minutes after one another messenger entered with an envelope marked "Personal." Bridger, just returned from lunch, opened it with decided interest, and read:

> Of course I'm satisfied. All well and happy. Am going to stay few days for rest. CALDERFORD.

"And how much that doesn't remind me of the conversation we had in this office yesterday," commented Mr. Bridger. "How beautifully that doesn't agree with any of Calderford's statements!"

"Eh?" The interested Corliss appeared in the doorway.

"There's no 'cheese' yet," observed Bridger.

"What?"

"Here's a message from Calderford that never came from Calderford. If it had, he would have understood and would have dropped in that poor little word 'cheese.' More than that, he would have been almost home again by this time—and, instead, he announces that he is going to stay up there for a while."

"Really!"

"And I," said Bridger, as he blew a cloud of smoke at the bronze figure, "I wish I was there with him, I can tell you."

"Pack up and get out."

"Can't do it, my boy. There's too much hanging on here now that needs my personal attention. I guess it's your job."

"I'm willing."

"As partner and employee of this office, you have to be," Bridger laughed, as he considered the series of rings he had blown. "Corliss, you've got a *job* cut out for you, according to my way of thinking."

"Ah!"

"Is your suit-case here, ready for traveling?"

"As usual," answered Corliss, "it is."

"Good enough. Get the next train, old man. I'll wire ahead in your name to have a conveyance of some kind meet you at the station—you can phone me from the Grand Central—after you find out yourself—when you're likely to arrive up-State."

"All right."

"Go to the blamed place and see what's to be seen," the detective continued. "If there isn't anything to be seen, find out what's under the surface of things. You know the people who are supposed to have gone there and who are not accounted for anywhere else. One or two of them you know by sight. See if you can locate them. If you can, have a talk with them and wire me in full."

"Um—um!"

"And see here! Don't under any conditions use plain English, Corliss. You and I are probably the only two persons on earth with our own particular cipher engraved upon our brains. Have you a copy of it with you?"

"Yes."

"Can you remember it perfectly?"

"I devised most of it."

"All right. Give me your copy."

Corliss reached into his pocket and produced a rather worn bundle of typewritten paper. He handed it to the head of the agency; and Bridger thrust it unceremoniously into a drawer.

"That settles *that!*" He considered the cigar for a moment. "When you get there, Corliss—the instant you get there, if the wire is open—I want a cipher report from you. You'll land there very late to-night, at the best, although I understand that their station is on the trunk line, and there are a good many trains. If it should happen that their private wire isn't open at night, get a message through the very first thing in the morning. They're bound to open by eight. Understand that?"

"Somehow, I believe I have grasped it," smiled his assistant.

"In every particular?"

"Yes."

"And the idea has penetrated that more or less thick skull that we are not to exchange one word *except in our own cipher?*"

"It has."

The detective pointed to the door, and the classic qualities of his English came to the surface.

"Twenty-three!" he remarked tersely.

Corliss left with a laugh.

He returned some ten minutes later, ready for the trip; and after a few words he was gone.

He phoned, some fifteen minutes after that, to state that a train was leaving almost directly, and that, with fair luck, he could make Wylesdale not much after midnight.

And thereupon, for the time at least, Mr. Corliss drops out of the story.

Bridger spent a busy afternoon at the mass of work which seemed to have piled up in the regular routine of the office.

He read and he dictated. He interviewed operators who drifted in with reports. He even allowed himself the time to go out and arrest a certain individual who was needed and who was eating a late lunch at the restaurant next door to the agency, and he went to the extent of running the individual to court, arraigning him and seeing him sent to the Tombs for trial.

And at the end of the day he cast aside its cares and studied the throng at Coney Island with the cheerful abandon of a schoolboy on a holiday.

Morning came again, and he was at the office early.

Messages from Firwood Inn there were none—and Bridger was more than a little puzzled. If such a thing as opening a long-distance telegraph wire were possible, Corliss would have accomplished the feat. Yet there wasn't a sign of a message dating from any spot north of Albany.

He pondered for a time before getting down to the business of the day. He had a telephonic interview with the manager of the nearest telegraph office; and the sum and substance of the whole affair was that there was absolutely no trace of a message for the agency or himself.

Nine o'clock chimed out, and ten—and the frown upon Bridger's brow became positively massive. He was on the point of attempting a long-distance call to the mysterious inn itself, when a messenger entered with another personal telegram.

The detective ripped the envelope even before signing.

Before him, on the conventional yellow sheet, lay the amazing:

> There is nothing to worry about. They are all right, and I am returning this afternoon.

He signed the slip and the boy betook himself to other regions.

The detective gazed long and earnestly at his message.

Eleven o'clock passed, and he was still gazing. The thing lay in his lap now, as it had laid for nearly an hour.

He picked it up at last, read it for the last time and threw it to the desk.

"I told him to use nothing but cipher," he said, "and he knows well enough not to disregard instructions. The whole confounded business has gone crazy, and —and—well, I'll have to go myself."

He pondered again and bestowed another smile upon the bronze figure.

"And if I can judge anything by the performance of the fictitious Mrs. Dallingshire and the dent they put in poor Bland's skull, I am *watched*, good and plenty," he observed. "I may be wrong, but I've got a nagging suspicion that about the time I leave this office and make for the depot, full particulars will be wired to the inn, and—"

He rebuked the bronze electrolier with a scowl.

"And, therefore, I shall have to get to Firwood without leaving this office," he remarked enigmatically.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD ARVINDALE ARRIVES.

As a general rule, when one has to hurry, one hurries. Bridger hurried.

It was a mental, rather than a physical, process at the outset, and its first signs came in the keen lightening of his eyes.

Things were going on in the astute brain—things which counted for fully as much as physical haste.

The detective's elbows were upon his desk, and he stared at the blotter—and incidentally indulged his worst habit—that of meditating aloud in the peculiar, underbreath murmur which was characteristic of him.

"Arvindale's in India," he said gently.

He surveyed the largest blot of ink upon the pad.

"To all intents and purposes, I saved Arvindale's life last year in that affair down in Surrey. More than that, he's grateful to me, and a good friend, and a downright decent chap."

He searched for and found a letter with a foreign stamp. He perused it for a little and folded it again.

"And by this time," he pursued, "Arvindale must be well toward his beloved Tibet and out of reach of communication for a few days at least. And even more than that, he must have caused that fake report of his American trip to be circulated before he left for his explorations. It certainly can't be more than two weeks ago that the *Herald* published the rumor that he was coming here *incognito*."

Bridger dropped his cigar and his smile broadened.

"And he's one of the wealthiest young devils in England, too," he mused, "if not in the world—and everybody knows it, and—that's sufficient. I'm going to be Lord Arvindale for a while, and I don't believe he'll mind. *Miss Patten!*"

The young woman entered the room to find Bridger scribbling in his check-book. He tore out the slip and handed it to her with a faint smile.

"I want you to go to the bank, if you will, and have this cashed at once. If possible, get it in one one-thousand-dollar bill, two or three five-hundred-dollar bills, and as many one-hundreds and fifties as they can give you in crisp new gold certificates. I'm especially particular about their newness. Hurry, please."

"Five thousand—"

"Precisely. Five thousand dollars. And I want you back here as quickly as possible, Miss Patten."

The girl left swiftly and, perhaps, dazedly. The detective's sternness relaxed into a smile as he gazed after her.

"Five thousand is going to make something of a scratch on the agency's balance, but it ought to be worth it," he observed. "However—"

He pressed another of his unostentatious electric buttons—the one which led to the operators' room this time. In a second or two a youth entered.

Bridger squinted at him thoughtfully.

"Your memory still holding out in good shape, Towns?"

"I think so."

"All right. Listen and remember, then. You're to go to my apartment. See Wynne, my man, and get from him the dress-suit case I carried when I was abroad last year—the one with the thousand and one labels on it. Have Wynne put in it whatever I need for a three-days' trip. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Then take it down to"—the detective found a sheet of paper and scrawled a name and address—"take it down to this trunk-store on Sixth Avenue and ask for Mr. Dahlski himself, and tell him you come from me. Tell him that if he puts plenty of dryer-in paint, it can be made to dry within fifteen minutes. Got that?"

The eyes of young Mr. Towns were twinkling in rather eager expectance.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Then have him print on that case, with paint that you can carry out dry within fifteen minutes, the initials, 'P. D. B. A.' Put that down—P. D. B. A. Under that 'London.' Got that down?"

"Yes."

"Then I want you to take that case and sit down on a bench in Madison Square, my young friend—and I want you to begin sitting there not longer than one hour from now. Have you got that last fact firmly fixed?"

"I think so." Towns put on his hat.

"Go ahead."

The man disappeared with that cheerful rapidity which characterized the agency. The head of the outfit sat back and smoked again.

"It's the best scheme, and it'll work," he announced to the bronze figure. "Arvindale won't care, because he doesn't know, and it wouldn't matter if he did. On a pinch, I look enough like him to pass for him. And, anyway, if things are going as they seem to be, Lord Arvindale and his coin are going to draw attention as a sponge draws water."

Miss Patten was back presently, with an envelope full of delightfully crisp bills, yellow as the gold they represented. Bridger folded them with a sigh and placed them in his trousers-pocket.

And precisely thirty minutes after Towns's departure, Bridger called up his own apartment, rather farther up-town.

Had Towns been there? He had. Was he there now? He was not. How long ago had he left? Certainly fifteen minutes back.

He had rushed in and stated his wants, and Wynne had put in Mr. Bridger's gray suit and four colored shirts and ten collars and the dinner-suit and two dress-shirts and—

Mr. Wynne was cut off abruptly.

Bridger tried the telephone anew.

He obtained this time that particular half-way up-town hotel where people go who cannot afford not to pay for what they want.

"I'm at the White Star pier," he announced, with charming mendacity, when the connection was made. "Can you give me a large room and bath?"

It seemed to be possible. Some one asked his name.

"The name's Arvindale," said Mr. Bridger. "Good-by."

He hung up the receiver with a grin and rang for Miss Patten; and in a second or two the young woman entered. Bridger considered her thoughtfully for a little.

"Miss Patten," he said, "I'm going to ask you to use a good deal of tact for the next two or three days. In the first place, please remember that I am here in the office, night and day—that that strike-breaking business has necessitated my sleeping here. Also remember that I am so absolutely weary that I cannot possibly be disturbed for anything short of a fire in the building, and that I can attend to nobody. Will you please look into the outer corridor and see whether there is anybody loitering between here and the elevator in the rear now?"

The girl left again. She was back shortly with the report that the hall appeared to be empty.

Mr. Bridger grinned anew and found his hat.

"Then you may expect to see me back here three days from now," he said, with a gentle disregard of previous statements. "Meanwhile, if you want to communicate with me, address Lord Arvindale at the Firwood Inn, Wylesdale, New York."

He left quickly. He descended by the freight-elevator and emerged upon the street behind the building—and, for the time, Richard Bridger was lost to New York.

At the—well, not to be too specific—at the hotel toward which Bridger had steered, there was a mild sensation.

A cab had drawn up before the door and a well-built individual had entered the house.

The house-detective, who happened to be an intimate friend of Bridger's, stared for the most infinitesimal fraction of a second, smiled in his sleeve and sauntered down the corridor.

The visitor himself, a bell-boy trailing behind with a much-belabeled case bearing the initials "P. D. B. A." and the small-typed word "London," sauntered lazily to the desk.

"Room and bath reserved for Arvindale?" he inquired.

The clerk started—stared—and became humble.

"Yes, sir," he said energetically, as the register swung around.

The visitor declined the pen; instead, he extracted one of the fountain variety from his pocket and inscribed:

P. DUNSTAN B. ARVINDALE.
LONDON, ENGLAND.

The clerk half turned to the man behind him. The latter stared in the most unostentatious fashion at the signature—and, somehow, his gaze traveled across the big lobby, and the two young men came forward hastily.

"Lord Arvindale?" the first of them queried, almost tremulously.

"E—h?" Bridger stared hard.

"I'm from the New York *Morning Mercury*," the youth pursued. "If you'd give me your—er—first impressions of this country? It's your first visit, isn't it? What do you think of—"

Lord Arvindale straightened—stared—and turned away frigidly.

"Heard of it before," he observed under his breath. "Thought it was all bally rot! Fancy having—I say! Give the boy my key—won't you?"

A momentary trip in the elevator, and he was established in a suite of such magnificence that Bridger's grin could hardly be contained until the boy left with a quarter and the shattered expectation of a five-dollar gold-piece.

For a minute or two Bridger stared around. He sobered then, and went to the phone.

"Long-distance telephone, is it—eh?" he inquired over the wire.

He was assured of the fact.

"There's a place called the Firwood Inn, somewhere north, you know—Wylesdale, I think it's called," he went on, with the happy Irish-English accent of Arvindale himself. "I want it. Can you get it?"

"Certainly. It may take half an hour, my lord."

"It's immaterial, miss. Say that a gentleman named Arvindale desires to speak to the proprietor of the inn in person. And get them as soon as possible—won't you?"

He shed his coat and vest and mopped his brow, as he contemplated the inadequate electric fan. He picked up the afternoon paper and waited for the telephone-bell to ring.

CHAPTER VIII.

LONESOME ELEGANCE.

An English peer, apparently—as Bridger reflected in the light of past experiences—must be something of a personage.

There had been times when he had waited half an hour for an Albany call at the office. Yet now, within some ten minutes, he was in communication with a resort in the very depths of the Adirondacks.

"I say!" he began tentatively.

"Is this Lord Arvindale?" said a very distinct and very respectful male voice.

"Yes." Mr. Bridger cleared his throat and prepared to make his "a's" even broader. "Firwood Inn, isn't it?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I want a suite of two rooms and bath for myself. I want them to-morrow morning. Can you give them to me?"

"Certainly, my lord," answered the far up-State voice.

"Good enough. They tell me there's a train that reaches your Jamesville Junction about eight in the morning. Can you have me met there to-morrow?"

He was assured that such a program would produce almost hysterical joy in the bosoms of the Firwood management. He rang off with a final word or two and sat down in the big wicker chair.

"If that bunch up there will fall for the English lord business as easily as this supposedly sophisticated one here, I am inclined to think that little Mr. Bridger will ramble under the wire with the rest of the field twenty lengths behind and not one hair damp. And I guess that several members of New York's best society will throw up their hats and cheer about the time of the finish."

The train that carried the newly scheduled sleeper which shunted off at Jamesville left New York at eleven.

As you may have learned from the time-table, it was due to reach the Junction by eight; and as you may have learned by experience, it pulled in very promptly at ten minutes after ten.

Lord Arvindale descended and looked about; and the first thing to meet his gaze was the dapper little tiger who hurried forward to seize his grip with:

"Lord Arvindale?"

"Eh? What? Yes," responded the arrival.

The little chap all but salaamed.

"The motor is—waiting, my lord," he choked.

"Fancy!" said Lord Arvindale impressively. "Where?"

"This way, my lord."

The tiger trotted ahead. Lord Arvindale followed lazily, giving an appreciative eye to the very green and very elevated scenery.

The motor was indeed waiting. Lord Arvindale allowed himself to be bowed into it and to be covered with the thin robe; and with a whir and a flourish the machine started up, while a dozen or two of admiring yokels gaped at the newest capture of the very fashionable Firwood Inn, and some one whispered to some one else that a real English lord had decided to visit Firwood!

The ride, long in miles, was brief in minutes.

The strong wind was sending to his nostrils the strong sun-baked odor of pine-woods; and he desired more than anything else to stretch out in the big seat of the tonneau and slumber.

But business is business; and when one is bent upon it one must attend to it.

In the course of some fifteen minutes, with a tooting of horn and a swirl of dust, the machine whirled up the long driveway and paused before one of the most ornate country establishments the detective had seen in years.

There were grounds; there were terraces; there were balconies galore.

There was a veranda of some twenty-five feet in width. There were servants, too, who hurried out and all but carried Lord Arvindale into the office.

He entered it with the nonchalant, swinging swagger at which he had laughed in England. He came to the desk and registered indifferently; and the individual in charge of the register bowed low.

"We have given you suite fourteen, Lord Arvindale," he said apologetically. "It was the very best we could do for you on short notice."

"Oh, it'll answer, doubtless," smiled the detective. "I sha'n't be here for long. Bath, is there?"

"Certainly, my lord. It's one of the better suites, but if you had wired ahead—"

Lord Arvindale snapped his fingers in obvious token of his submission to circumstances. He reached gently into his pocket and produced a roll of bills which fully justified the stare they produced.

He took from the inside two of the fifty-dollar denomination — leaving revealed that pleasant number, "1,000!" on the outer bill.

"I fancy this had better go into the safe, old chap," Lord Arvindale said easily as he dropped the little bundle upon the desk. "There's a bit less than a thousand pounds there—forty-nine hundred dollars, to be exact. Give me a receipt for it and keep it safe, won't you? It's all I have with me."

The clerk paled peculiarly. He smiled then, and his smile was rather sad.

"I am very sorry, my lord," he said. "The time-lock on our safe here refused to work yesterday morning, and we haven't been able to get anything in or out of it since then. I wish it were possible to put your money where it would be protected from fire—but I assure you that there is nothing but fire to be feared here. The money itself will be quite as secure as if you were at home, my lord."

With a shrug, the roll of bills was returned to Lord Arvindale's pocket.

"It's quite all right," he remarked. "It's not a matter of great importance, anyway."

The boy was waiting with his grip. Lord Arvindale turned and sauntered toward the tiny white-and-gold elevator, and was bowed into the car.

His apartments, upon the third floor, while small, were little less than superb. For something like half an hour he surveyed the luxury of them in mild wonder.

The most impressive of head waiters appeared then and informed him that

luncheon was served, and inquired whether he preferred to dine in his own apartments or in the general dining-room.

Lord Arvindale was democratic. He preferred the general dining-room, and descended to it.

There would be guests there galore. They would have heard of him, and they would stare. And with the help of a kind Providence there wouldn't be one who knew him; or, if there was, that one would have sufficient sense to keep his lips discreetly closed.

With all fitting ceremony, he was placed at a table. Covertly, he looked about—and he all but gasped aloud. It was long after one o'clock now. The room was capable of seating at least fifty. The newspaper reports of Firwood Inn indicated that it must be nearly full.

And yet he was entirely alone! Not another soul seemed to be inclined for lunch just then.

He pondered as he consumed the most delicious soup that had ever reached his palate. His pondering found expression as he encountered the meat course.

"I say!" he remarked to the servile head of the establishment. "House empty?"

"Not quite, sir," smiled that individual. "Most of the guests have climbed the mountain to-day, my lord."

"Um!" Lord Arvindale smiled slightly. "Hope they'll be back for dinner, then. It's wretchedly lonely sitting here this way."

"They'll hardly be back for dinner, my lord. It'll be well toward ten before they get down again, I'm afraid."

Luncheon over, Lord Arvindale returned to his suite.

He had wandered about the grounds with an eye that seemed lazy, and was actually rather observant. He had gathered that the establishment was one well calculated to cater to the very best class of summer trade. He had deduced, also, that every last requirement for fashionable patronage had been fulfilled.

More than that, experience had taught him that the moneyed class is not overaddicted to mountain-climbing or other violent exertion; and the most careful observation of the low, bare mountainside declined to reveal the first sign of a human being.

And there was no indication of Calderford's presence at the place, and there was never a sign of sharp little Corliss—save both their familiar signatures on the same page of the register with his own.

In short, there were about two conclusions which one might reach: either each and every individual who landed at Firwood Inn suddenly went mad and took to mountain-climbing and irrational telegrams and the neglect of meals—or else Bridger's original theory was pretty well justified, and there was something radically wrong.

The detective whistled a gentle tune or two over his cigar.

He patted the pocket which contained his five thousand dollars and made sure that the pickpocket-proof catch was in working order. He felt gently of the heavy revolver whose presence was concealed by his loose coat.

And when the frown disappeared from his ordinarily smooth forehead he murmured:

"This is a case for a little investigation and more waiting—and I don't believe the waiting's going to be very long. When even Corliss can pop out like that—"

His eyes quickened. He gave a last pat to the revolver. Indeed, with an eye on the open transom and its possibilities, he walked to the closet and examined the thoroughly satisfactory load. And as he returned it to his pocket he muttered:

"And I sort of feel that you're going to do a little of the wild-and-woolly barking before long.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN IN THE MOTOR.

THE afternoon dragged rather heavily in the sumptuous little apartment.

Another hour of meditation, and Bridger was wandering about.

Nothing had happened. Why? Why had there been no hint of the amazing fate which seemed to have befallen all his predecessors?

Or had nothing whatever befallen them? The lingering suspicion that, even now, it might be all one great mass of coincidence began to appear again—and in the end Lord Arvindale

softly locked his rooms and sauntered down the corridor.

There was not a soul in sight. He found a door or two open, and glanced inward. Like his own apartment, the rooms were magnificent; and here and there about them were scattered bits of fashionable raiment and gold and silver and ivory toilet bits.

Those, certainly, were not part of the furnishings; and just as certainly they seemed to indicate the very recent presence of wealthy guests. It was odd, occurred to the detective in a minor mental flash, that the personal servants of the guests hadn't tidied up a little better; but for the matter of that, if one were to accept the mountain-climbing theory, it was easily enough accounted for.

The early morning departure had been hurried, probably, and all the servants were needed for the carrying of wraps and lunches. Perhaps—

He considered the "perhaps" for some two minutes at the head of the stairs. Then, noiselessly, he descended to the second floor.

The funereal stillness still prevailed.

Very carefully and very thoughtfully the detective looked about for curious eyes that might be spying upon him—and for further open doors that might lend a hint of what was afoot. Of the former there seemed to be none—of the latter there were actually none at all.

Save for the broad window at the farther end, the corridor was entirely closed; and Bridger considered it vaguely.

And then he started a little and came closer to the first door by the window. His sharp eyes had encountered a rather curious detail; he examined it carefully now, and passed to the next door—and the next—and the one after that.

His brows lifted as he returned to the first. He felt of the paint and frowned, and whistled a little under his breath.

These must be the choicest rooms of the house, and by all accounts the house was filled. Yet the indubitable fact remained—as was attested by the heavy film of white enamel that joined door and jamb—that not a single one of these portals had been opened since their painting!

And the hardness of the slow-drying enamel seemed to indicate that that, at the very least, was a good week back, and more likely a month!

Swiftly a skeleton key came from his pocket and was thrust into the hole. It remained faithful as ever to its task, for the lock creaked back.

He shoved gently at the door itself, and it opened.

And before him lay a room as bare as half-finished carpentry could make it! The woodwork trim was not even in sight; bare ends and lines of shaggy plaster indicated the spots where closets and mirrors should have been. The hardwood floor, too, was not near completion; and in the far corner lay a hammer and a box of nails, as thickly coated with dust as was the floor itself!

For a moment the detective studied the amazing spectacle of what should have been the Firwood's very best suite. He turned hurriedly, then, and closed the door as he stepped into the hallway.

He tiptoed to the next room and peered through the keyhole. The scene of raw desolation was identical. He tried the next and the next, and with the same result!

Not a single one of the rooms was within three weeks works of completion!

"This," said Lord Arvindale inaudibly, "is the private residence of a lunatic, opened this season for the creation of new lunatics. That's all!"

His unconcerned saunter regained, he descended to the big office. A bell-boy or two started forward and retreated again. The clerk behind the desk kotowed in proper form; and a suave and portly person in flannels, with "Manager" written upon every inch of him, came forward respectfully with:

"Looking around, my lord?"

"Eh? Yes. Jolly lonesome hole, isn't it?"

"You'll hardly be lonesome when our guests return this evening," smiled the personage.

"Friends of mine, some of them, I think," Lord Arvindale went on listlessly. "Some of the New York Calderfords here, aren't there? And the Vandercourts, too? Ripping good chap by name of Dallingshire, also—met him last year in Paris. Eh?"

The managerial countenance lengthened in sad sympathy.

"That's rather unhappy, my lord," he observed. "The Vandercourts were here, but they were called to the city, and left a day or two ago—and the same thing applies to Mr. Dallingshire and his wife. The elder Mr. Calderford, again, became so fascinated with the surroundings that he decided to go for a few days' camping with a couple of the guides—although he will return by the end of the week."

The sadness changed to a smile.

"But at least we can promise you the younger Mr. Calderford. He, too, decided to remain with us, and he is with the party on the mountain."

Lord Arvindale struggled to retain his blasé expression.

Save Corliss, after whom he dared not inquire, they were all logically enough accounted for at this end of the game. And Corliss, for all that he could offer in legal evidence to the contrary, might be at this moment sitting in the office in New York. And—

His lordship felt suddenly that it might be better to remove his countenance from view before surging emotions began to find too visible expression thereupon. He strolled to the door with:

"I'll take another walk about, I think."

"Why not permit us to offer you one of the motors?" the managerial smile inquired.

"Rather walk, thanks," grinned his lordship. "Too much motoring elsewhere, you know."

He strolled out and to the lakeside, some hundred yards from the house. He settled himself, and prepared to contemplate what promised to be a beautiful sunset, when in the roadway behind him came the whir of a machine.

He turned suddenly. The car had stopped within a few feet of his august person and the chauffeur had descended nimbly and was saluting.

"The manager, my lord, instructed me to attend you and drive you, should you change your mind."

Mr. Bridger attained his feet with a well-developed desire to curse. His plans, already formulated to a certain degree, would have stood an excellent chance of maturing further in that hour of meditation.

Yet the expression of annoyance faded suddenly as he met the eyes behind the big goggles. Something extremely enigmatic in the way of a smile lurked momentarily across his lips.

The chauffeur, too, seemed to start ever so slightly, as he turned toward the car.

"If it's annoying to you, my lord—"

"On the contrary, it isn't, my man," said Lord Arvindale. "I'll take a little ride after all, I think."

Briskly he climbed into the rear seat and settled down. The chauffeur took his own place, and the car whirled away down the smooth roads.

Five miles passed in silence, and ten, and the way was darkening slowly.

His lordship leaned forward.

"We'll turn now and go back over the same road a little more slowly, particularly when we come within two miles of the inn."

He was rewarded with a sudden backward glance. It lasted but a second; yet when the car had swerved about and was spinning along again, it seemed to produce a covert grin on Bridger's face, which was prolonged for a good half-hour.

The inn was easily within three miles when Lord Arvindale leaned forward again with:

"We'll stop here a little while."

Promptly the motor slowed.

"Got a machine-shop at the house for fixing up all sorts of motors, haven't you?" he inquired.

"No, my lord." A little breath of relief escaped the chauffeur.

"Fancy that! Where the deuce do you have them repaired, then?"

"They have to be taken to Jamesville, my lord," replied a voice which seemed to ease with every word. "They've a very good shop there."

"Quite reliable, if a man should bring his own motor up?"

"Very reliable, my lord."

The imported peer stroked his chin.

"So that if I should make up my mind to put in August here and bring the Mercedes, I'd always be sure of a tow to Jamesville in case of need, would I?"

"It would be the only way you could secure repairing, my lord," answered his driver emphatically. "There'd be no

trouble about a tow, though, sir. The house has three machines."

Lord Arvindale came a little closer in his suddenly developed friendliness.

"Well, I guess that'll be about all, then, for the present, Donlin!" he remarked in a tone that had lost its English qualities and gained in force.

Under the leather of the goggles, the man's face whitened abruptly.

"I—beg pardon, my lord?" he said breathlessly.

"You can cut out the 'lord' business, Donlin," said his passenger. "And you can keep your hands on that wheel and in plain sight, too, my boy, because there's a very large, healthy gun pressed right up against the back of your neck! Feel it, do you?"

"I—I—" The gloved hands clenched the wheel firmly.

"Donlin, you know me, don't you?" inquired the man behind.

"Yes—Mr. Bridger. Anyway, I—I thought it was you when I first seen you down by the lake, and—and—"

"And now you're sure of it, eh? All right. And you remember that I'm the man who put you in Sing Sing on three counts for 'con' work—and the same man that would have you back there now if they'd given me the case after you escaped?"

"Yes." The voice was growing thick.

"Do you want to go back?"

The man all but whirled about, his hands still on the wheel.

"My God, Mr. Bridger!" he cried wildly, "I'm living straight—so help me, I am. I've been earning an honest living these last two years up in this country, sir. You can ask anybody. There ain't anybody got anything on me since I got loose. You don't want to put a man back in that hell—"

"That's all right. That may be just as it is, because I've lost track of you in the last year. But the fact remains that we've met again, Donlin, and that we know each other. You know that I'm capable of taking you again, half a dozen times if necessary. I know that *you're* the most artistic liar that ever walked the earth—and therefore I'm not going to ask you any particulars about what's going on in that fake hotel ahead!"

He watched his man keenly as he turned in some astonishment. The chauffeur's instinctively assumed innocence suffered slightly from the scrutiny.

"I don't know any — anything about the hotel, Mr. Bridger," he muttered. "I've only been working there a week!"

"Then I'll gamble you've been working overtime!" Bridger chuckled sourly. "Listen to me. You're not a fool. You're going to do as I say, or go back to that little village on the Hudson. Which?"

"I—"

"Bosh! See here, Donlin, *I've got eight men planted in these woods,* between here and the inn. If you want to try the trick, I'll get out of the machine and signal, and you can see how many yards you go before you're shot? Don't want to, eh? That's better. Then run your car into that little side road."

The machine bowled into the narrow, grass-grown path and stopped, out of sight of the road. Mr. Bridger stepped out, with a light laugh, and watched amusedly as Donlin cast a wary eye through the thick trees.

"Now, my man, you're going to stay where you are until I want you—and that won't be many hours, I think. At all events, you're going to remain within ten feet of that car till eight o'clock to-morrow morning. By that time, if I haven't returned, you may take an *opposite* direction to the inn and get as far as possible. Meanwhile—well, it may be as well to take precautions for keeping you here, alive or dead."

His face hardened as he eyed the staring, white-cheeked man.

From his pocket he drew his watch and a police whistle. He listened intently for a moment, and gave a short blast. He waited an instant and gave another, and counted aloud to ten seconds, when a second long blast followed.

Whistle and watch were replaced, and Bridger smiled savagely.

"There isn't anything you've misunderstood, in the way of instructions?" he asked.

"No, sir!" Donlin choked.

"Then don't let your memory fail between now and to-morrow morning."

He turned on his heel and walked rapidly down to the highway; and he

struck into a blithely whistled tune as he hit up a rapid pace upon the highway itself.

The average person, acquainted with Mr. Donlin's interesting past, rather than his past and personality together, might easily have expected a bullet in the back before ten steps had been covered. Bridger, on the contrary, chuckled happily as he trudged on without a backward glance.

"Of all the imaginative physical cowards the Lord ever put on earth, the triumph is Donlin—and always has been!" he observed. "I'll gamble my last cent on earth that he won't be a yard from that car at dawn!"

He hastened his gait, until his sturdy legs were fairly eating up the ground. He laughed again, with:

"Only fancy sending *me* out in a defective car! Fancy the car having to limp all the way to Jamesville for repairs, while his lordship foots it back to his dinner! Demmed outrage, it is—positively!"

The indignant Lord Arvindale, having calmed somewhat and accomplished a solitary and almost incredibly perfect dinner, returned to his rooms and, comfortably ensconced in the biggest chair, lighted his unaristocratic pipe.

"It's the devil, anyway!" he murmured. "Here's the confounded inn, with every appearance of propriety, with a manager that can account, or lie, plausibly for every one that has disappeared, and who promises to produce them at nine or ten this evening. And there's no positive certainty that the people who disappeared didn't come to harm between here and New York. And there's no real reason for attaching too much importance to those unfinished rooms, because there may be more of this place than I've been able to nose into while watched. And that time-lock story about the safe *may* be straight, and Mike Donlin *may* actually be earning an honest living, and—"

He snapped his fingers with an impatient growl.

"And, on the other hand, why should everybody be absent from the place when I get here? And why did those irrational and unexpected telegrams arrive in the first place, and why didn't Corliss and Calderford do as they were directed? And who sandbagged Bland a minute or two after he left the office? And who the dickens was the first Mrs. Dallingshire?"

Something like a reeling sensation came over his brain. Bridger gripped himself and sent further clouds of smoke toward the ceiling.

"Now, that's the deuce of being tied down to a theory which you believe right and which may be altogether wrong—and which you can't verify one way or the other until some one gives it a push in the right direction, and—"

His murmured words trailed off in the smoke. He pondered hard for another ten minutes; and finally he sat up with marked decision.

"Well, whatever has happened to them all, it seems to have happened on the very first night; and if Lord Arvindale isn't about due, there isn't—" He broke off suddenly and sat noiselessly erect.

On the door had come a firm yet respectful tapping!

CHAPTER X.

BLUEBEARD'S VESTIBULE.

FOR an instant a thrill went through the detective.

Instinct, unreasoning instinct perhaps, seemed to tell him that *the* moment was coming.

There were a thousand and one utterly harmless things that might have accounted for that knock on the door at nine in the evening; and yet, as the detective rose and drew his animated face into something more nearly resembling the bored countenance of his assumed character one hand dropped unostentatiously nearer the revolver pocket—Lord Arvindale opened the door with a smile.

The beatific manager bowed low.

"I trust I haven't disturbed you, my lord?"

"Not at all. What is it? Calderford returned?"

The manager beamed anew.

"Hardly yet, I think, my lord. We—"

"Bosh! Bally old rotter he is, anyway!" Lord Arvindale laughed vacuously.

"It is only that the royal suite has been vacated."

"Eh?"

"Rather, it has not been vacated; but the Kelvings, of New York, who were to arrive late this evening, have just wired that illness prevents their coming. Therefore, my lord, we are very glad to be able to put you in more fitting apartments."

"Er—well—" Lord Arvindale considered for a moment. "Jolly neat little place right here, you know."

The manager's expression grew a trifle more intense.

"But I am sure that you will find the royal suite infinitely more comfortable and satisfactory, my lord. It was arranged, you know, with a view to entertaining Prince—er—well, perhaps a friend of yours, when he came to this country *incognito* this summer, and I assure you that everything has been done to make it perfect."

"Well—"

"It is also in the annex, which is more spacious throughout, my lord. I—"

Lord Arvindale snapped his fingers carelessly.

"All right—I'll shift to it," he smiled. "Send some one to take the luggage as quickly as possible, won't you? I'm rather anxious to roll into bed and sleep off some of this pine-woods heaviness."

The manager bowed again and hurried toward the elevator. Lord Arvindale sauntered back into his apartment and yawned resoundingly. But a second or two later the real Bridger expression returned, and the detective squinted at himself in the mirror.

"The annex!" he muttered. "The *annex!* Is the annex the Bluebeard attachment to this establishment that's been swallowing the people up? Or—"

A second tap stopped his meditation.

He called a command to enter, and the door opened again—and Lord Arvindale all but caught his breath.

Two bell-boys had come in noiselessly, and were standing respectfully at attention; and in that fact there was perhaps nothing very remarkable, save that Lord Arvindale's suit-case could have been managed easily enough by a youngster of ten.

Of the two, the first was rather short and distinctly solid in build; but it was the second who caught the detective's eye. Rather young, he was little short of seven feet in height; his face, entirely expressionless, was not far from that of the hardened professional pugilist, and his muscular development might have brought a blush of shame to a longshoreman.

Lord Arvindale's calm returned in an instant or two. He cocked his jaunty straw hat on the side of his head and motioned toward the suit-case.

"I'll only need one of you," he said yawningly. "That's all the luggage with me. My own man's coming with the boxes to-morrow."

The smaller of the pair picked up the case. The formidable individual bowed low and placed Bridger's light overcoat across his arm and assumed charge of his umbrella.

"This way, my lord, if you please, sir. I'll attend to the lights here."

Lazily as concerned externals, warily in the actuality, Bridger loitered into the corridor. The smaller of the attendants stepped briskly ahead, with:

"Right this way, my lord. The other man will attend to everything."

"He's carrying my top-coat. There are papers in the pockets I don't want to lose sight of."

An odd wait, and the human anomaly hurried into the corridor. Lord Arvindale stepped aside and motioned him ahead; and after an uncomfortable little pause, which did more to confirm Bridger's suspicions than any one thing so far, the man bowed and preceded him.

All in all, it was rather an odd walk. There seemed to be corridors innumerable in the Firwood Inn—corridors out of all proportion to its size. They turned to the right and to the left; they went straight ahead for a space and steered to the left. They traversed another dim hallway, and came at last to a wide upper veranda.

There were but two incandescents here, and their illumination was all but ghostly. The bell-boys, however, trudged straight ahead, until the foremost paused to wait for his lordship.

Bridger, stopping short, perceived that they were at the mouth to a canvas-canopied walk—a stretch covered by the con-

ventional canvas curb-to-curb stretch of awning, and sufficiently black to have simulated the entrance of Hades!

"I say, you know!" he gasped in amazement. "That — that — where the deuce does it lead?"

The boy salaamed in the fashion to which Bridger was growing accustomed.

"Only across the big rock to the annex, my lord," he said. "It's the huge piece of stone that protrudes from the side of the mountain, sir, and this part of the house is built against it. The annex is upon the other side, my lord. Turn on the lights, John!"

From the wall of the house there came a snap as the able-bodied "boy" stepped over. From down the long, black corridor came the sickliest of lights — another pair of them, and neither more than four candle-power.

Indefinitely they revealed the flooring of the passage, with the canvas walls drawn tight against the sloping sides of the walk—and Bridger's eyes widened a little.

"This," he commented mentally, "is Bluebeard's vestibule!"

The smaller of the "boys" trotted ahead. Lord Arvindale motioned the larger to follow; and there came another pause. Eyes met, and the muscular attendant went ahead; and the progress down the channel of darkness was taken up.

Ahead—so far ahead that one could hardly guess the distance along the great rock side of the hill—another area of blackness yawned. There was never a light, never a sign of human habitation, never a—"

But somebody had coughed sharply, over there in the impenetrable gloom! The detective started. The muscular bell-boy started as well, and in so doing he dropped Lord Arvindale's coat and stooped slowly to regain it. Off his guard for an instant, the detective passed the man.

His caution returning in another fraction of time, he turned to see a hairy fist reaching for his collar!

With a little cry, he leaped aside. The bell-boy followed swiftly—and quite as swiftly Bridger's fist shot out unerringly and sent him hurtling backward on the stone!

From the blackness at the other end there came a shout. The detective straightened quickly, gave a flitting glance at the figure struggling to its feet and cursing—and then, with strong fingers, Bridger had gripped the canvas wall at the bottom and torn it up.

A last moment of doubt—a last view of the bell-boy coming toward him savagely—and Mr. Richard Bridger slid pell-mell down the side of one of the largest single pieces of rock in New York State, down and down and down into an inky depth that might have death waiting for him at the bottom!

It was, perhaps, the most remarkable trip in all his history of daring!

The rough stone bruised him unmercifully, the scraggly bits of stiff bush tore at his hands and face. More than that even, he seemed upon the verge of turning a somersault into the depths of a sea of ink—he was turning it—and now he sprawled flat among bushes that grew from real earth!

For an instant or two dazed nature declined to permit his rising. He was up, then, and racing straight away from the rock, through bushes and across clearer spots; and, with the faint crescent of the new moon in sight, with a very fair idea of his direction.

Some one or two hundred yards through the woods, he must find the road. After that, he knew the way well enough.

A shot had been fired. An instantaneous backward glance, and another flash of flame came into view, high above him, and Bridger laughed gaspingly. Whoever had taken that random aim was shooting at a spot two hundred feet behind him, near the base of the rock.

In the course of a minute, timber and troubles grew thicker together!

Behind him a dozen hoarse voices were calling back and forth, and in language hardly befitting the ostensible character of Firwood Inn! A lantern had come into view, too—a tiny speck, but dangerous in possibilities.

Bridger stopped short. For the moment, flight was impossible. He looked around and chuckled breathlessly again. There was a straight young pine beside him in the gloom, and next to that a huge tree whose thicker branches brushed the top of the pine.

With steeple-jack nimbleness he wound himself around the smaller tree and began to climb.

Another lantern came into view, and another—and Bridger was almost at the top. He reached out and caught at a limb of the larger tree; he made it in safety, and scrambled toward the trunk and into higher branches.

And there, crouching monkey-like, he watched the scene below him.

He saw some half-dozen men with lanterns beating around the bushes at the bottom of the rock. He saw more looking for his trail—which nothing short of a bloodhound could have located.

A matter of five minutes, and he saw two motors whiz out of the garage, four blazes of light on the front of each! He saw them take to the driveway and roar out of sight—one to the east and one to the west—and he laughed again.

Unless they actually took to bloodhound tactics, he had a very strong suspicion that when those cars returned from their search, he could safely make for the road perhaps a quarter of a mile from the inn and browse about after Mr. Donlin!

CHAPTER XI.

THE MORNING AFTER.

It was just fifteen minutes to two next morning that Mr. Josiah Scott, the eminent and solitary druggist of Jamesville, was roused from peaceful slumber in his bed over the store by the snorting of a big automobile. It was two minutes later that the incessant clatter of his night-bell had him down-stairs in carpet-slippers.

He unlocked the door ungraciously. A man in chauffeur's garb was shoved in by a rather wild-eyed and hatless and unkempt individual, who asked quickly:

"Got a long-distance telephone here in a sound-proof booth?"

"Over there, there's a—"

"All right. Turn on some light here, will you. Now, Donlin, you sit right there, and remember that this gun hasn't got smashed, in spite of all it's been through. Sit down."

The chauffeur sat down limply. The wild man went into the booth, and remained there for the better part of an hour. When he emerged, Mr. Scott received a roll of greenbacks that dazed him.

When Mr. Scott's next telephone bill was rendered, the genial druggist learned by patient search of half a dozen directories that the crazy man of that night had talked with police headquarters in several cities between New York and Jamesville; and further, that he had conversed with one or two other numbers in the metropolis, which meant nothing in particular to one who had been born in Jamesville.

And perhaps there are two other curious bits of data which have some relevance here.

For one, shortly before ten next day, Mr. Howard Steele, the eminent sporting man of New York who does not believe in banks, but carries his roll on his small person, called up Firwood Inn and inquired whether he might have a room and bath if he arrived that afternoon; and explained that he was speaking from Saratoga, and wanted a week or two off before the season opened. He was assured by a strange, grim voice that he could be accommodated.

For another, when the early train rolled into Jamesville, no less than seven total strangers descended. A chauffeur—not Mr. Donlin, for Mr. Donlin was reposing in the lock-up on a technical charge of vagrancy, which would be quashed in the morning at Bridger's request—nosed curiously about the depot.

And as he looked around and chatted with the ticket-agent and endeavored to learn just who had left on the early train that morning, a brushed and patched edition of Richard Bridger stepped from the baggage-room with a smile and laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"I guess we won't let you go back to Firwood either, with the sad news that you couldn't find me, friend. We'll give you the next cell to your old chum Donlin!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST GUEST.

Another sunset was in the course of departure when Firwood's remaining automobile rolled up the drive.

A little, genial man sat in the rear of the car, caressing his huge black mustache and humming to himself. The chauffeur leaped down and opened the door of the tonneau for Mr. Howard Steele, of New York.

Mr. Steele permitted his well-worn grip to be taken by the bell-boy and himself to be escorted up the broad steps of the inn; and once inside the office, he paused considerately, for the chauffeur was speaking to a frowning manager.

"Timmins," said the gentleman with the goggles, "hasn't been seen in Jamesville since early this morning, and the station-agent tells me he went off in the car with a stranger."

"And has that blamed crook stolen—" burst from the erstwhile benevolent lips.

The manager controlled himself suddenly, and the smile beamed forth again.

"Mr. Steele?" he asked gently.

"That's me, Bill!" laughed the sporting person.

He registered with a flourish and patted his fat pockets thoughtfully.

"Well, what's doing in the way of a room, old man?"

"We have several, Mr. Steele. Will you look at them now, or will you have dinner first?"

Mr. Steele considered for an instant.

"Me for the chow!" he said lucidly. "Where's the dining-room, and is she ready to be set up?"

The manager rang his gong. A boy came forward.

"Inform the *chef* that dinner must be hastened. Learn if it is ready to serve. I shall be able to tell you in a minute, Mr. Steele."

The boy returned presently, with the report that most of the dishes were ready for service.

And as Mr. Steele was piloted toward the lighted room, the mild-eyed clerk rose from his seat in the shadow of the big safe and came forward; and the manager eyed him questioningly.

"It's Steele, all right," he said. "I've seen him times enough around Congress Hall and them places. It's him."

Mr. Steele was cheerfully oblivious to all but his food. If the dining-room was empty, that mattered little. He ate and read his paper—and read his paper and ate, until at last black night had descended, and he rose with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Well?" he remarked. "Now for a bed, I guess."

"I will take you up, sir," said the manager.

The third floor showed but one vacancy. Steele surveyed it with more or less doubtful approval. The manager broke in upon his meditation.

"This is all we have here," he explained apologetically. "In the annex, however, you may find something more satisfactory. We—"

Mr. Steele turned with his genial grin.

"Pass it out, then," he remarked.

A walk through the labyrinth followed. The dismal back veranda was reached in a minute or two, and the large and obliging manager switched on the lights in the canvas corridor and motioned the way.

Mr. Steele started a little.

"What's down there?" he inquired.

"It is our most convenient path to the annex, over the great rock which meets the back of the house, sir," laughed the manager. "It may look dismal, but I assure you that it will appear otherwise at the other end. And I *must* have more lights hung here!" he murmured. "It's a nuisance—er—this way, Mr. Steele."

The sporting man trotted forward obligingly, his heels ringing out on the cold stone. The manager came after.

Half-way down the corridor, and Steele glanced back. The manager's hand was just descending upon his shoulder, and that individual was smiling oddly. The grip came down firmly.

"I'll just pilot you down here," he said. "It grows a trifle steeper, and you might slip, you know."

Through the dusk they seemed to come toward the end of the passage—and suddenly, without warning, two more incandescents sprang up ahead of them, and a man stepped out and seized little Mr. Steele by the arm.

The manager dropped his grip and laughed aloud.

"And now we'll take you to the annex, Steele!" he remarked.

"But—say—hey!" The little man tried to turn. He gasped aloud and stared about. "What—"

"Come on! Come on!" remarked the

gentleman who held him. "Go ahead! Straight through those bushes! Move!"

"But I don't want to move! I—"

The last guest seemed thoroughly bewildered. Uncertainly, he staggered through the bushes for a dozen yards.

Then came a turn, behind the huge rock—and Mr. Steele gasped in very real earnest!

For before him yawned the entrance to a cave of tremendous size! And there were a dozen people in it; and people, incidentally, whose pictures appear more frequently in the society columns than in mountain caves! There were lights, too, swung from the ceiling—little incandescents that added to the gloom rather than relieved it.

Two or three cots were visible—a dozen curtains, which seemed to indicate that extremely crude rooms had been partitioned off for the benefit of the strange occupants of the place — some eighteen or twenty chairs.

And at either side of the opening of the insane place sat a man on a camp-stool, holding a position that forbade exit!

"Well, what the—" began the latest visitor.

"Shut up!" and his captor shook him. "George, get the goods out of his pockets before I shove him in."

The manager came forward with a happy grin.

His hand stretched out toward the diminutive Mr. Steele.

And as it did so, that small person seemed to develop muscle as hard as his name, for with a violent jerk he shook off his captor and sent him hurtling toward the mouth of the cave. With a blow that almost staggered himself, the visitor laid the manager low. Mr. Steele leaped a pace or two into the blackness.

And a hand came out of his pocket as he retreated, and the still night was fairly split with eight heavy reports of an automatic revolver!

From the cave came a chorus of screams.

From the woods all about echoed a chorus of shouts. Men seemed to pour down from everywhere at once.

They came from the black sides of the rock itself; they came racing down from the brush near at hand. They seized the several black figures who seemed suddenly to have rallied to the defense of the annex.

The manager found his genial person in a vise-like clasp of handcuffs. A series of gentle snappings told that a similar service was being performed for several others thereabouts.

For, as it developed in the flare of half a dozen little pocket flash-lanterns, most of this dozen or so of newcomers wore bright little shields on the bosoms of their waistcoats.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW IT WAS DONE.

AND then there was a gathering in the parlor of Firwood Inn.

It took place after the busiest hour in the inn's history.

Hysteria had been conquered at last by several of New York's society women. An eternal handshaking process among several of New York's richest men had finally worn itself out. A collection of nine employees of Firwood Inn were shackled and in the big garage, awaiting the machines which should take them to the Jamesville jail.

Bridger's own hand had been shaken to the point of dropping off, and now, as the motley, unkempt, and unwashed prisoners of the cave grew finally calmer, the younger Calderford began to look for the detective.

He was nowhere in sight. Some one had seen him leaving with Corliss, a matter of fifteen minutes back.

Mr. Calderford searched for a while, in vain. When he returned he had conceived an idea; and he addressed it pithily to the much-moneyed gathering before him. He ended by producing a pocket check-book from his dusty coat and scribbling in it defiantly. He tore out the slip and passed it around.

There was a gasp or two, here and there.

And after some running up and downstairs, there were ten more little slips in an envelope in Calderford's pocket.

Half an hour and Bridger reappeared.

He was as weary as mortal man could well be and walk. His clothes were in very little better condition than those of

the whilom prisoners. His eyes were sunk deep in his head—and he yawned as he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, you're all out and I'm all in. Good night. I'm going to sleep somewhere."

Mr. Calderford the younger raised a protesting hand.

"You'll do no sleeping until you've given an account of yourself and your splendid work, Bridger!"

"Account of my work?" The detective laughed sleepily. "There wasn't much work to it, except to form a theory and then work it out. You all came here and went crazy and disappeared. The crazy part of it seemed to indicate that your affairs were being managed by somebody else without your knowledge—and as you didn't seem to be anywhere else on earth, you and the somebody must have been here. That's not deep reasoning, is it?"

"Well, go on?"

"Well, I came here and managed to find you, with the help of plain-clothes men from three or four cities. That's all. . . . Hallo, there's Wilsey!"

The recent Mr. Steele had entered, a large black mustache in one hand.

He bowed, and Bridger went on absently:

"Steele's the chief of detectives in—well, one of the cities, you know. When he owned a mustache of his own, he did look like Steele. Occurred to me last night that he'd be the best bait possible—and he was! Heigh-ho! I—I beg pardon!"

He half straightened to his feet—and sat down again.

"I say, though, you were lucky in getting out when you did!" he remarked more briskly. "I've just had an interview with that choice band out in the garage, assisted by several pretty experienced detectives. They had a neat little scheme, all right enough."

"Was it really all a plot, Mr. Bridger?" said the frail little voice of frail little Mrs. Vandercourt in vague incredulity.

The detective all but laughed aloud.

"It seems to have all the earmarks of a plot, madam," he answered dryly. "It seems that this place was built last year and half completed—that is, the upper floor was completed altogether and the lower parts, and they were reckoning on some very fine hardwood work for the second floor when the money gave out completely.

"The house has been in the hands of an estate, and not actually on the market in any way. Our corpulent managerial friend—who happens to be George Walton, another confidence man—came through here in the early spring, saw the house and the rock and the cave, and cooked up the whole scheme in his delightfully astute brain. He approached the executor, in Chicago, and leased the house, to be worked on shares this season. Then he went to work and gathered about him the slickest criminals I have seen for some time—and the Firwood Inn opened only to people of wealth who were known to carry large sums on them.

"I needn't tell you any further details of the scheme—except that the idea was to keep you all in that cave and its dead-wall ramifications for about two weeks more."

A shriek went up from more than one of the ladies.

Mr. Bridger's head was drooping again very markedly. Indeed, it reached his chest, and he came up with a jerk and rose.

"I—I beg your several pardons again," he smiled wearily. "I'll—"

"Bridger, where the dickens did they get the furnishings?" asked the elder Calderford suddenly, as he contemplated the golden parlor.

"Grand Rapids—New York—Boston—everywhere that skilfully forged credit could be pushed through; and in Walton's hands it would go anywhere. Another month and the whole thing would naturally have been out, and people would have been here for the carpets and chairs and beds and all the rest. But by that time they figured on something like one hundred thousand dollars in the safe and about ten thousand miles of ground behind them. Good night!"

"Bridger!" It was the younger Calderford who spoke now. "We've been talking things over, and we have decided to offer you an engrossed set of resolutions. Here they are, with the profound thanks of the whole party."

Noddingly, the detective opened the

envelope. A mass of little folded slips of paper fell into his hand. He examined them hastily—and his breath left him with a gasp.

There were eleven of them—yes, eleven of them! Eleven of those slips of paper, and every slip had been signed apparently by one of New York's foremost names—by people he had come to rescue and people he had not known to be at Firwood at all.

And each, it seemed, was worth precisely two thousand dollars!

"Twenty—twenty—twenty-two thou—"

"It was worth considerably more, Mr. Bridger. You'd realize that if you had passed even one night in that cave," said the elder Calderford.

The detective stared dazedly for a full minute.

"Well—thanks!" was all the late Lord Arvindale had strength to mutter.

THE END.

SHE AND THE MONSTER.

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

A thrilling fight that was won by an aim which went wide of the mark.

"WHY do they call it a 'monster?'" she asked.

"I don't know," confessed Wolfe, "unless maybe because it *is* one."

"It's more like a monster than that reason is like humor," she admitted judicially.

Then, somehow, they fell silent and continued their survey of the creature.

In a big, hinged, blanket-lined box it lay; its two and a half feet of dull, black and yellow length coiled stiffly amid the blanket folds; the blunt-nosed head inert, the lidless eyes dim and glassy. The box's under lid bore a scrawled legend: *"Gila Monster. Habitat Southern Arizona."*

"Is it dangerous?" queried Miss Frayne, after a pause. "I seem to have read somewhere—"

"Not just now," said Wolfe. "There's a big difference between the blistering sands of Arizona, and blizzard-swept New York. The thing's torpid at present, and likely to remain so till it thaws out."

"And yet you just lighted the fire? In five minutes the room will be—"

"In five minutes the Gila monster will be safely boxed again," explained Wolfe, dropping the lid over the motionless reptile's blanket nest. "There! Now do you feel safer?"

"I'm afraid I didn't have a single thrill of fear to revel in," she returned. "Really, do you think it was worth while to drag me up two long flights of stairs to this ice-cold study of yours just to stare at—?"

"But it isn't going to be ice-cold any longer," he protested. "I've just lighted the fire, and—"

"Wilful waste!" she reproved, "if it was lighted on my account. For I'm going down again now to wait for Helen."

"Why not wait here?" he pleaded. "See, it's getting beautifully warm, now the door's shut and the fire blazing. And you shall have my biggest leather chair. The children will tell Helen you're here as soon as she comes in. Honestly, you'll find this is the comfortablest place in our whole blizzard-buffeted house. *Please* stay!"

"I wait here under protest," said Miss Frayne, whisking a few stray cigar ashes from the big chair and resigning herself to its soft leathern depths. "I still consider I was lured up to your study under false pretenses. Here I have braved a blizzard and a subzero temperature to come all the way across the street to see your beloved sister, only to find she has ventured out to market. All I got for my heroism is a view of an extremely ugly black and yellow lizard that you miscall a 'monster' and—"

"Not to mention my sister's two very delighted children and her still more overjoyed brother. Surely, we ought to be counted in, if only after the monster."

"Oh, the children of course. They're dears. But you hustled me away from them, up two whole flights of stairs, to—"

"Yes," he sighed in contrition. "the same two offending flights you mentioned before. I'm sorry I couldn't induce Helen to give me a study on the ground floor, or else provide an elevator. I'm sure if she had dreamed you'd honor my poor quarters—"

"I shouldn't have honored them but for the promise to show me a real live monster."

"And haven't I kept my word? It isn't my fault he's no livelier. I'm sorry you don't like him. I've had such a lot of bother with the measly brute, I rather hoped to be repaid for some of it by giving you a little amusement."

"If you don't like him why did you get him?"

"*I* get him? On the level, Marjorie, do I look like the idiot who would buy that sort of a pet? Don't rub it in."

"But if he isn't yours—?"

"He's Dick Baldwin's. You've heard me speak of Dick. He lives just outside of Hackensack. Keeps what he calls an 'Ophidiarium'—I guess that's Latin for a 'snakery.' He's got all breeds of weird serpents and other reptiles, and pays fearsome prices for them. He sent out to Arizona for this Gila monster. It reached New York yesterday and he was shipping it out to his place when he happened to tell the trainmen about it.

"They swore the thing shouldn't go in the baggage-car, and the station hands wouldn't have it in the trunk-room. So he brought the box here to me and threw it on my mercy till the roads are open enough for him to take it out to Hackensack in his motor. That's how I come to be temporary guardian of a veritable monster."

"I don't see why Helen allows such a thing in the house!"

"She doesn't. She doesn't know. That's why I keep it up here. No one knows. I didn't mean any one should. But I sacrificed my secret as a bait to give me a half hour with you without the children butting in to—"

"A gruesome sort of bait!" she commented. "I'm going now."

"Oh! *please* don't. Let's—let's think up a name for the poor thing! Great idea. What shall we call it? How would Cephas do?"

"Cephas!" she echoed in high scorn. "Who ever heard of a Gila monster—?"

"Called Cephas?" he finished. "I never heard of one that was called anything else. It struck me as a neat, innocuous, scriptural name—but if you can improve on it—"

"What I was going to say," she corrected with dignity, "was that no one ever heard of such idiocy as giving a Gila monster any name at all. I—"

"Then let's set the custom!" he urged eagerly. "Now if you don't like Cephas, how would Claude do? or May Blossom or Gregory? There now! *Gregory* seems to me an uncommonly good name. Rugged, yet with a certain Old-World stateliness. Shall it be Gregory? I'm sure any self-respecting monster would be proud of such—"

"Roy Wolfe!" she laughed vexedly, "were you ever sane in your life?"

"Always," he replied with solemn protest, "till I lost my head over you. Since then—"

"Don't!" she ordered.

"Why not? It isn't news to you. If you don't like to hear me say it, that's no fault of mine. I've said it so often—only more so—that you ought to be getting used to it by this time. Aren't you getting just a *little* tired of giving me the same unkind answer?"

"Must we go over all that again? If you were different—if you weren't content to be an idler living on other people's brains—if you would act and think for yourself—"

"I'd rather act and think for you, Marjorie. There might be some inspiration in that. But—"

"Learn to do it for yourself, first. When you do, I—"

"When I do, I can look for a different answer? Is that true?—*Marjorie!*"

"When you do—when—" She paused in confusion; then, rising and glancing about as if for means of escape, stood suddenly stock-still, her fresh young face paling, her dark eyes dilated.

For the lid of the forgotten box near the fireplace had stirred. It lifted a few inches. A blunt nose, then an evil, black and yellow head were thrust forth.

Wolfe, in dropping the lid, had neglected to note that a tiny corner of blanket prevented the lock from catching.

Now, following the direction of Miss Frayne's wild gaze, he was just in time to see the long, thick body slide from the box to the polished floor. The fire-warmth had done its work. The monster was thoroughly awake.

Wolfe took an involuntary step toward the creature. With a breathy, hissing sound, it wheeled with awkward haste to face him. He halted, irresolute.

"The bite is deadly poison," he mused aloud. "I don't care to risk picking the thing up and putting it back. And it cost Dick a lot. I don't like to kill it. Better get out, Marjorie. I'll find some way to catch the thing."

But as it chanced, the chair where Miss Frayne had been sitting was at the far end of the room from the door. As she started, in a shrinking détour, to leave the study, the swish of her skirt caught the monster's attention. Apparently mistaking the motion for a challenge, it rushed at her; ugly jaws wide-stretched, the short legs clawing desperately for firmer foothold on the polished boards.

The unlooked-for attack robbed the girl of all power of flight. Fascinated, she stood watching the clumsy yet swift onrush.

Wolfe, barely in time, picked her up with a sweep of his arm and lifted her to the broad surface of his study table. He himself joined her there with highly ungraceful haste, just as the serrated fangs, striking at his ankle, tore a clean-cut little semicircle from the bottom of his left trouser-leg.

"Rather close call!" he observed ruefully, eying the mutilated garment. "Bite's deadly, too, as I think I mentioned."

"What—what *are* we to do?" gasped Miss Frayne, as the monster, with a quick succession of little snaps and hisses, lumbered furiously about the table-feet, seeking means of getting at them.

"I'm afraid," remarked Wolfe, looking down at their assailant, "I'm afraid Gregory hasn't awakened in a very sweet temper. He seems almost peevish."

"But what are we to *do?*" she repeated.

"Do? I'm afraid we must rob Dick Baldwin of his fine specimen of Gila monster—habitat southern Arizona. In fact, unless we care to sit perched up here all day, Gregory must be wafted forthwith to the happy Gila grounds. He's getting livelier and livelier, the warmer he grows."

The man was balancing a heavy paper-weight in his hand as he spoke. Now, with all his force, he hurled it at the biting, hissing thing sidling along just below them.

The sharp corner of the projectile drove a deep dent into the hard floor, scarce an inch from the monster's head.

"A clean miss!" grumbled Wolfe. "Gregory is an elusive little pet! He ducked as prettily as Jim Corbett. And I don't seem to have improved his temper much. See, he's trying to jump at us. They're furious jumpers, for all they're so awkward, I've heard. But he can't get enough foothold. Floor's too slippery. Here goes for the inkstand! Better luck this time."

Poising the broad, cut-glass receptacle, he threw it, deluging himself, the table, and the floor with the flying ink. But though this time a corner of the missile grazed the monster's neck, no further effect was wrought than to lash their foe to a fresh access of murderous rage.

"What a deceptive object an inkstand is!" commented Wolfe, sopping his handkerchief across his spattered face and raiment. "That one didn't look as if it held a gill. Yet I've at least half a gallon of ink on me, to say nothing of the floor. Poor Helen! How pleased she'll be when she sees that floor!

"Just look at Gregory! There's actually foam on his jaws. He has a most unfortunate disposition. I hope his temper wasn't guaranteed gentle when Dick bought him. Now for— By Jove! There isn't another blessed thing on this table heavy enough to crush a mouse. If I could get across to the fireplace where the poker is! Perhaps I could make a dash for it and—"

"*No!*" cried the girl, clutching his arm. "You *mustn't!* He would be there before you. You see how terribly fast he moves."

"But there might be a chance—"

"Roy," she panted, tightening her hold, "if you think I'm going to be left alone on this table—with that awful beast prowling around the foot of it—"

"All right!" he said in beautiful resignation. "As long as you'll hold on to my arm like that, I promise to stay. But I own I'm disappointed in Gregory. Maybe our treatment, though, hasn't brought out all that is best in his nature. He— Look! He's trying to jump again. This table used to seem almost too high for comfort—but now it seems to be getting lower and lower every minute. I'm glad the floor is so slippery. I wish we could think how to pacify him. Oh, Gregory, 'in our hours of ease, uncertain, coy, and hard to—' Shall I try him with a blotting pad? I might scare him, or—"

"No! Let him alone. It would only make him angrier. Oh, *what* a position!"

"I'm sorry the table isn't comfortable," he answered. "If I'd have had any idea you'd ever choose it for a roosting-place, I'd have had it nicely upholstered. Let's play we're pirates adrift on a raft and that Gregory's a shark. It'll make the time pass quicker till some one comes to—"

"Till some one comes?" she repeated. "Roy, do you know what that means? It means that horrible thing will attack anybody that happens to enter."

"So it does," he replied. "And I was just going to sing out for help, too, on the chance that my voice might carry as far as the ground floor. There's no one else up in this part of the house. Say, Marjorie," he went on in sudden despondency. "I'm beginning to see something. When you were down upon me for not 'acting and thinking for myself,' I thought you were wrong. Now I see you weren't. Any fellow with a man's-size brain and the power to help those he cared for, could figure a way out of this nasty scrape. *I* can't."

"Don't talk of that now!" she pleaded. "You've behaved *splendidly*. I never thought you were so brave and so—"

"So inky?" he supplemented, surreptitiously rubbing blots of the black fluid from his forehead. "Well, I am! And a pretty mess my idiocy has got us both into. Can you ever forgive my—?"

"Oh!" she interrupted, "he almost reached the edge of the table that jump. I suppose next time—"

"He isn't going to reach *you*," the man reassured her. "So don't worry your pretty head about that. Oh, Gregory, Gregory! What a misspent, undisciplined youth yours must have been! If only you'd learned self-control or read Dr. Watts's—"

A rattling of the door-knob cut short his apostrophe. Untrained little fingers without were wrestling with the handle.

"Uncle Roy!" announced a clear treble, through the keyhole, "I'm coming in. It's lomesome down-stairs and—"

"Keep out! Go away!" croaked Wolfe, a great horror sanding his throat at sound of his baby nephew's voice.

The monster, drawn by this new diversion, twisted away from the table and faced the door, ready to meet the newest antagonist. Rising high on its stumpy forelegs, the foam-flecked jaws snapping like castanets, it awaited the child's appearance.

"Back!" vociferated Roy, and Marjorie echoed his shout with a scream of frantic warning.

The only reply was a gurgling laugh from beyond the door. The baby fingers had at last mastered the secret of the knob. The handle turned and the door creaked open.

Roy, at first call of the child's voice, had sought to leap to the floor. But the convulsive grip of both Marjorie Frayne's white hands about his arm could not be shaken off.

Then came his inspiration. Scrambling to his knees as the knob turned, he snatched up with his free hand the heavy desk chair from beside the table. With one supreme effort he whirled it aloft and sent it smashing—through the broad double window just beyond.

In rushed the blizzard driven by a sixty-mile gale, filling the room with a blast of zero air that flung the slowly opening door wide and sent an icy draft whizzing through the whole house.

And, at first breath of that bitter chill, the monster, standing full in the path of the wind, collapsed into a motionless, senseless, wooden lump. The spawn of

red-hot sands and burning sun could not for one instant withstand the ice touch of the North. As Roy, with his rare flash of inspiration, had hoped, the danger was all at once ended. The dreaded Gila monster was as powerless now for evil as the broken inkstand itself.

The baby stood in shivering wonder on the threshold, watching his uncle lift from the table a very limp and trembling girl. Her clasped hands had somehow shifted from his arm to a still less conventional position that necessitated the encircling of their attendant arms about his neck.

Roy's pale, ink-stained face was very close to Marjorie's own, and he was whispering:

"Did I 'act and think for myself,' for once, sweetheart?"

"Oh, you did! Indeed you *did!*" sobbed Marjorie.

And in the ensuing confusion which arose several of the ink-streaks were carelessly transferred from Roy's lips to her own.

"As a matter of fact," continued Wolfe, when he remembered to speak again, "I did nothing of the sort. Any one else would have had sense enough to brain Gregory with that chair ten minutes earlier. But *I* don't care, if *you* don't. Good old Greg!"

A FALL OUT OF FATE.

By EDWIN BLISS.

An artist in difficulties, how a friend tried to help him out, and the part played by his pet antipathy in the process.

CHAPTER I.

"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR FURNITURE."

THUMP! thump! The sound of a heavy foot on the stairs made Walters's heart sink into his boots.

Tiptoing noiselessly to the door, he turned the key in the lock. Then he sat down on the cheap little lounge that answered the purpose of bed at night, chair by day; landscape, kitchen, and dining-room table, and everything else in any way pertaining to the pursuit of art, the rest of the time.

Thump! thump! The steps had now passed the second landing, and he waited breathlessly. There was one—and only one—forlorn hope left. It might be a model come to see if he had any work for her.

Models sometimes grow defiant of the world, hardened to reproof, and altogether acquire the heart-deadening tread that belongs by right only to a collector.

The dread walker was now outside the door, and Walters involuntarily held his breath, lest the terrific beating of his heart betray his presence.

Bang! Bang!

That settled it! His worst fears were confirmed! No model ever had the temerity to pound that way on a door behind which she hoped lay work. He listened to see if the man would not go away. He had known some that did not hammer over a few moments before taking their departure.

For instance, the milkman was a sensitive soul, and did not pound anywhere near so vehemently as the baker. The tailor sneaked up to the door, and tried it before rapping politely; while his landlord hammered like all possessed.

His first thought was that it might be a call for the rent, but there were certain little peculiarities about this summons that puzzled even such an expert in sounds as Walters. Who could it be? Of one thing he was certain—the party was strong-minded, and on a most disagreeable errand; consequently, Walters kept his seat, and was satisfied with merely being curious.

Every other creditor that came to see him had some regard for the panels of the door, but this one was exerting himself to the utmost to break it in.

"Come on, now! I know you're in

there!" a gruff voice demanded. "Y'u fergot t' take yer key out."

This was a new one on the artist! He had heard of all manner of clever ways of finding out the fact this fellow seemed to have ascertained so easily, but he had never known his creditors to peek in the keyhole before. It had always been a matter of principle with him to leave the key in the lock so that no other one could be inserted, but he now recognized that what he had been wont to pride himself on as a rather ingenious scheme, only betrayed the fact that there was undoubtedly life within.

Bang! bang! *Crash!* There was no use in concealing himself any longer; consequently he began to work himself up into a great passion before opening the door.

The collector had now started to kick against it, and it did not require much effort for Walters to get into a towering rage. Rushing to the door, he slapped round the key in the lock, and abruptly threw it open.

A great, strapping bully, dressed in an exceedingly noisy suit of checks, brushed him roughly aside and entered the room.

"See here! What do you mean by butting into my quarters that way?" the indignant artist demanded of him.

"Aw, cut it out, young feller! I butt in that way every day! Dat's me biz."

"Well, if it's your biz or not, you don't come it around here. Do you understand that?" Walters was mad enough to attempt to pitch the fellow out, if he had been big as a barn.

The man waved him wearily aside with a gesture, as though he were used to all that kind of talk. Hauling a long dirty sheet of paper from his pocket, he scanned it for an aggravating moment, then turned to the tenant with: "Are youse Richard Walters?"

"I am. What do you want?"

Walters's heart sank to zero as he recognized the document for a court paper.

"I come fer dat rent."

"Well," Walters suavely rejoined, "just go back to Mr. Abrams and tell him that I am perfectly ready and willing to pay him when he has fixed that pipe in the bathroom, and put this place in a sanitary condition. Ask him how he dares ignore the ultimatum I gave him last week. I will move, and not only not pay him a cent of rent, but will report this building to the authorities. Just tell him that, will you?"

The artist mentally patted himself on the back over this outburst.

"Dat's a good line o' talk you've got, young feller," and the man looked at him admiringly. "But you're barkin' up the wrong tree. I ain't come from de landlord."

"Oh, I understand! You want to serve a dispossess notice on me. Is that it?" Walters laughed easily. "Well, just tell them that I've accepted service; but absolutely refuse to pay my rent until the landlord fixes the leak in that water-pipe."

"Naw, I ain't come t' fix no water-pipe. Maybe y'u know what dis means?"

He threw open his coat, and displayed a great nickel badge, on which glittered the words, "City Marshal."

Walters did not know, but it made him decidedly uneasy to guess. He felt that it must be something far from pleasant.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "I haven't got it to-day, but—"

"Cut it out! Cut it out!" Again that indescribable gesture of boredom impossible for any one not born in the near vicinity of the Bowery to display. "Save all that line o' talk fer yer nex' landlord. I got trouble of me own."

"You see, it's this way," Walters went on, unabashed at the interruption. "This has been a very slack month, and the orders haven't been coming in as fast as they should. To understand the situation, you must, first, be thoroughly conversant with the magazines. Now, I presume—"

"Fergit it, fergit it! Have y'u got th' money fer me?"

"I don't happen to have it in the studio at the present moment, but—"

"Out y'u git, then! The court gave y'u three days t' move or pay, an' this is th' limit."

"But I spoke to the landlord about the rent on the day the case was called for trial, and he said my explanation was perfectly satisfactory to him. You certainly haven't seen him since then?"

"He jus' telephoned me t' roust y'u out."

"But he said—"

"Say, kid, honest, it's a shame t' take th' money from y'u. It's like stealin' candy from a blind man. Ain't y'u wise yet, that he didn't want youse in court, er you'd a gotten at least two weeks longer t' move in."

"Then he purposely said that to keep me from getting my due? He'll find he struck the wrong customer this time. I'll get every fellow in the building to move."

"All right, all right! I don't blame y'u. But that ain't none o' my business. I'm after th' coin, an' if y'u ain't got it, it's up t' me t' put y'u out."

"You mean to say that if I can't pay you to-day you will put me out?"

"Right-oh! Y'u gessed it th' very foist time," the fellow laughed hatefully. "Of course, there is little ways o' fixin' things up till nex' week—" He looked expectantly at the artist, to see whether the hint was taken.

"I don't understand," Walters replied, in a daze at the abruptness of the whole affair. "If the thing has passed into the hands of the court, how can it possibly be adjusted?"

The man laughed.

"Well, now, if youse was t' ax me advice, I t'ink, from wot I knows o' yer landlord, dat if youse was to han' him a fiver he might wait a few days."

"But I haven't got a penny," the painter cried in despair, feeling in his pockets to see if he might not have something there to satisfy the insatiable grafter. "If you'll only give me till next week, though, I know I can raise the rent, and pay you ten dollars besides, to show you my appreciation for your kindness."

"Nix on de credit in dis game. Nex' t'ing I knows, dey'll have me up, a callin' me a grafter. It's pay er get out wid me."

"But isn't there anything I can do?"

"If y'u got a watch, er ring wid a good stone in it, I might persuade him t' wait."

The fellow's greedy little eyes twinkled avariciously as he fixed them on the victim's face.

"Do you suppose if I had anything I could pawn I would be in this hole?" Walters demanded.

"Dat settles it, den." The man took hold of the easel and slapped it roughly together.

"Wait a minute!" Walters cried in desperation. "Isn't there something here you could take for the rent?"

He looked around him at the bare interior of the room. It was a very large studio, and while he had all the absolute necessities, they were dwarfed by the size of the place.

In fact, the only thing that was at all conspicuous were the rows of pictures stacked against the wall. At sight of them—though the sacrifice wrenched his heart—a brilliant idea struck the artist.

"Here! Take one of these pictures. They have just been returned from my exhibition at Seaman's. Any one of them will more than pay the amount due."

The man leisurely strolled to the pile nearest him, and turned over a landscape view, in which Walters took great pride. The price it had been exhibited at—two hundred dollars—was plainly marked on its back, and he heaved a gratified sigh of relief as he saw the man pass on to the next.

Another and another he exposed, until he had made a complete circuit of the studio. The artist watched him with an expression of pride on his face. It is mighty pleasant to show a man who thinks you amount to nothing what a really fine workman you are.

"Well, what do you think of that for an offer?" he questioned.

Turning, with an expression of the deepest disgust, the marshal sneered: "Say, cull, do I look like I was born yesterday, er day before?"

Walters smiled benignly.

"That's right," he said, with a nod of his head. "I mean what I say. I'll give you any one you pick out, and call it square."

"Do I look like I was the only original lemon merchant in dis burg, young feller?" the other demanded.

"Why, what do you mean? I don't understand!"

Walters could not believe the evidence of his own ears. Surely this man was not trying to depreciate the value of the paintings!

"Dese t'ings ain't wort t'irty cents!" the fellow declared emphatically.

"O'Bryan's got a line o' dem dat has youse skinned t' deat'!"

"Thirty cents!" Walters cried indignantly. "Why—"

"Say, young feller, are youse tryin' to make y'ur rent out o' dese?" and he pointed at the despised pictures.

"Why, any one of them would sell for a hundred dollars, and that is giving them away. Seaman listed them at six thousand dollars."

"Den why don't youse pay yer rent outer it?"

That was a facer! The exhibition had been a bitter disappointment to Walters. Although it had been richly productive in praise from the people whose opinions he valued, his work was evidently not of a salable kind.

Outside of his oils, he had done a great deal which he had vainly tried to sell to the magazines, but for over a month had not got rid of one. Even before this spell of hard luck he had only with difficulty managed to pay his rent and keep the wolf away from the door for two weeks out of each month.

"Well, I tell you," he finally announced; "I think I know where I can get the money for you by next week."

"How about dat fiver t'day?" The fellow rubbed his fingers together suggestively. "I might be able t' square de landlord fer y'u wid a 'V.'"

"I'll tell you what you do," Walters suggested. "You go around to him and tell him that I'm willing to let him have one of my pictures if he won't push me for the rent. He knows I am ready to pay him as soon as I can possibly get the money."

"Great!" The marshal laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. "Say, young feller, don't youse want me t' write youse up in de papers, too? I knows dat any editor 'ud want me ideas on picters. Conny Sir—ain't he de guy dat writes 'bout dem tings?"

Even Walters, despite the plight he was in, could hardly repress a smile at the absurdity of the idea.

"I don't know what I can do, then," he said. "As the landlord seems to wish to get rid of me, however, I will go to a friend's house to-night and come around early in the morning and pack my effects. Tell him I will do my best to get them out by the day after to-morrow."

He turned with a sigh, and looked at the studio that had grown so dear to him. It was the only place he had occupied since coming back from his studies in Paris, and naturally the very trials he had undergone had only made it doubly homelike to him.

"Yer fernyture goes in de street if youse don't pay me. D'youse t'ink dat a guy like me comes round t' manicure yer nails?" The fellow swelled out his chest and looked threatening.

"In the street? Oh, surely you wouldn't do that? Why — why, that would be—" The artist confronted the man in mute dismay. "But, don't you see, all my pictures may be damaged?"

"De law says, 'T'ings mus' be handled wid due care,'" and the man laughed with sinister meaning. "But youse is such a generous loose guy wid yer money dat I'll use more dan due care wid de t'ings. Last chance now!" He suddenly dropped all his banter. "Pay er git out!"

"But isn't there anything you could take to hold off this terrible thing till I can raise the money for you?" Walters cast a despairing glance about the room. "Some picture, or something like that."

The man strolled leisurely toward a great pastel the artist had made some years ago of his sweetheart when she was visiting in Paris.

"I'll take dis one, an' wait till four o'clock for youse t' raise de coin. I can persent it t' O'Bryan fer his collection. She's a peach!"

Walters ground his teeth in helpless rage at sight of the big brute handling with his unclean hands the portrait of the girl, who seemed to glance helplessly out of the frame at him. Then, as the most incongruous ideas will persist in obtruding themselves into dreadful situations, he caught himself wondering what the daughter of the rich grain man would say could she see him being evicted for non-payment of rent.

"No," he finally decided in a very low voice. "You can take any other picture you like, but not that one."

"Nix on de udders! Dat's de only one I can see fer a minute," the man responded decisively. "I wouldn't take

dis if I didn't t'ink O'Bryan 'ud like t' have it in his bunch o' beauties."

"You will understand my unwillingness when I tell you that it is the portrait of the young lady I am engaged to marry. That is the only reason I ask you to take another one," and Walters smiled at him.

"Oh, dat's all right, cull," and the fellow winked back sympathetically. "I knows jus' how youse feels. Honest, I wouldn't like me own gal's mug tucked up wid de bunch in most o' de saloons, but O'Bryan has a dead swell lot. All de beauties on de English an' American stage."

"It isn't that so much," Walters explained.

He could see it would be impossible to show the fellow his real reason for not wishing the portrait to be exhibited there. "But, naturally, I don't want to lose it."

"I'll give it back to you when y'u bring me th' money at four o'clock," the man faithfully promised.

"But suppose by any chance I shouldn't get it? If the man I am going to see is out, or some other thing like it should happen?" Walters suggested.

"Den"—and the tough face of the man lit up with a sinister light—"I might as well have it as not. 'Cause, if I didn't happen t' feel jus' right, yer pictures 'ud be smashed up when they landed on de sidewalk."

The artist instinctively clenched his fists at the coarsely veiled threat. He was helpless as a babe in the hands of this brute. There was absolutely no direction in which he might turn.

Years ago, when he was beginning to read the newspapers, he had smiled at the tales of blackmail with which they were crowded, and made up his mind that the one who attempted to try such a game on him would have a very sorry experience. He was young then, and never dreamed of the thousand and one ways in which the law could be used by designing ruffians for the furtherance of their own dirty ends.

For instance, this man was put by the law in a position of absolute dictatorship over a man a thousand times his superior, and yet he was absolutely incapable of any power of discrimination.

"Very well, then," Walters finally announced. "I'll leave the studio till four o'clock. I'll do my best to get the rent and a little extra money for you; but, if I don't, I trust you to take care of my things till I come back, and land them safe on the street. But you don't get the picture, understand that?"

"Cert, me boy!" the fellow assured him. "Yer all to th' merry. I don't want yer gal's picter. All I'm after's th' dough, an'"—he leaned over and whispered hoarsely in the artist's ear—"me own little rake-off. Come back here wid de forty if youse wants to, but it won't hurt none t' remember dat 'V' while youse is about it. See?"

"But if by any chance I couldn't get it," Walters pleaded. "I'll have it for you in the course of a day or so. Wouldn't that be all right?"

"No money—" The man made an eloquent gesture familiar to farmer folk as the method by which chickens are shooed. "Remember," he warned; "the street fer yours!"

He took from his pocket a great turnip of a watch and, ostentatiously snapping open the lid, gazed suggestively at its face. "*Four o'clock* ain't all day, young feller! If I was youse I'd be a shakin' in me tootsies."

Again that gesture with his hands, indicative of a thorough house-cleaning, quickly followed by a glare of menace.

"Y'u know wot dat means, I t'ink."

CHAPTER II.

FORTY DOLLARS OR A NICKEL.

WALTERS stood a moment in the doorway before leaving the room.

Where could he go to raise forty dollars on this short notice? He was never a borrowing man, and, while he had a great deal more downs than ups, he had never solicited a loan. Consequently he was all at sea.

The fellows he would logically go to were the ones who owed him money; and yet, he reasoned, they were continually broke, and showed by the fact that they never made the slightest attempt to pay him back that they had nothing themselves, or else were not the sort to help him.

Naturally most of his friends were artists, and forty dollars was a fabulous sum for any of that ilk to have on hand.

The others—the ones he knew had money—liked him because, for one reason, he never had a hard-luck story to pour into their ears, and they had often asked him why it came about that he never was reduced to the extremity of borrowing? These were business men as well as artists, and he feared his well-known aversion to asking for help would hurt instead of aid him in the quest.

They would be inclined to figure that if a chap with as little work to do as he came to them for assistance, their chances of getting their money back soon were very vague. Now, he berated himself for the reticence he had adopted in his attitude toward them. If he had only gone about, borrowing here and there, like the other chaps he knew, loads of people would have accustomed themselves enough to it to help him gladly now.

But perhaps Charlie Berry, in the next studio, might have some money. Walters knew he could get it if he had, although the chance was a slim one.

When Charlie had money he rarely showed up at his quarters until it was pretty well gone. However, it was a chance, and he rushed breathlessly over to his friend.

In response to his timid knock, a deep, stentorian voice bawled, "Who's there?"

"It's just me, Charlie," Walters ungrammatically responded.

The door swung open abruptly, and he found himself being grabbed by the coat and swung into the studio.

"Excuse the haste," Berry smilingly apologized, as he turned the key carefully in the lock; "but there's a collector hanging round the halls somewhere. Sit down and make yourself at home. I'm just finishing this hand."

While sitting down was the last thing on earth that Walters had any desire to do, he nevertheless leaned back comfortably in the great Morris chair, and critically remarked on the quality of his friend's work.

A dozen times he tried to blurt out what he had come for, but the sentence always stuck in his throat, and instead he voiced some idiotic piece of criticism. At length, with a groan at the hopelessness of it, and an oppressing realization of the fleeting moments, he rose to go.

"Charlie," he timidly blurted at the door, as at last he mustered up enough resolution to tell what he had come for, "Charlie!"

"Huh!" The man looked up with a frown at the interruption.

Walters had never realized before what an extremely forbidding countenance Berry had. No, he couldn't ask him. He couldn't ask any man who said "Huh!" to him that way!

"I'm going," he finished weakly.

He almost hated the man for not seeing the tragedy that was written on his face, forgetting that, in the years of proud struggle, he had steeled himself to show no emotion.

"Good-by, old man! Drop in tonight," the worker easily replied, keeping at his task. Just as Walters was turning the key, he sprang to his feet.

"For Heaven's sake, be careful when you get out!" he exclaimed. "Run as soon as you hit the door. That fellow stays here every night till six!"

"Good-by, Charlie!" and Walters clasped his hand in a grip that might have told any one, save a thick-hided elephant, that disaster was in the air, but Berry was beast enough not to see it.

"Well, anyhow, I'm getting in practise," Walters mused as he stood outside the door, pondering on the next best place to go.

It occurred to him that it wouldn't be a bad idea to strike some fellow that was perennially "broke." The request would not lower him in the other's eyes.

Easy quest! Conner, across the hall, was an ideal person.

Conner owed every artist in New York, and Conner likewise had never been known to pay back a cent. Yet he was the most popular, lovable, free-and-easy, happy-go-lucky chap in the artists' colony.

A great big Irishman, with a heart the size of his body, he got along somehow; and nobody had ever been able to discover the slightest reason for his existence, save the depletion of what might otherwise have been plethoric pocket-books.

No one could understand his methods

or his success. He welcomed a creditor as fondly and as sincerely as one from whom he might have been able to borrow. His door was never closed; and, while he owed every tradesman in the vicinity, collectors always came from his studio with a broad grin on their faces, ready for renewed assaults on the other delinquents' doors.

"Step right in, Walters, old chap," and he grasped his unhappy neighbor by the hand before he had time to knock on the open door. "This is certainly a case of the mountain and Mohammed. I was just going to drop in on you."

Somehow his very manner seemed to invite confidence, and the artist found it easy to broach the delicate subject. But first he must make some little introductory remark to lead up to it.

He knew from experience that Conner always went about it that way.

"Been a pretty tough winter, hasn't it, Conner?" he began.

Conner's face fell till it seemed as though all the sadness of the world must be concentrated there.

"Bad—bad—mighty bad!" he dolefully responded. "Could you let me have a little matter of a ten?" he quickly added.

The utter incongruity of the manner in which the tables had been turned on him brought a smile to Walters's face.

"That's right, boy, smile!" Conner beamed. "I like to see it. If you haven't got a ten, then a five, or a two, or a quarter!" He followed each shake of the other's head by diminution in the size of his demand.

"To tell the truth, Conner, that's what I came to see you about," Walters replied. "I haven't got a penny in the world, and I wanted to—"

"Let me see." The Irishman mused a moment, then turned swiftly to his desk and pounced upon a large ledger hidden under a heap of old papers.

Running his fingers swiftly over the pages, he finally turned, with a sigh of the most heartfelt relief, to his visitor.

"Here we are!" he cried triumphantly. "Walters! Sixty-four dollars and—two cents; that's for the postage-stamp I got the other day when you were out—I forgot to tell you.

"You didn't know about all this!" he cried in amazement, at the other's expression of ignorance; then wagged his head gravely, as though reprimanding a culprit child. "You must keep better books, my dear boy, or you'll never get along in the world. Why, certainly, I can pay you. Just wait one moment, till I look through those old trousers."

He made another flying leap to the meager little wardrobe in a corner.

"By George!" he exclaimed, with an exclamation of dismay; "I've gone and left it some place. But, never mind, Walters; just drop round to-morrow and I'll have it," he assured him.

"I really didn't expect to get anything," the artist said. "And I don't want you to think that I came to dun you, but—"

"What!" the man cried in a tone of mortal hurt. "You expected to get no money?"

"Seriously, Conner," Walters continued; "I'm in a terrible hole, and absolutely must have forty dollars by four o'clock. I wanted to know how to go about it."

The Irishman's eyes twinkled humorously at the unconsciously innocent manner in which he was conceded to be an authority on the subject.

"Well, my boy," he cried heartily, "that's a very simple matter!"

Walters sighed.

"I'd give anything if I thought so."

"Come, come; that's no way to talk!" the other retorted. "Lesson No. 1: 'Nothing so easy as to get what you're after.' Never dream of thinking anything else."

"But nobody I know seems to have any money."

"Nonsense! Never be in doubt about that! Put them on their mettle to give you the money, or show themselves up. Lesson No. 2: 'Never ask—demand; always expect it; don't give up; and if you see they haven't got it, tell them they can send it, if it won't come later than ten o'clock in the morning.' Of course, you understand these are just the cardinal rules, and are given to you under the strictest secrecy. There are many different little shadings you can impart to this gentle art, but for a beginner the things I have told you will suffice.

"Boy, boy"—and he gazed sadly at the artist—"I only wish I had your opportunity. Think of starting out with a clean slate, and a good reputation, and then wearing a glum face like that! Shame! The world belongs to you if— Just think about the lesson that two-cent postage-stamp I owe you teaches, and you'll get the money. When you borrow, have no intention of paying it back. A man who intends to return the loan never looks the part. Now, take that sheep-killing look off your face and you'll come home with your pockets filled and enough over for me to come and make a touch. Good luck!"

Decidedly, Walters now understood why it was that everybody seemed to enjoy having Conner owe him money. When he left the room, despite the seriousness of his dilemma, and the imminent disaster overshadowing him, he felt a thousand per cent better than he had when he went in.

Ridiculous though it may seem, it was a feeling as if Conner, out of the kindness of his heart, had turned over to him everything he held dear in the world. He had forgotten for the moment that the marshal was in possession of his room, with one eye on the clock, and another on the furniture; but, once in the hallway, it all came back to him with sickening intensity.

"Don't ask—demand!"

The Irishman's cardinal rule in the festive art of "touch" reverberated through his head. He would immediately put it in practise.

But where? Necessarily it would be useless to go to any one with no money; consequently, he rushed down the stairs to make a hasty journey down-town. No more artists for him! He would go into the business district, where every one he knew *had* cash.

He had once heard a friend in Wall Street say that money was the cheapest thing in the world; that he could get all he wanted at a half of one per cent.

He was the fellow to go to! Surely he would not be averse to making a little cash on the side. He—Walters—would be willing to give ten or even twenty per cent for forty dollars, and any business man would surely jump at an opportunity of making such a profit.

He felt decidedly better, as he broke into what was almost a dog-trot toward the financial district. The only trouble was the time limit which the marshal had placed on him; the rest was easy. He felt rather proud of his own ingenuity and resource. Notwithstanding the light flurry of snow that was falling, he was in a sweat when he rushed into the great sky-scraper where his acquaintance had his offices, and searched the directory for his name.

There it was, on the fifteenth floor—G. W. Broome!

In a second he was being rushed up in the electric-elevator, and then wound his way through the devious corridors. The feeling he had was of blue funk, as he watched the rustle and bustle about him. He began to think maybe Broome had been stretching the truth a little when he had made that remark about the plenitude of money.

If what he had said was true, why hadn't some of these poor devils of clerks, who didn't look like they had over a dime apiece, got the secret and quit work?

"Who do you wish to see?" a curt little office-boy demanded aggressively.

"Mr. Broome," Walters responded.

"What business?"

"My business is with the gentleman I asked for, not you," the artist shortly responded. "I am a friend of his."

"Mr. Broome never sees friends during the rush hours. I'm very sorry, sir, but those are his orders."

Walters's heart sank to his boots. When all he had to do to get money was to see a man not twenty feet away—and when he could make out that man's figure dimly through a ground-glass window—to be stopped by a little whipper-snapper of a child was more than he could well bear.

One hope alone remained, and he decided to try it. And he asked the boy:

"How long do the rush hours last?"

"Up till four o'clock, sir."

Four o'clock! By that time his belongings would be out on the street! No; he couldn't possibly wait till then. He decided to try a little diplomacy.

"But surely he will see me!" he said. "He asked me to come down any time, and I know he will be sorry to miss me."

"Have you got a tip on the market?" the boy questioned.

Walters grasped at the straw.

"Why, yes," he reluctantly confessed. "But you must not say anything about it. Your boss would not like to have it known that I told even you."

The imp pointed to a sign on the wall, glaringly brutal in its gaudy red paint:

TIPSTERS AND BEGGARS BARRED!

It certainly seemed that he must have been expected!

"Why," he gasped, "your employer distinctly told me that he loaned great sums of money continually."

"Dat's his biz!" the boy ejaculated.

Walters shuddered. The expression reminded him forcibly of the unpleasant creature who was waiting anxiously for his return.

"But I came to negotiate a loan," he stammered.

"Why didn't you say so at first?" the boy ungraciously growled. "What's the name?"

"Walters."

He could almost have hugged himself with joy. So it wasn't a fiction after all that this man was in the money-loaning business. He had never imagined, even in his fondest dreams, that there were places where people were actually looking to loan out money.

Why, this would be easy! If it were the man's business he wouldn't hesitate an instant about asking for what he wanted. And why shouldn't he get a hundred and fix the studio up a bit while he was about it?

No, he would not be continually taking up the man's time; he would make it two hundred and pay three months' rent in advance.

Not the boy, but his friend, himself, came back and greeted him warmly.

"Well, well, aren't you rather far afield for an artist?" he exclaimed, as he shook hands.

Once in the comfortable, luxurious room, with a big Havana between his lips, Walters found it easy to get down to business. He had never dreamed that the men in the down-town district were surrounded by such comforts. But his friend anticipated him.

"Well, let's get the unpleasant part over first. The boy tells me you have come to negotiate a loan."

Unpleasant! Walters's hopes took a decided droop.

"Why, yes," he stammered. "I thought I would trouble you to—"

"No trouble at all! that's the way I make a living, loaning money. Now about how much do you want?"

He took a check-book from a pigeon-hole and, dipping his pen in the ink-well, paused expectantly.

Somehow all Walters's resolutions began to fade, despite the man's eagerness to oblige. Forty dollars would do after all.

"I guess about forty dollars would be enough," he quavered.

"Forty dollars!" The man put down his pen and laughed till the room almost shook with his merriment. "Come, come, you're joking," he finally managed to gasp.

Walters's spirits rose again.

"Well, you're right," he admitted. "I did need two hundred, but I never borrowed before, and I didn't want to inconvenience you."

"Always remember," Broome remarked, "it's easier to get a large sum than a small one. Name me a figure in the thousands and it will be much simpler than the hundreds."

"No," the artist decided. "I don't believe in going in debt any more than I can help. I guess two hundred will do beautifully."

"An antiquated notion," the other retorted. "Borrowing is the only secret of commercial success. That's what makes this country the most progressive in the world. However, if that's all you'll take, here goes."

He scribbled hastily a moment, then handed a deliciously beautiful piece of paper that read payable to Walters's order for two hundred dollars.

Walters rose and poured forth a torrent of thanks, excusing his hurry on the grounds of a most important engagement. What would Conner think could he know of its exact nature?

"Well, if you must leave, good-by," Broome said at the door. "It's so seldom I have any of you fellows call during the day that I hate to let you go when you do come."

"I'm sure if you were to give them an inkling of your business you wouldn't be troubled by not seeing *enough* of them," Walters laughed.

The other chuckled.

"I suppose we all get short, now and then," he remarked. "Just leave your security at the cashier's window. You see it over there—that little cage," and he pointed.

"Security! I have no security, unless you will take a couple of my pictures?" the artist gasped. "But I'll pay you back as soon as I get the money."

"What! No security! Why, my dear boy, how in the world do you expect to borrow money without security? Don't you know that I am a broker and am obliged to pay back this money to the person I get it from at a moment's notice?"

"I thought it was your money," the luckless artist stammered.

He handed back the check with a sigh.

"Could you let me have just forty dollars on my own word then?" he asked.

"Walters, I'm giving you the straight goods; but I don't expect any one innocent enough to try to borrow money without security will believe me. I live up to every penny I make. If I had forty dollars I would certainly loan it to you, because I believe you'd pay it back. But I haven't got it, and, what's more, I was just figuring on making a little 'raise,' out of your two hundred."

As Walters found himself once more on the street, his heart was filled with black despair.

He couldn't for the life of him understand how a man could write out checks in the thousands, and scatter money to anybody and everybody and still be forced to borrow from a man that he knew only had a measly couple of hundred; but then he knew nothing of such matters and Broome seemed to be in earnest. He would go to some of the other down-town chaps he knew. If they had anything he was sure it would be an easy matter to secure help.

But first he must telephone the studio and tell the marshal that he was hot on the scent of cash, so that he would not start in and throw his things out immediately on the appointed hour.

He skirmished through his pockets. He must telephone somehow. He couldn't put his mind on borrowing when he didn't have any idea whether his things were at that very moment being dumped on the sidewalk. He must telephone first!

He stared up the street and then down, looking for some inspiration in the long, endless rows of ugly buildings. How? That was now the momentous problem. He must have forty dollars or a nickel!

CHAPTER III.

SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR.

WALTERS stood a moment in the street, plunged in the deepest thought, when suddenly he laughed aloud.

Why, certainly! Why hadn't he thought of it before? He could go to any friend's office and use his telephone. No one would dream of charging for it.

As though the idea had put new life into him, he started briskly toward Broadway. He knew a man in one of the big office-buildings near Trinity Church where all the lawyers of his acquaintance had quarters.

It was but the work of a few minutes to reach the head of the street and enter the building.

"Hallo, Walters!" The young lawyer wheeled in his chair and paused a moment to greet him. "What brings you down-town?"

"I wanted to telephone," the artist began; then corrected himself with a sickly laugh. "That is, you understand, I didn't come down to telephone, but just to—to— Well, you see, I wanted to do something else, too."

The lawyer looked at him in amazement.

"Help yourself," and he indicated the phone on the edge of his desk.

"Haven't you got a private one?" Walters stammered.

"Sure! That one in the outside office is a private wire."

"I mean one where you can talk in private—one with a sound-proof booth," he explained.

"Nope! You'll find one of them down-stairs. Most all the booth phones are at the public stations. Wait a minute and I'll show you how to get to it," he began, slipping into his coat.

"Oh, no; don't bother," Walters interrupted hastily.

It would indeed be dire if he were forced to reveal, in the presence of his friend, that he didn't have a nickel, and had probably dropped into his office for no other purpose than to use his phone. "I'll wait. Good-by."

"What's the matter, Dick?" The attorney placed his hand upon his shoulder and then got the whole story.

"Why didn't you tell me before," he demanded. "However, I think I can fix it up for you. Just a minute now," and he took down the receiver from the hook.

"Hold on a second," the artist cried. "You don't know the number yet."

"Well, I ought to; I've called it up enough times," the lawyer smiled. "Give me 232 Times," he requested of the operator.

"That isn't the number." Walters grasped his arm, but the lawyer brushed him aside.

"Hello, is this Judge Frazer?" he queried. "This is Masters. I have a client who is being evicted to-day. He is a perfectly responsible party. I can vouch for him from my own personal experience. He has stood willing and ready at all times to pay his rent, but there are certain unsanitary conditions in his studio which make it unbearable. Time and again he has asked that these things be remedied, but to no avail. Then his landlord served him with a dispossess, and tricked him into not going to court to answer it. I want a stay of execution to serve on the marshal.

"He says it will be all right." Masters wheeled in his chair and smiled serenely at Walters. "I'll send the boy right over to get the stay signed."

He fumbled in his drawer a moment, and having produced the blank filled it hastily out and rang a bell.

"Take this to Judge Frazer and have him sign it right away," he directed. "See how much trouble you have saved yourself by coming to your lawyer immediately?" he added with a smile for the artist.

"And will it be all right now?" Walters questioned anxiously.

"Sure! The boy will hustle right around to the marshal. He won't move the things till you get back. I suppose you gave him a 'hand-out' for waiting?"

"No-o. You see that was one of the things I was looking for. He said he would wait till four for me to bring him the V."

"Blackmail!" The lawyer jumped excitedly from his chair. "Why, man, you've got the suit of a lifetime. Do you want me to prosecute him for you?"

"I certainly want you to get back at him somehow."

"Well, we'll have them wishing they had never been born before we're through with them. Now you run right up there and pay him the rent. Oh, don't worry," he interrupted to Walters's protest. "He'll have to hold it while the suit is pending. Then give him the five dollars for waiting, in the presence of a witness. Be sure and get him to admit that he asked for it, though," he cautioned in conclusion.

"But I haven't got a cent," the artist cried in despair.

The other man pursed his lips into a long-drawn whistle.

"Well, that puts a different aspect on the thing. But no—wait a minute—" He sat a second, drumming on the desk with his fingers. "I can loan you forty-five dollars, I guess. I'm pretty short myself, but this is too good a thing to let slip. I've always wanted to get one of those foxy landlords and their grafting marshals."

Again Walters had the satisfaction of seeing a man reach out for a pen and scribble hastily on a check. Surely, Conner was right when he spoke of how extremely easy it was for a man of his appearance to "raise the wind."

In the only two places he had tried he had met with this remarkable success. He eagerly reached forward for the bit of paper, but his friend suddenly slapped his knee a resounding blow and chuckled as he tore up the check.

"What's the matter? Didn't you make it out right?" Walters demanded.

He thought if he should see another man destroy a check, he would do something desperate.

"Why no, not exactly that! The fact is that if I give you the money it would come under the head of laying a trap to catch a man in a criminal act. The law is very particular on that point. While you and I know we would be performing a service to humanity by catching the scalawag, I could never make a court believe that I gave you the money as a friend, and not as your attorney. No, it is impossible."

"Well, why don't you loan me the money and not sue them?" Walters queried hopefully.

"My dear boy," and the lawyer looked at him reproachfully, "do you mean to say that you want me to get out of the case, after bringing it to me?"

"But I didn't come to bring you the case. I came to use your telephone," the artist blurted out.

"But, Dick, you said you wanted me to take the case, and here I've gone and telephoned the judge and already signed my name to a document in his hands, as your attorney. Now how can I get out of it?"

"What's the use of telling them about it at all?" Walters cried, as a great light dawned upon him.

"That would be easy if you hadn't let the marshal know you had no money when you went out. He will want to find where you got it? You can't perjure yourself, you know."

"Well, all I can say is that I wish some of you fellows would take time to think of these things before you go to writing out checks and then tearing them up," the artist growled.

"I know it's pretty tough, Dick?" The friend's tone was so sympathetic that Walters could not help but forgive him. "Still, there's lots of the fellows that will let you have the money. Just go round and see one of them. They know you wouldn't borrow if you didn't need it mighty bad. I wish I could let you have it," he added sincerely.

"That's the trouble," the artist responded. "I've never borrowed, and so I don't know how to go about it. And besides, the fellows will think if I'm in such a hole that I have to make a raise, I'll have a slim chance of paying them back."

"Not at all; not at all," the other replied with the ready assurance it is so easy to give a person who is tackling a thing you wouldn't undertake yourself. "I know *any* of the boys would be tickled to death to let you have it."

"You'd help me a lot then if you'd give me a list of a few of them. I can't seem to locate them," Walters spoke somewhat sarcastically.

"Why, *anybody*," his friend indefinitely replied. Just see how easy it is. Didn't I offer you the money the minute I heard about it? Of course I'm awfully sorry I had to take it back, but I was perfectly willing to let you have it. Now, wasn't I?"

"It figures mighty easy," Dick responded dryly. "But the fact remains that I haven't got a nickel yet."

"That's right! But don't be too impatient, Dick. Think of the damages you'll get out of that landlord. You can't have your cake and eat it, too, you know."

"I don't give a hang for the damages," Walters snapped. "What I want is some money, now."

Masters looked at him reproachfully.

"You don't seem to understand what you've got, Dick. This is a very pretty case indeed. There is a fine legal point involved that I will take great pleasure in testing."

"Well, I'm going out to look for some one of those friends you talk about," the artist responded. "Now, don't forget to hold that fellow off until I can get the money."

He did not even stop for the other's assurance that he would attend to the matter before he was in the hall waiting for an elevator.

"Brace up, Dick!" he told himself as he stood once more on the street. "There's forty dollars waiting for you in a dozen different places. Now, the thing for you to do is to locate just one of them in the near vicinity. I don't believe any fellow ever had so many narrow escapes from good luck in a day before, and I guess the tide must turn sometime or other."

There was a chap he had known rather well in the old Latin Quarter

days in Paris, who had always been hard up, and who, Walters heard, was now doing remarkably well as an architect down-town somewhere. It was but the work of a few moments to find a directory and get his address.

It was just a block up the street, and he started out bold as a lion. Here was the sort of man whom he could go to without embarrassing himself. Many a time he had helped him out of a hole; and he saw no reason in the world why he should hesitate about asking the same favor for himself.

Curiously enough, his resolution slipped gently away as he approached the huge suite on which his friend's name was emblazoned. There is nothing like prosperity to take the wind out of a man's sails, when he is on a still-hunt for aid, and Walters never realized the fact so vividly as when he found himself timidly rapping on a door marked

PRIVATE.

"Come in!" a deep voice growled, and he was facing a very florid, aggressively fat and prosperous man, whom he recognized, with difficulty, as the former friend.

No, he couldn't brace this man! Time had written too great a change in his face. The hard lines, the selfish mouth, the bulldog chin—everything bespoke stern refusal. In fact, Walters thought, as his resolution faded completely out of sight, that he had never seen a less promising sight for a touch.

Still the greeting he received fanned his resolve into feeble life again. As he lolled back in a chair and rambled on over the old days—in which at the moment he felt not the slightest interest—he tried again and again to bring up the subject of a loan, but each time the opportunity slipped away before he could get a tight grip on it.

"Say, Dick," the architect leaned over and fished something from his pocket, "do you recognize this?"

He held out a five-franc piece.

"I haven't seen one for so long I'd pretty nearly forgotten what they look like," Dick tried to smile, as at last he recognized a Heaven-sent opportunity to broach the matter uppermost in his mind.

"No," the other agreed. "You don't see many of them in New York, do you? Well, that's the last money I ever borrowed, and I got it from you. I've always kept it as a terrible reminder of my past. Do you remember the way you used to lecture me about never amounting to anything so long as I borrowed all the time?

"Well, when I came back to this country, I made up my mind to take a chance at turning over a new leaf, and I believe a good part of my success has been due to my never borrowing a cent. You know, I've come to be of the opinion that we fellows that were all the time making touches were a disgrace to America, in the old Quarter; and that the fellow who tries it, is nothing better than a tramp and beggar. I've always held you up to myself as my ideal of what a fellow ought to be, and you've helped me a great deal more than you have any idea of. Now, this coin I shall never pay back, because it will always make me think of what I owe you."

He leaned back in his swivel chair and looked kindly at the artist.

Was ever such a proposition put up to a man in a hole such as that in which Walters wallowed? Here was a man offering him anything he wanted and yet practically telling him that should he ask for one thing he would forfeit his good opinion, and be placed in the category of a beggar and tramp.

But he certainly did wish the architect would forget his little sentimental attachment to that five-franc piece. A dollar would help quite considerably at the present moment!

"No," he remarked in answer to the other's harsh estimate of the borrower. "I never felt that way about any of the boys. It's all right for a man who really needs the money to borrow, and I never grudged it to him. Now, I myself have—"

"Nonsense!" the architect laughed. "You good-hearted old fellow! You didn't even know yourself that you were the most imposed upon man in the Quarter. Why, those hoboes used to come to you on the most absurd excuses. For instance, one of the boys was telling me the other day that he got ten dollars out of you once, saying that they were

going to put him out of his room, if he didn't pay it. He was laughing about it; said you loaned it to him, but remarked that a fellow who couldn't take any better care of his money than to get in such a hole ought to be put out. Do you remember about it?" The man fairly shook with mirth at the recollection.

"Yes, I remember," Walters was now nerved up to the point of asking for anything. "But that fellow had plenty of money for an allowance. Now, there are fellows I'd have been glad to loan to, for such a reason. I can't imagine anything worse than being put out—"

"Exactly! But the men who are poor enough to be put out aren't the ones who ask for a loan."

"I don't see it that way," the artist replied with a sinking heart.

"But I tell you, it's true," his friend continued. "Take myself for example. The first loan I ever effected put me back ten years in my work. While I thanked the man at the time, I have often thought since that no one ever did me a worse turn. Why, I wouldn't be the means of putting a man on that track for a thousand dollars.

"Look here," and he hauled from his pocket a great roll of bills and laid them on the desk, then drew from another a big, impressive looking check-book. "If I do say it myself, old man," he remarked earnestly. "I am a big success to-day. I have money to burn, fame, and everything a man wants. There's nothing I like that I can't say, 'Give it to me.' Money? Why it's the cheapest thing in the world when you once get on the right track."

"I wish you wouldn't say that," Walters protested. "I once knew a very dear friend that made that remark, and—"

"It's a fact! And do you know to what I ascribe it all? Your advice! Why, Walters, you'll never guess what I owe you. You could have anything in the world from me. I—"

"Well, that's mighty good of you," Walters gratefully responded. "I can't begin to tell you how I thank you. I—"

"Yes, sir, anything in the world," the man went on, "except a loan. I'll never in the world break over that resolution. That's one of the reasons why I think so much of you. I know I'll never be tempted."

"Good-by." The artist held out his hand abruptly. He could not stand it to see that great roll of bills on the desk and hear this very personification of affluence unconsciously berating him.

"Good-by." The other grasped his hand warmly at the door. "I expect I've bored you to death with my talk, but it's the first chance I've had of letting you know my feelings toward you. Now, tell me where you live. I've been trying to find out for a couple of years, but haven't been able to locate you. I've got a little present I've been saving for you a long time. It isn't much—"

Where did he live! Walters could not restrain a smile at the question. Where? He wondered!

"I'll drop in on you in a couple of days and tell you then. I'm—" He was getting terribly fussed at the innocent question. "I'm—that is, I'm planning to move, you see."

"Well, I can get it around to you in a day or so. You can't move before then. I tell you what I'll do," he cried in a great burst. "I will drop in on you to-morrow. It would take me back to the old days."

"No—no—" the artist cried out in alarm at the suggestion. "I'm all upset and I wish you would postpone your call."

"All right, then. Just as you say. But it's the *upset* part I was so homesick for," and the architect looked expectantly at the artist.

"I'll drop in on you to-morrow and tell you whether you can or not." Walters hated to have to deny the prosperous man what he so evidently longed for; but he shuddered to think of what would happen should Hayward drop in on him when engaged in a duel with that pest of a marshal.

"Don't forget that," the other exacted. "If you *don't* come, I'll be around anyhow."

"I'll be here. Never fear." Walters made a mental inventory that should anything less than the end of the world intervene, that was one engagement he would keep. "Good-by till then."

His head was in a whirl when he tried to think of some one else to strike. He had heard the fellows tell funny stories by the hour about strange things happening to them in their efforts to get money; he had read whole books on the subject, but never had he struck any precedent for the manner in which he was being received.

He would make one more trial and only one, and then abide by the decision. If he didn't get it, well and good. But if he was handed another check, or tale of romantic attachment, he would promptly go home, put Conner on the scent, and get his authoritative opinion as to what it all meant.

Sturgis, the real-estate man, whom he had often met, but had never become well acquainted with, was a likely subject. In the first place he was close at hand; in the second, he was a business man, and a friend.

Now it is a hard matter to steel one's self to borrowing, but once you have been at it a number of times you become automatic and hardened. Consequently it was with a bold air the artist pushed open Sturgis's door and found that gentleman hustling into his overcoat for the trip home.

"Hallo, old man! You're just in time! Going my way?"

"No-o," Walters replied. "I came to see you on a matter of the utmost importance to me. Now, please don't beat around the bush, but come right out and tell me what you will do. I'm in something of a hurry, too. I want to borrow forty dollars, as I am in a most critical predicament. I must have it to-night. Can you loan it to me?"

"I know you're good, old man, but—"

"So every one has told me," Walters interrupted. "I never knew before what a splendid reputation I had. While I am deeply gratified by these tokens of esteem, I want the forty worse."

Sturgis looked at him in amazement.

"You're a queer card," he murmured. "Well, Dick, to tell the truth, I don't as a business man loan money without adequate collateral, and as a friend I don't know you well enough to forego the amount of pleasure I could get out of that forty myself to let you have it."

"Good!" Walters laughed bitterly. "It's rather tough to hear the truth, especially when it means as much to a fellow as it does to me; but, thanks, for talking square to me."

The real-estate man regarded him as if he thought he was crazy.

"You certainly are a queer one," he said. "Is that the way you've been trying to raise the wind?"

"By asking for it? Yes."

The man broke into a great roar of laughter.

"Excuse me," he finally repressed himself enough to say. "But this is the funniest thing I ever heard of. You know, Dick, I've half a mind to—"

The artist grasped him by the arm as he began fumbling in the pocket where ordinarily the check-book is deposited.

"Sturgis, I want the money badly; but if you're going to write out a check, make up your mind more than *half way* before you do it."

"No, old man," and his friend shook his head decisively, "I can't let you have it."

"No ill feelings," Walters responded heartily. "I wish I knew you better."

He gazed after the departing figure of the man, then shook himself together like a great Newfoundland.

"Well, Conner," he murmured to himself in a whimsical vein, "what is a fellow going to do, who is only versed in the fundamental principles of touching, when he strikes the most delicate coloring and shading on the part of the touchee? Tell me that, will you?"

CHAPTER IV.

CONNER IS STUMPED.

"Well," exclaimed Walters, as he strode rapidly up the street, "for taking a fall out of fate, it looks very much like I'm the only original training partner. There's a cog loose somewhere in the machinery of old Dame Fortune, and she keeps smiling at me over her left shoulder. If anybody else shows me a roll of bills or a check, they'll have to beat me running to get it back. I've had some pretty narrow escapes in my time, but to-day Luck has certainly

put her antic disposition on. I wonder what 'near-decent' thing my friend the marshal has done up at the studio?"

The thought quickened his steps perceptibly, and a feeling of impending disaster he could not shake off struck a chill to his heart. He tried to reason it away, saying to himself that his friend, the lawyer, had assured him he would fix everything all right; that the man would never dare to put his furniture on the street in the face of the judge's signature on the stay of execution.

But something was wrong, somewhere. Walters knew it; could feel it. Inevitable, terrible disaster!

So engrossed was he in trying to analyze his emotions that, before he came to himself, he had turned the corner, where he hoped he still lived. A great black cat darting from the corner stoop brought him to his senses with a jolt.

While Walters was not ordinarily more superstitious than the average mortal, he had a pet antipathy, and that was cats. Cats, to him, presaged disaster. He could not even see one, that some bit of bad luck did not come to him before he had time to close his eyes in sleep. He therefore hated them, and never would allow one to come within a block of him if he could help it.

Curiously enough, this aversion had become so much a part of his nature that, try though he might, he could never even learn how to draw one of the animals. They were the one thing that, of all things animate and inanimate, he was helpless before with a brush. He simply hated them with a hatred so deep as to be positively ridiculous.

This cat seemed not to have due regard for his feelings, for it fell into line with him and slowly, gravely, marched on ahead, looking neither to the right nor left. In this ridiculous alinement the pair went home.

In his strenuous thinking he had forgotten all about the dilemma that awaited him up-stairs, but the sight of the building drove all other thoughts from his mind. With an admixture of hesitation and eagerness, he inserted the outside key in the lock and let himself in.

He listened a moment in the hall, and from the top floor came sounds that indicated something decidedly unpleasant. He could hear Conner's voice pitched in a key of anger, which in itself was enough to attract his attention—for Conner, never, in the memory of the oldest artist, got angry.

Two steps at a time, Walters flew up the stairs, and on the top floor a sight met his eyes that almost paralyzed him.

Conner, the imperturbable, the easy-going, the lazy, was holding the struggling marshal from behind as easily as a St. Bernard toys with a poodle dog. The tough was making the air blue with sulfuric language; and, although his tone was as soft as ever, Conner's eyes were blazing with ill-concealed rage, as he pinioned the man's arms to his side and rendered him absolutely helpless.

"Easy now, me man; be easy," the Irishman was beseeching, in the soft tone that only served to make the marshal madder than ever.

"I'll fix youse for dis?" the fellow screamed. "I'll eat yer heart out! I'll have yer up fer contempt! I'll—"

"One at a time, sonny; you can't do them all at once," Conner irritatingly assured him.

"Here, here! What's the meaning of all this?" To save him, Walters could not keep his face straight. "Turn him loose, Conner!"

"Will you be good, if I do?" the Irishman quizzed his captive.

"Yes," the man sullenly promised.

"All right then." Conner released him, and the marshal stood glaring malignantly at him. "It's merely a little exercise I'm taking," the good-hearted fellow explained to Walters.

"But I don't understand," and the artist looked about in perplexity. "I thought you went off duty at six o'clock?" addressing the marshal.

"So he should be," the Irishman eagerly interrupted. "But after waiting till six, and making a nuisance of himself bumping around in your place, and being disagreeable to everybody that came to see you, he starts to move your things. I had me eye on him though, and stopped him just in time." and Conner beamed at his friend.

"But weren't you served with a stay?" the artist inquired, with a puzzled expression.

"*Dat* fer yer stay!" The man

clutched a piece of paper from his pocket and, tearing it into bits, threw them spitefully on the floor.

"Shall I bate him?" Conner's eyes gleamed as he turned to Walters.

"Never mind, Conner! That's contempt of court!" and he glared sternly at the man.

The fellow laughed spitefully.

"I'm here t' put youse on de street. I don't know nothin' bout de law sharks' game."

"Well, I think perhaps for your own good, you'd better call on some one who does, before you try any of those little tricks," Walters replied. "Perhaps Mr. Abrams, the landlord, will be willing to let you know what you have just done. I'll call him up and get him around for your especial benefit."

Conner forestalled him and had already reached the telephone. He returned in a moment to announce, with beaming face, that the landlord would come right up.

"He sees a damage suit in sight, and I scared him to death," he whispered, with a chuckle to his friend.

"But what am I going to do?" Walters threw up his hands in despair.

"Leave it all to me, my boy," the good-hearted chap assured him. "They'll never get you out to-night, and to-morrow always was a fine fellow to take care of himself. But I've got grand news for you. Grand news! Come over to my place while I tell you. Our dear friend here will take care of everything," and he beamed at the scowling man.

"Don't youse fergit dat I'll take care o' youse," the marshal retorted angrily.

"Out with the good news, old man," Walters begged, as soon as they had reached his friend's room. "I can stand it to hear some, after this."

"You're made, Dick!" Conner took him by the shoulders and faced him squarely in front of the mirror. "Look at yourself!" he cried.

"What are you driving at, you crazy Irishman?" The artist laughed in spite of himself at this foolishness.

"That's right! Smile. It does me good to look at you! You'll never enjoy yourself, or do anything, unless you smile all the time."

"But I don't understand!"

"Keep looking at yourself! You're made—reputation, fame, riches, everything the heart holds dear. But—beware, Dick, she doesn't steal your heart away! She's the most beautiful creature you ever set eyes on!"

"She! Who?"

"The woman who called on you today—er, excuse me, I should say called on your friend the marshal to give you a commission to paint her portrait. And I—I saved the day. Your dear friend over the way insulted this radiant creature, and she was leaving in anger when Conner, with his ear to the keyhole, as usual, saved the unfortunate damsel, and made an appointment for you."

"Talk sense, Conner! Tell me what you are driving at!" In his excitement, the artist shook his friend vigorously by the collar.

"Mean? Just what I say! A beautiful lady rapped on your door, about half an hour after you had unsuccessfully tried to fleece me of some hard-earned lucre, and the next thing I knew I heard her giving some one a most terrific calling down. I thought no one had any business in your studio, and if some fellow was in there, it was up to Conner to find out who it was. Besides I've been here so long babbling around that I know most of the models, and I don't like to have them insulted. I never dreamed but it was a model.

"Well, when I pushed open your door I was mad clean through and ready to hand the fellow, whoever he was, what you saw me giving him just now. Imagine my astonishment to see a queen standing in the middle of the studio, something like this—" He struck an extravagant posture of regal command, and Walters burst into a roar of laughter at the ridiculous sight.

"I hope not like *that*," he protested.

"Perhaps a little more graceful," the other admitted good-naturedly. "And her voice! I knew I had heard that voice before, but exactly where, I couldn't remember."

"Who was it?" Walters could not restrain his impatience.

"Easy! Easy! I'm coming to that! Let me tell my story in my own way.

She thought your friend the marshal was yourself, and I gathered from what she said, that if such was the case you were likely to lose an order. With my usual diplomacy, I managed to draw the lady to my studio, and then went back to see what that fellow was doing there. It didn't take me more than a moment to find out his unpleasant mission, and to persuade him to wait a while until you returned with your pockets loaded down with lucre. I told him what a splendid reputation you had, and how everybody you knew would give you his last cent if you asked for it. It is a subject in which I flatter myself I have some reputation," he interpolated modestly.

"But the woman—what about her?" Walters cried.

"When I went back to the charmer, she was sitting on my couch in a position that I recognized immediately. I explained that the man she had met was not a friend, or even an acquaintance of yours; that he undoubtedly was merely one of the horde of vulgar rich, who pester you to paint their portraits."

"You good old liar!" Walters smiled affectionately.

"Well to make a long story short, she had been a frequent visitor to the exhibition of your paintings up at old Seaman's on the avenue, and had finally managed to find out where you lived. She had immediately jumped in her little carriage and driven post-haste to give you an order for a portrait in oils."

"But who is it?"

"The most beautiful woman I have ever had the good fortune to meet. And I am not alone in saying so, for her picture is as well known in Europe as in this country. She is the beauty of the world." The Irishman paused impressively. "Can you paint such a woman, Dick?"

"I can paint anything I ever saw but a *cat*," Walters replied.

"Then you can paint her, for she's the farthest thing from being a cat you can possibly imagine. And that isn't all. When finished the picture will be exhibited in some art gallery on the avenue. There it will court comparison with the work of the most celebrated artists of the day. They have all taken a turn at painting her. You couldn't have a better advertisement. And, besides, her own personal press-agent will get in the game without its costing you a penny or lowering your standards of a true artist's reserve.

"Oh, so it's an actress?" Walters's tone indicated his disappointment.

"More!" the jubilant Irishman retorted. "It's *the* actress! *Madame Burnham!*"

"Madame Burnham wants me to paint her portrait! Not really!" Walters gasped. "Why, she has never had an American paint her before, except Sargent."

"It's a fact. She gave me the order, and I made an appointment for her to call here to-morrow about it."

"But I won't be here to-morrow. That fellow is going to put me on the street. What shall I do?" Walters gazed helplessly at his friend, who for once was unable to answer.

It was truly an appalling situation.

CHAPTER V.

EVICTED.

"WHAT am I going to do?" Walters repeated. "It's a chance that only comes to a fellow once in a lifetime, and here I am without a cent in the world, and not even a roof over my head. How can I paint her when I have no studio?"

"Didn't you get anything when you were out?" Conner queried. "I'll tell you what I'll do!" he added in a burst of enthusiasm. "I'll go out to-morrow and see what I can raise for you myself. You make out a list of the people you know with money; and I'll go to them with tears in my eyes, and—"

"Indeed you will not," Walters cried decisively. "No, I'd rather miss the whole thing than have everybody know the shape I am in."

"False pride!" Conner groaned. "For Heaven's sake, man, don't let your pride stand in the way of this opportunity. Why, don't you see that every one of the fellows would consider it a favor to let you have the money. They will regard it the greatest honor that has come to any one of the crowd for years. Why—why—"

"I know," the artist sighed; "but I can't do it. But can't I go to her hotel and paint here there?"

"No: that won't do," and Conner shook his head. "She specifically stated that she wanted the work done in the studio of the artist."

"But I can persuade her that I can do better work somewhere else."

"Haven't you ever read about the Burnham's crazy notions? When once she makes up her mind to a thing, nothing can change it. Don't try it on, my boy. I don't mean to say anything about your ability, but can't you imagine the roar that went up when she decided to have you paint the portrait, instead of one of the big bugs? She knows what she wants, and she's going to have it."

"Well, then, what am I going to do? I simply can't throw the order away, and I can't have you going to my friends for money."

"But it's such a grand opportunity," Conner begged. "Why, Dick, I could bring in a thousand dollars, if you'll just turn me loose. I've never had such an opportunity in my life before. For the sake of yourself; for my own satisfaction; for the honor of all the artists in town—"

Conner paused a moment, plunged in deep thought over a second firm refusal from his friend. Suddenly his face lit up.

"I have it!" he cried. "You can use my studio!"

"Conner"—and Walters rested his hand fondly on the man's shoulder—"you're the best-hearted fellow in the world, and I don't know how to thank you. But you don't, for an instant, think I would put you in a position of that kind with your landlord—do you? He would roust you out in a minute."

"Nonsense!" the Irishman cried disdainfully. "He's been trying to fire me for four years now. Every month I lose my appetite if I don't get a dispossess with my breakfast on the first day, but always manage to get the best of him, somehow. Once he tried to put me out, and I brought a counter suit for damages, and he dropped it like a hot cake. I'm an expensive luxury, but he's found he can't do without me."

"It's no use telling me all that truck, Conner," the other responded. "But, if you really think it won't hurt you, I'll stay."

"Good! That sounds like a man! And now that we've settled that little matter, let's go round and see whether Abrams has come up yet. You know, I can't quite make him out. There's something crooked going on in his place. I think he's running a little gambling game, from the number of men I see coming in all the time."

"Nonsense!" Walters laughed. "You're prejudiced against him. He's not that bad!"

"I don't know." The Irishman shook his head dubiously, as he led the way into the hall.

Outside, the marshal and Abrams were having a vehement conversation. The landlord was waving his arms like a windmill, and protesting that he was in nowise to blame for the troubles that had overtaken the marshal in the performance of his duties.

"But, I tell youse, dat loafer over d' hall hands me a lemon. He tries t' beat me up, an' says I ain't a goin' t' move nuthin' outter here. He 'saulted me!"

"What seems to be the trouble?" Conner politely inquired, inserting himself into the conversation.

Little Abrams turned fiercely on him.

"For why you interfere vid my beesness?" he demanded.

"I interfere?" Conner looked innocently at him. "I simply thought this fellow was trying to steal Mr. Walters's furniture, and I stopped him. Don't you think he is rather a hard-looking customer yourself, Mr. Abrams?" he added.

"I won't take no more lip from youse," broke in the marshal.

"I don't haf noddings to do vid you," the little landlord protested volubly. "You pay no moneys; you make me, all the time, trouble—trouble, trouble, trouble—nuddings but trouble!"

"But, Mr. Abrams, doesn't he look like a thug? Can you blame me for stopping him?"

Instinctively all turned to the marshal, who stood glaring at his urbane traducer, with a murderous expression on his face.

"Ain't youse de fresh guy?" he remarked.

But the landlord refused to smile!

"I tells you dat I haf noddings vid

you," he repeated heatedly. "You vas a grafter. I vas here vor the Valters man. I vas here to put him out."

Before Conner could say anything more, Walters stepped forward. He saw now that the drift of his friend's foolery was to turn the anger of the pair toward himself, so that they might forget in another argument the thing which they had come for.

"Mr. Abrams," he said, "do you mean to say that you intend to put me out, after what you told me on the day my case came up in court?"

"I vas," the landlord exclaimed emphatically. "I vant my money or my room. Haf you got it?"

"I have not, but I received to-day an order for a portrait, by means of which I will be able to pay—"

"Vill! Alvays it is *vill*—vid de artist! I vant my money *now!* I vant my room or my money *now!*" Abrams repeated emphatically.

"But you can't put me out after six o'clock at night," the artist exclaimed. "The judge signed a stay that entitles me to a hearing."

"Vere vas der stay? I haf nod seen it," the landlord rejoined.

Conner stepped forward indignantly.

"As you very well know, Abrams, this fellow"—and he indicated the marshal with a contemptuous gesture—"tore it up. And, what's more, you are trying to get him in trouble by telling him to go ahead and ignore that order from the court. You'll find yourself in jail, with all your foxiness, if—"

"Never mind, Conner." Walters stepped before the irate Irishman. "This is my own affair, and I'm not going to let you be drawn into it."

He turned to the irate Abrams.

"Perhaps you would like to hear from my attorney before you finally decide to get me out to-night."

"Attorney! I vant no attorney! I vant my money or my room," the landlord insisted.

"But, I tell you, I can get enough to pay you within two days at least. I can borrow money on this order I spoke to you about."

"Vill you let me go to this order vun, and hear them say so myself?" Abrams inquired.

"Why, certainly I will not. Do you suppose I am going to allow my patrons to be bothered with your stories about my being behind in my rent?"

"Vell, den, I vill not belief vat I do not hear mit my own ears. Already you haf told me about dese tings too much." He turned abruptly to the marshal, who stood waiting expectantly. "If he tries to kick up a fuss, I vill be responsible for anything you do," he added.

The big brute stepped eagerly forward, and laid his hand on Walters's shoulder.

"Come on, now, young feller! Don't make no trouble, er I'll trun youse into th' street after yer tings."

"Take your hand off me er I'll hit you with a chair!" the artist hissed, all the rage that had been bubbling up within him for so long at last finding outlet.

The fellow laughed scornfully.

"W'y, kid, I'd make youse look like a piece o' mince-meat!"

To emphasize his words, he gave Walters a playful twist that sent him spinning across the room.

Wild with rage, the artist sprang to his feet, and was coming back, with head lowered like a battering-ram, when the cool, soothing tones of Conner broke in on the scene.

"Never mind, Dick, I'll fix the big one, and you can handle Abie."

"Abie!" The landlord fairly stamped in his rage, and the ridiculousness of the sight brought the ghost of a smile to Walters's face. "You vas de next von," he roared to the Irishman; then turned again to the marshal:

"Put dose things avay on de sidevalk, now—quick!" he commanded.

"Very well," Walters quietly capitulated. "But I think you will find you are making a big mistake."

"Come on in to my room," Conner implored him, his own face white as a sheet at the sight of the man laying his hand on his friend's belongings. "That fellow won't hurt anything—I'll guarantee that. If he does"—he turned a baleful eye upon the fellow—"he'll hear from me; and I won't be satisfied with holding his hands the next time either."

The marshal muttered something about not being "bluffed," but subsided

as his enemy made a move in his direction.

"If he goes into your room, I calls a policeman to put him out," the landlord stormed.

"You'll get a laugh if you call a policeman to put any one out of my room," Conner retorted. "Come on, Walters; Abie's driveling again."

"No," the artist said firmly. "I'm not going to let you get into trouble for me. Conner, go to your room, and stop interfering."

"Where will you be, then?"

"Well, just at present, I'm going to call up my lawyer." He took the phone, and hastily secured his friend's home address. "Hello, is that you, Masters?"

It was all he could do to keep his voice from trembling as he saw the marshal tearing down rudely a very handsome pair of curtains over the window.

"Yes. Is this Walters talking?" the voice responded.

"Yes. That fellow is putting my things on the street."

"What's that! The boy told me he served the man with the stay."

"So he did. But when I asked the man about it he tore it up, and said that that was his opinion of those things."

"And he's moving your things out, notwithstanding the fact that the judge's signature was on that paper?"

"Exactly. What shall I do? I haven't any place to go. I thought when you told me everything was all right for to-night that I would have no trouble." Walters's voice quivered in spite of himself.

"Well, you won't. He's acting directly in the face of the law when he touches a single thing of yours," and the lawyer's tone was reassuring.

"But I don't see how the fact that he's breaking the law is going to help me *to-night.*"

Walters was getting angry.

"But think of the case you've got against him, Dick!" the man at the other end of the wire answered eagerly. "Why, if anything should happen to you to-night you could recover any amount you wanted to sue for."

"Hang the recovery! I don't want to recover; I want to keep what I've got. That's all I want!"

"But, Dick, cool down and look at the thing sensibly. My dear fellow, they *can't* put you out that way. Don't you see that?" the lawyer replied.

"But, I tell you, they're *doing* it, whether they *can* or not. What am I going to do?"

"I never in my life heard of such a high-handed proceeding. I'll have you bring another suit against the landlord for damages, and one against the marshal for criminally breaking in with lawless intent. We'll have them sweating before the year is out. We'll put that little Abrams in bankruptcy!" Masters was allowing his professional instincts to run away with him.

At that moment, from the corner of his eye, Walters saw the marshal bang the leg of a chair against the door-jamb.

"But they're breaking all my things *now!*" he roared through the receiver.

"You'll have to speak lower, Dick. I can't make out what you are saying." was the response.

"I say that at this moment they are breaking up my things," Walters repeated, with painfully slow enunciation.

"Good! Just you make a note of everything that's injured in any way, and we'll get up a bill for specific damages."

"But they'll drive me crazy. I'll slug that fellow yet!"

Walters almost wept in his nervousness.

"Don't lose control of yourself," his friend soothingly cut in. "Be dignified and calm. If they can prove, no matter how great the provocation, that you struck one of them, it will hurt your case."

"This marshal struck me first," Walters complained.

"He did? Great! Another count to sue on! That's assault, even if he no more than lays his hand on you."

"But, Masters," the artist implored. "I've got a big order for a portrait, and a friend of mine made an engagement for me this afternoon, while I was down at your office, to talk over terms to-morrow at my studio. If the lady in question hears of this, or comes in on it—which will be worse yet—she will cancel the order."

"Hm-m! That's too bad!" the attorney responded. "Of course that's really

the worst of all, but I'm afraid it comes under the head of speculative damages, and the law won't allow you to recover on what you *might* lose. But all those things help your case, nevertheless. Now, the law—"

"To the devil with what the law says!" Walters cried, thoroughly worn out by what appeared to be his friend's heartlessness. "Put yourself in my place for a minute, and think of yourself as a *man,* and not a *lawyer.* When am I going to see you? Can't you come up here and stop this infernal thing?"

"No-o," his friend returned. "I can't possibly do it to-night; but I'll read up on all the facts you have given me, and you come down to the office in the morning, when we can talk over what course to pursue. I—"

Buzz-z-z! Positively Central's stupidity in cutting off this connection was a relief. Walters fairly threw the receiver back on the hook, and turned to find the room as barren as the day he moved into it.

It was the first time he had realized the absolute hopelessness of his situation. He felt morbidly in his pockets, and actually smiled at the emptiness there.

He was an outcast. Worse—a cast-out! There was no place for him to turn; nothing he could do. With a groan he averted his face, that no one might see, and buried it in his hands.

The portrait of Mme. Burnham? Where could he paint it? He could not let this opportunity slip! If he did he would be put back years in his advancement.

Here was this mad, eccentric actress, with her marvelous artistic ability, recognizing the same qualities in an obscure fellow-genius; and the painter saw no way of taking advantage of it.

He simply could not raise the money himself. If his very life depended on it, he did not have the nerve to go again to his friends and try to borrow enough from them to put him on his feet; and he knew—while Conner might get the money—that the methods would be humiliating in the extreme.

"Well, Dick, it's come to a point where you can't be foolish any longer about this thing. You've simply got to use my studio." The Irishman placed his hand upon Dick's shoulder in a manner which there was no denying.

"Now, don't say that again," he retorted, in answer to a feeble shake of the head. "This is too bad a case to let any nonsensical squeamishness stand in the way of your doing your duty to yourself. It won't inconvenience me in the least; therefore, you must use my place."

"But Abrams says he won't allow it," the artist feebly protested, feeling all his resolution giving way in the face of actual calamity.

"Don't say a word about it. He has no right to dictate. But, as you see, what he has a *right* to do, and what he *does,* are entirely different things. What did your lawyer say?"

"The same thing backward." Dick forced a feeble smile. "Old man, I can't begin to tell you how I thank—"

"For Heaven's sake, don't try, then," Conner cried in alarm. "Save it; it will keep. Don't you see that beautiful pair looking in this direction?"

The men had returned from the street to the studio, and were holding a whispered conversation, and glancing now and then in their direction, with the most sinister meaning.

Walters watched them, as though the sight fascinated him. Some new move was in the air; there was something sneaking about their very manner.

Finally the little landlord came toward the two.

"Vell, Mr. Walters, an' now you must follow your things," he said, politely enough.

"Quite so," the artist replied, in the manner in which one would speak to his dearest enemy, politely hostile.

Followed by Conner, he started toward the stairs.

The street, a moment before desolate as the grave, now had sprung into the most lively appearance of animation. The sight of the pile of stacked-up furniture on the extreme edge of the curb—the most desolate sight in the world—had attracted a crowd of the morbid, and they were coming from every direction.

Dick shrank back into the hallway at the spectacle, but Conner pushed him forward.

"Never mind, Dick; I'll draw the remarks."

The pair sat upon the couch, and looked at the gathering rabble. Conner soon had them in a roar, with his mock expression of wo at the calamity, and their undesirable attentions were soon directed toward the landlord and his burly assistant, who at that moment were once more appearing, laden with a piece of furniture that drew a roar of rage from the jolly Irishman.

"Here, you!" He sprang savagely in their direction. "What are you doing with that chair? That belongs to me!"

Abrams smiled sweetly, but, nevertheless, retired behind the marshal as he spoke.

"Vy, certainly, Mr. Conner. Ve vas making a clean sweep vile ve vas about it."

"But by what right do you dare to touch my things?" Conner demanded. He made a threatening move toward the marshal. "You hobo!" he hissed. "I'll smash your face in if you don't take that chair back where you found it, this instant."

The bully dropped the chair, and retreated a step.

"I follow my orders," he said sullenly.

Conner bellowed at the top of his voice.

"Help! Thieves! Police!" then turned, as soon as he saw a cop flying round the corner, with a malignant grin on his face. "Just for that I'm going to make the policeman compel you to carry everything back where you got it," he added.

The little landlord seemed not at all alarmed by the approach of the limb of the law, but instead only bowed sarcastically to the pair.

"Thank you, Mr. Conner, for saving me the trouble. I do noddings vidout de lawfulness."

"Here, what's all this row?" the policeman demanded of the four, who, with excited faces, were gesticulating around the pile of furnishings.

Conner put on his best brogue:

"Shure, an' fer no reason at all, at all, they put me friend's stuff on th' strate; an', because Oi stud up fer him, th' shpalpeens are puttin' me own there, too," he explained.

The officer looked kindly at his fellow-countryman.

"An' is it th' truth ye're spakin'?" he demanded in astonishment.

Then, turning to the urbane landlord: "What's the manin' of this?" he asked.

"They are dispossessed," that gentleman hastened to assure him.

"An' who dispossessed thim?"

"The court dispossessed this man." and he indicated Walters with a stubby forefinger.

"But the judge signed a stay of execution, which was served on this marshal before he began putting me out," the artist eagerly interposed.

"An' who put out this man?" The policeman looked very kindly at the injured Conner.

"I did," the marshal blustered. "And here's my authority." He hauled back his coat, and brought to light his badge.

"That fer ye're watch-charm," and the policeman poked the badge contemptuously with his night-stick. "Since whin did ye're badge give the likes o' you the right t' be t'rowin' dacint min out o' their homes widout th' coort sayin' so?"

"But they both owe me great rent," Abrams cut in.

"An' what of it, if the coort don't tell yese t' get 'em out? I ain't a lawyer, but I knows they can sue yez fer damages, an' get 'em."

The man turned to the elated artists.

"Come, step lively, now! Get yer things in the house before Oi have t' telephone th' Encumbrance Department t' come an' take away this junk!" He tipped them a wink that took away all the harshness of his words and tone.

Abrams and his satellite were holding an excited whispered conversation behind them, and Walters had an undefined feeling of dread. He knew they were not through yet; that they had some other dirty move up their sleeves, and would play it before they finally capitulated.

Still, it looked as if, with the officer on their side, they were safe for the night at least.

The policeman prodded the marshal with his billy and, growling: "D' yez hear me tellin' yez t' take th' things back?" he demanded.

The fellow turned, with an ugly lear on his face.

"[illegible]win' th' landlord's instructions. He says dese guys is undesirable tenants."

"Sure, an' why don't he go to th' coort an' get thim put out thin, if he don't like thim; instid o' goin' about it this way?" the officer retorted.

"I vill not haf gamblers in my house," the little landlord stormed to the officer.

"Sure, an' what business is it of yours if they gamble?" the man returned.

"Wud yez listen t' th' likes o' that?" Conner laughed loudly.

"I hef the right t' put a gamblin'-house out of my blace," Abrams cried.

"Sure yez have," the policeman returned. "But y'u'll have t' show me!"

The little fellow rushed up the stairs, and Conner turned to his friend, who stood dazed at the new turn things had taken. The officer stood irresolute.

"Abrams lives in the house," the Irishman cried; "and he's going to ring in some phony trick on us!"

"Here vos der proof!"

Abrams had returned, and was triumphantly holding in one hand a roulette-wheel; in the other, a faro-bank layout. "Dese vas in de room!"

"But it's a lie," Walters stammered. "It's a lie!"

The policeman turned a stony face upon the artists.

"I guess they must have some reason for doing this. They would be liable to all sorts of damage suits if they weren't telling the truth. You'll have to come along with me!"

(To be continued.)

THE BLUFFER.

By M. GERTRUDE MILLER.

The man who sought a short-cut to a competency and what he did, all unconsciously, to aid a more deserving person.

So far as his brother lawyers knew, Barton's only assets were an ingratiating manner, a dashing air, a handsome face, and a dress-suit. Haynes was the legal genius of the office, but he was deficient in *savoir faire,* and the men who trusted him with their cases paid their social attentions to Barton.

Haynes, being totally indifferent to that branch of the profession, slaved along at his desk, winning case after case by sheer persistence. Goodrich and Johnson—just average young lawyers, with neither the ability of Haynes nor the social qualities of Barton—together with Billy Ensign, general law clerk, not yet admitted to the bar, made up the balance of the office personnel.

Strangely enough, with all his sparkle and dash, Barton was not a success either before a jury or in the preparation of cases for trial. His abilities being all on the surface, and possessing the rare gift of knowing his own limitations, he wisely confined himself to female clients.

But, somehow or other, fees were few and far between, though the women came in droves, chattering like a lot of magpies and wasting his day completely. The stenographer used to wonder at the daily increasing pile of feminine correspondence on Barton's desk—all tints and sizes of envelopes, some crested, none businesslike in appearance. He no sooner started to dictate than the phone at his elbow rang.

Had the stenographer believed in masculine sincerity before entering that office, she would certainly have emerged therefrom enlightened to a degree, for to one and all of his women clients Barton administered copious drafts of flattery, adroitly altered to fit special cases and ages. When he turned from the telephone to his dictation, he would laugh and say: "The only way to manage women is to jolly them—they're all alike."

To his *confrères* in the office, Barton was exceedingly communicative, and the monotony of their work was enlivened by stories of how he bluffed creditors in

general, and the landlady in particular, and of how he managed to play the part of a millionaire on nothing a year by a judicious application of a minimum of tips with a maximum of what Haynes called "hot air."

"Do you know," exclaimed Barton one day in the midst of an admiring circle, "I've made up my mind a man is a fool to work for a living when there are hundreds of girls just dying to get married. What I mean to do is to catch some girl who has an independent fortune and help her spend it. Just think of it! Plenty of money—no duns—and a wife who adores you! How's that for a pipe dream?"

"But," queried Billy Ensign anxiously, "suppose the girl you loved happened to be poor?"

Billy had just returned from his honeymoon and his mind naturally ran in sentimental channels.

"Love!" ejaculated Barton, with biting sarcasm, "that was out of date years ago. It's the pocketbook that counts these days."

"But do you think that quite fair to the girl?" pursued Billy.

"Why not? She'll never dream I'm not crazy about her. What's a man worth if he can't pull the wool over a woman's eyes anyhow?"

Billy sighed. *He* had married a girl whose sole capital was a pair of big blue eyes and a mass of soft brown hair, and such views seemed sacrilegious to him.

One day Barton ran into the office excitedly, almost upsetting the office-boy, who was carefully transporting an inkwell. He dashed into his private office and threw his cane and hat recklessly on the desk. The boy ran at the sharp summons of Barton's bell, remarking to the stenographer, "Guess that bag of wind's got a case at last."

"Tell everybody to come in—Haynes and all," said Barton excitedly.

They all came but Haynes, who grunted he was busy.

"Sit down, boys. Have a cigar—bully, aren't they?"

"You must have struck a retainer," suggested Goodrich, as he puffed with serene enjoyment, for Barton's generosity was usually confined to his tongue.

"No, something better than that. *Her* father gave them to me. You remember that big case Haynes had last year—Stanton *versus* Hecker. Fine-looking old fellow, Stanton—carriage like a marshal of France. Well, I met him at the hotel last night—after a drink or two he warmed to me, asked me around to his apartment and introduced me to his daughter.

"Believe it or not, I came the nearest being bowled over in my life. She is a peach and no mistake! However, I pulled myself together and settled down to business. They're just living on their money—hers came to her from her mother. They are strangers here and you may be sure I wasn't slow in volunteering as escort. Have another cigar," and he chuckled as he passed the box around.

"Well, I wish you luck, old man," said Johnson.

He and Goodrich were rapidly assimilating metropolitan standards and they hung with avidity on Barton's every utterance.

The office was favored with daily bulletins of this budding romance, while the telephone was kept busy with orders to florists.

"I tell you, it's no joke, trying to run a thing of this kind on your nerve," was Barton's grim comment, when the bills and the collectors began to come in.

The office-boy was instructed to "jolly them—tell them any old thing—only keep them away from me," and he followed instructions literally. Barton's ingenuity was severely taxed for ready money. Everybody in the office had been "bitten," and they were impervious to hints for further loans.

They told him, with many regrets, he would have to "go it alone," Haynes adding, with the only humor he had ever been known to manifest: "Better get her father to advance something, and agree to pay him out of her money."

One Friday afternoon Barton summoned them all to his room—Haynes still holding contemptuously aloof with an enigmatical smile.

As they sat around Barton's desk smoking, he gaily narrated the happenings of the preceding evening:

"She sails for Europe to-morrow, boys. I might think it was to get her

away from me, but her eyes tell a different tale. I heard the old man say to Haynes last night that he had some business to attend to and Miss Helen would have to drive alone to the steamer. Dry as dust that Haynes—couldn't even be enthused by a pretty girl. I immediately volunteered, and if she hasn't promised to become Mrs. Robert Barton before that cab reaches Barclay Street, I'm mightily out in my calculations.

"*Then,* when she returns in October, good-by to duns and living on the ragged edge, always expecting to land on my head. I'll be Robert Barton, Esq., the husband of an heiress and sole guardian of her property."

No one in Barton's office had heard the outer door open. The stenographer's experience had taught her to know the "real thing" when she saw it, and there was no mistaking the soldierly figure that entered, with flashing dark eyes under a thatch of snow-white hair.

He bowed as low to the girl at the desk as though she had been the mistress of the White House.

"Is Mr. Haynes in?" he asked courteously.

"Who shall I say, sir?" asked the office-boy.

Before the caller could reply, Barton's voice rang out clearly:

"When she returns in October, good-by to duns."

The old gentleman waved the boy aside imperiously and seated himself at Barton's door, where he listened attentively to reams of such talk about his daughter. Then with a gesture of disgust, he stole softly out of the office.

The boy, who had grasped the situation with the quickness of his kind, was bursting with suppressed mirth.

II.

When Mr. Stanton entered his apartment, his daughter met him with unusual affection.

"Dear old dad," she cried, putting both arms around his neck.

"How much is it to-day, Helen?" asked her father, with a twinkle in his eye.

"It's not that this time, father. Jim's —been here—Mr. Carroll," she said hesitatingly, twirling a button on his coat.

Carroll was a neighbor's son whose addresses had been rejected because of his extreme youth and lack of ambition; but in the light of recent revelations regarding Barton, Carroll seemed a positive relief.

"The young rascal! Haven't I told him never to darken my door again?" thundered Mr. Stanton, with affected severity.

"That was when he hadn't any business, father. He's got a splendid position now, and he doesn't care a bit about my money—says he can take care of me without anybody's help. I'd be dreadfully sorry to act against your wishes, but—but—"

"I see that my little girl means to defy her old father. Well, let's have a look at Mr. Carroll. Where is the young scamp?"

"He's coming to drive me to the dock in the morning, father. I didn't dare to ask him to dine to-night, but—"

"Never mind that, little girl," and Mr. Stanton walked to the telephone, laughing to himself as he went.

"Oh, I entirely forgot," cried Helen, running after him. "I promised to drive down with Mr. Barton. He has been so nice to us. I wonder what to do."

"Just leave that to Jim," chuckled the old gentleman, adding under his breath: "That Barton is an insufferable cad; it serves him right."

III.

The next morning, Barton alighted from his cab at the Stanton's hotel. He had run himself deeply into debt for flowers and fruit, and the difficulty of getting hold of sufficient ready cash to see him through the morning had rasped on his nerves. He handed his card to the sable attendant into whose good graces he had repeatedly tipped himself, asking for Miss Stanton.

"She's in the pahloh, suh," said the boy.

As Barton entered, he saw Miss Stanton in earnest conversation with a tall, athletic young fellow, broad-shouldered, and with a boyish, pleasing face.

"Mr. Barton, I want you to meet Mr. Carroll," she said with a charming blush. "He has arrived quite unexpectedly and wants to drive me down to the steamship dock. Can't we make it a party of three?"

Barton winced, but gathered himself together quickly, and grasped the young man's hand cordially.

"Oh, I wouldn't *think* of spoiling your drive together."

"Mr. Barton has been very kind to us, Jim," said Miss Stanton.

"We must return it by inviting him down to Virginia when we—"

"I'll finish it for her," laughed young Carroll. "She means we're going to get married in the fall and settle down in Virginia, and certainly any friend of hers will be welcome there."

Barton watched them drive away, for once at a loss for words.

THE JAILBIRD.*

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Time Limit," "The Isle of Mysteries," "When a Man's Hungry," etc.

What happened to the man who resolved to live up to an evil reputation he didn't deserve.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

RELEASED from jail after a term of unjust imprisonment, Tom Robbins finds it impossible to long hold any position. After losing his place as bookkeeper to Dolman & Co., and applying in vain for aid to his father and his half-brother, Peter, he resolves to lead the life of a crook. The next day Dolman finds $2,000 missing from his safe, and Peter Robbins has his furniture factory at Peekskill destroyed by fire.

Near the town of Benford, not far from Peekskill, where Tom is forced to leave the train on which he has stowed himself away, Robbins comes upon a young girl fishing in a boat on the river. She catches the hook in her finger, and Tom thinks she will upset the boat. He gives a shout of warning.

CHAPTER VI.

SHORT, BUT EVENTFUL.

TOM ROBBINS'S shout of warning was wasted. The frenzied girl, dancing with pain and panic, upset the boat and disappeared beneath the water.

"This won't be what you might call a crooked piece of work, and therefore it's against my policy," muttered Tom. "But here goes."

With that he plunged into the stream and began to swim with long, strong strokes toward the spot where the girl had disappeared.

The girl did not come to the surface, and Tom, perfectly cool and collected, wondered why.

"Must be weeds at the bottom," was his first thought, and then suddenly he remembered the fish-hook in the girl's thumb.

The situation was plain. The unfortunate girl had fallen overboard, dragging the fishing-tackle with her. The line had become entangled with something under the water, and the hook through the young woman's thumb prevented her from rising.

"That's funny," Tom could not help thinking. "Instead of the hook pulling fish out of the water, it's pulling the fisher under the water. She's hooked as securely as any fish. If she gets out of this alive, it ought to be a lesson to her not to go fishing any more. She'll sympathize with the poor fish in future, I reckon. If I get tangled up with part of that line, I guess I'll be a goner."

With this comforting reflection, he dived in search of the girl.

As he had surmised, she was pinned to the bottom of the creek by the fishing-tackle.

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He tugged hard at the line, broke it, and, released from its restraint, the girl's body rose to the surface. Whether she was alive or dead, Tom did not know.

He attempted to follow her to the surface, but something held him back.

He knew what it was. The spiteful tackle had wound itself around his leg. He struggled hard to release himself; but to no avail. There was a singing in his ears, and his head felt as if it were bursting.

"This is the end," was his last thought.

After that he knew no more.

In the meantime two men in a launch had caught the girl's body as it floated upward.

"Seems to be dead," remarked one.

"I hope not," answered the other. "Let's make full speed for shore; there may be some hope of saving her."

"But what of the man below?" asked the other with a shudder. "We've got to try to save him."

"I'm going down after him. You take the girl ashore, and come right back for me in the launch."

As he said the words, the speaker plunged overboard.

He had to come to the surface twice for air before he was able to find Tom Robbins. But by the time the other man had returned with the launch, the brave rescuer had managed to bring up the unconscious man.

"Good work, John!" said the man in the launch. "I'm afraid you've had your trouble in vain, though. Looks to me as if the poor fellow's gone!"

"How's the young woman?" spluttered the man in the water.

"They're working hard over her. She shows signs of animation. Let's rush this fellow to shore as quick as possible. There may be a chance of saving him, although it doesn't look like it. Poor chap, he deserves to live, for he made a gallant attempt."

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG FRIENDS.

TOM ROBBINS did not feel particularly grateful when he discovered that he was still alive. Neither was he disappointed. He was just indifferent.

Death offered him surcease of mental agony and trouble. Life offered him opportunities for revenge. It was an even choice. Tom felt that he could not lose, either way.

He opened his eyes to find himself lying on a strange bed in a strange room, with a strange face looking at him anxiously.

He didn't ask the stereotyped question, "Where am I?" for he did not care. He simply opened his eyes and stared.

"Feel all right, now?" inquired an old man with a gray beard.

"Feel sort of funny," grunted Tom. "I guess you're the doctor, eh?"

"I'm a doctor; but I'm also the father of the young woman you so heroically tried to save," said the old man. "I can never repay you, sir—"

"Ah! How is she?" asked Tom with some interest.

"She's all right. She got over it in first-class shape, thank God; but you've had a pretty hard spell. There were times when I despaired of bringing you through. It was my girl's devoted nursing that saved you."

"Nursing!" gasped Tom in amazement. "How long have I been here?"

"Five weeks," answered the old man with a smile.

"Five weeks!" gasped Tom. "Did it take as long as that to get the water out of my lungs?"

"Not exactly," was the reply. "We resuscitated you, all right; don't you remember? But you had a bad case of fever right afterward. Been unconscious most of the time. My girl has nursed you night and day."

"So it wasn't a dream, eh?" remarked Tom. "I've been seeing a woman's face all the while, but I thought it was a dream—or death."

"Oh, no, that wasn't a dream," laughed the other. "That was my daughter Angelina you saw. She's scarcely left your side for a minute. She's upstairs now, taking a nap. The poor girl's tired out. You'd better go to sleep again, my friend. Here, drink a little of this first. You're out of danger now, and you'll feel much better by and by; but you mustn't excite or exert yourself."

Tom swallowed the draft and dozed off. When he opened his eyes again the

doctor had disappeared. Tom thought he was alone in the room, and tried to sit up in bed.

Somebody at the head of it gently restrained him.

"You mustn't move," said a girl's voice. "You must lie perfectly still. You couldn't sit up, anyway, you know. You are too weak."

Tom realized that this was true. He tried to turn his face toward the speaker, but found he could not even summon sufficient strength to do that.

The girl divined his wish, and moved forward so that he could see her.

She was too good a nurse not to know that there is nothing more aggravating to a patient than to have to converse with somebody out of range of his eyes.

Tom saw at a glance that she was the girl he had seen fishing in the creek and who had fallen overboard.

"How's the hand?" he inquired. "Did you get the hook out all right?"

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "The hand was the least part of it. It's when I think of how near you and I were to being drowned that I can't help shuddering. We both had narrow escapes, didn't we? By the way, this is the first chance I've had to thank you. It was very brave of you to risk your own life to try to save mine."

Tom did not answer. He felt half inclined to tell her that when he had risked his life he had not risked anything of much value to him; but, somehow or other, he could not put the thought into words.

"You've had a bad case of fever," went on the girl. "My father says it's a miracle that you pulled through all right."

"Your father told me that I owe my life to your nursing," said Tom. "I guess that makes us quits; don't you think so?"

"I'm glad you look at it that way," rejoined the girl. "I tried to do my best. I owed you that much, you see, considering what you'd done for me. I hardly think, though, that it was really my careful nursing that saved you."

"Well, your father says so. He ought to know what he's talking about. He's a doctor, isn't he? If I'm not mistaken, he told me he was, a short while ago."

"Oh, yes, dad's a doctor; although he's given up the practise of medicine." She sighed.

"Given up the practise of medicine, eh? Made his fortune and retired, I suppose. Lucky man!" said Tom.

"Oh, no! Not exactly that," replied the girl, smiling. "Dad hasn't made his fortune; quite the contrary. The fact is he had to give up practising medicine, very much against his will. He's getting old and very forgetful, and lately he's found himself making mistakes when he's gone out to attend to patients. One or two blunders threatened to have serious results, and that scared dad pretty badly. He finally made up his mind that he wasn't fit to practise any more, so he retired."

"I suppose he saved a little money. Enough for you and him to live on for the rest of his days, eh?" asked Tom with interest.

"No," said the girl with a sigh. "Poor dad gave freely when he had money, and, as a result, he hasn't got a cent now."

"Then how do you manage to live?" inquired Tom boldly.

The girl sighed again.

"Oh, we manage, all right!" she said with an attempt at cheerfulness. "Besides, we have prospects. We live in hopes all the time."

"Hopes of what?"

"Hopes of becoming very rich soon."

"Oh, you do, eh?" said Tom. "That's good. I'm glad to hear that."

He was on the point of inquiring as to the precise nature of these prospects, but he stopped short. He felt strangely interested in this household, and he had a natural propensity for asking questions; but he realized that he had been guilty of unpardonable inquisitiveness already, in going as far as he had, even though the girl did not appear to resent his questioning.

"Do you and your father live alone here?" he inquired.

"Yes," answered the girl. "I have no mother, brother, or sisters. Dad and I live all alone."

Tom was silent for a while. He was thinking.

"These people are evidently as poor as church-mice," he mused. "I'll bet I've already been quite some expense to them.

Three mouths cost more to feed than two, even in the country. I guess I won't stay here any longer than I can help."

When, a little later, the old doctor came in, Tom mentioned as much to him.

"I guess I'll be strong enough to be moving along in a day or so; don't you think so, doctor?" he asked anxiously.

"Not for a week or so yet, sir," answered the old man. "What's the matter? Are you in a hurry to leave us?"

"Well, I don't want to be a burden to you," said Tom.

"Oh, you needn't worry yourself about that," rejoined the old man. "You're welcome to stay with us as long as you care to. By the way, you haven't told me your name, have you?"

"Tom Watson," answered Tom, obeying an impulse, without being able to explain to himself why he should have assumed an *alias* for the first time in his life.

"Well, you can set your mind at rest about being a burden to us, Mr. Watson," said the old doctor. "We haven't got a whole lot, but what we have you're welcome to share with us for as long as you like. Perhaps you've got folks, though, you're anxious to get back to?"

"No. I've got no folks," said Tom with a trace of bitterness in his voice.

"No folks, eh? Well, perhaps you've got a job you're in danger of losing if you don't get back to it mighty quick?"

"No. I've got no job, either," said Tom with a sigh.

"Out of work, eh?" remarked the old man, noting the sigh.

"Yep," assented Tom.

"Well, then, why are you so anxious to get away from here? Haven't we made you comfortable?"

"Oh, yes, you've made me very comfortable—you and your daughter; but, as I said before, I don't care to be a burden to you any longer than I can help."

"Well, as I think I said before, you can drive that idea out of your head," said the old man. "We're only too glad to have you with us. Even when you're strong enough to go, you're welcome to make your home here permanently, if you wish."

"That's very good of you," exclaimed Tom gratefully, "especially as I'm a perfect stranger to you. You don't know anything about me, doctor."

"I know that you're the man who almost lost his life trying to save that of my daughter. I guess that's good enough for me," said the old man.

"But you don't know anything about my character, or where I came from," persisted Tom.

"I can see by your face that you're honest," replied the other. "That's all I care to know about your character."

"Thanks," said Tom briefly.

"As for where you came from, that's no concern of mine," continued the doctor.

"Supposing I were to tell you that I'd come from prison," said Tom daringly.

"Well, you might tell it to me; but I'd know you were joking," was the answer. "If I thought you really were an ex-convict, I'd turn you out of my house this minute, even though you'd saved my daughter's life, for I've got an instinctive horror of men who've been to prison; but I'm a good judge of faces, my friend, and I know that you've never seen the inside of a jail, so make yourself perfectly at home."

"Thanks," murmured Tom Robbins; and he said no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET IN THE SAFE.

It was not long before Tom Robbins was strong enough to be on his feet again.

He arose from his bed, feeling so fit that he expected he would be able to take long walks right away.

To his surprise and dismay, he found that he was just able, by the expenditure of great effort, to walk half-way across the floor. Then his strength gave out, and he remained, shipwrecked, in the center of the room, clutching the back of a chair for support.

In this position he was rescued by Dr. Green (Tom had discovered that his host's name was Silas Green), who piloted him safely back to his bed.

"Don't you worry about your inability to accomplish more in the line of walking," said the old man cheerily. "You're not by any means the first man who has

arisen from a sick bed expecting to be able to tramp across the globe right off the reel, and has been surprised to discover that it was necessary for him to learn to walk all over again. That's what's the matter with you, my boy. You've forgotten the art of walking. You've got to begin all over again, just as if you were an infant."

Tom groaned. He had had four years of prison life, and he had learned to hate inactivity. He wanted to be up and doing.

"Don't you care," continued the doctor. "You'll soon get your bearings again. It'll only be a matter of a few days or so. My daughter Angelina will help you around until you get your full strength back again."

"I hate to think of the amount of bother I'm causing to her and yourself," said Tom.

"Oh, you just forget about that, my friend. We're both glad to be able to do it. You've earned my undying gratitude for what you did for my girl. Perhaps you don't know what she is to me!"

"I think I can imagine," said Tom earnestly.

He had reached to the stage when he was forced to tell himself a hundred times a day that he positively was not in love with Angelina Green, and yet somehow or other it made all the difference in the world to him when she was around and when she was not.

He could quite sympathize with Dr. Green in his paternal devotion to Angelina. Tom himself could not help having a fatherly feeling toward her—distinctly fatherly, of course, that and nothing more.

From the standpoint of an artist, Angelina could not have been called beautiful. The local poets did not rave over her pretty face, or her glorious tresses, or her divine form, for she possessed none of these attractions.

Her face, however, was pleasant. Her eyes were tender and her speech was as gentle as her heart, and for these qualities Tom admired her exceedingly—of course, merely in a paternal way.

The convalescent man experienced a thrill of gladness when he learned that Angelina was to be his instructor in the gentle art of learning to walk again.

He made up his mind, instanter, that he would prove a very slow pupil, so as to prolong the course of instruction.

"She's the dearest girl in the world," continued the old doctor; "and it grieves me to think that I haven't been more of a financial success, for her sake. For myself, I don't care. I'm perfectly satisfied to live as I do. We've got the house and the grounds, and I manage to make a little money writing articles for a New York periodical, while Angelina helps by selling some needlework, at which she's really clever. Poverty doesn't mean anything to me; but I hate to see my girl deprived of the things other girls have, because I'm too poor to provide them for her."

"She seems very happy, nevertheless," remarked Tom sympathetically.

"Ah! She'd be happy under any conditions," sighed the old man. "That's her sweet, unselfish way; but I'm not happy. I'm miserable on account of her. I want to see her properly provided for before I close my eyes."

The old man's next words caused Tom Robbins to turn pale.

"I want to see her happily married, Watson," went on Dr. Green. "I want to see her marry the man she loves. If I could see that, I'd die happy."

"And does she love anybody in particular, sir?" inquired Tom, a trifle huskily.

"Yes, she does," said the old man. "She loves young Alfred d'Arcy. I'm sorry to see that it is so, for, personally, I don't think an awful lot of young D'Arcy. I think he's like his father—hard and selfish; but, then, you see, I'm not Angelina. She thinks the world of him, so I want to see them married."

"And how does young D'Arcy feel toward her?" asked Tom still more huskily.

"Well, he's been courting her pretty ardently of late—that is to say, ardently for Alfred d'Arcy. He isn't a very demonstrative sort of a fellow. He strikes me as being cold and clammy. Angelina says that that's only his reserved way; that he has a big heart beneath his cold exterior. I hope so, I'm sure; but that wasn't the way I courted Angelina's mother. Personally, I don't like these cold, distant young men."

"Is he able to provide for her comfortably?" inquired Tom.

"Able to provide for her! I should say so. Alfred is the son of old Henry d'Arcy, who has the big shoe factory here. They're tremendously rich. Old D'Arcy and I never got along together. He hates me like poison, I believe. It was only after I'd made my discovery that he pretended to be friendly to me, and was willing to allow his son to come calling here."

"What discovery is that?" asked Tom.

"Oh, I forgot. I haven't told you about it, have I? Well, you see, I've invented something which will revolutionize the shoe business. It's a chemical formula for treating leather which gives it a patent-leather finish and at the same time makes it as soft and durable as ordinary leather. It's worth a fortune."

"Have you patented it?" inquired Tom, interestedly.

"No, I haven't. In the first place, to procure a patent costs money. I haven't the necessary cash."

"Couldn't you borrow it?" Tom wanted to know.

"I suppose I could. But to tell you the truth, I'm afraid to take the step. You see, it's only a formula. When a poor man goes to patent anything, there's always danger of leaks. I'd have to go to a patent agent, and he'd probably steal my idea from me; or, if he was honest, somebody else would get the best of me. To borrow the money with which to secure the patent, I'd have to take somebody else into my secret, and they'd probably swindle me."

"Well, how are you going to protect yourself, unless you patent this idea?"

"Well, you see, it's quite a lengthy formula," explained the old man. "I've got it all written out, and it's locked in the safe down-stairs. There are only two persons in the world who know the combination of that safe — myself and Angelina. Nobody else shall ever learn it, either."

"And what do you intend to do with this formula? Go into the manufacturing business yourself?" asked Tom.

"Not exactly. I'm going to use it to bring about the marriage of Alfred d'Arcy to my daughter."

Tom groaned.

"What's the matter?" asked the old man anxiously. "I guess I'm tiring you by talking. You'd better try to sleep now."

"No, no!" said Tom eagerly. "I feel pretty good. It was just a spasm of pain that shot through me. I beg you to go on, Dr. Green. I'm very much interested, I assure you."

"Well, you see, when I made my discovery I treated a piece of ordinary shoe-leather with it, and the result was splendid. It looked just as shiny and glossy as patent-leather, and when subjected to the hardest kind of tests it manifested its durability. It's much cheaper to produce, too, than the ordinary patent-leather. It will revolutionize the shoe business. It will make shoeblacks unnecessary."

"And after you'd found your formula a success, what did you do then?" inquired Tom.

"I took the sample of finished leather to old D'Arcy. At first the scoundrel scoffed and was absolutely insulting in his demeanor. Then he tried to trick me into giving him the secret. He told me to write it out for him, and he'd have some experts examine it, and let me know if it was of any practical use."

"Of course, you did not fall for that?" said Tom anxiously.

"I should say not. I told old D'Arcy that I knew that the invention was practical, even without consulting his experts. I told him that I knew that it was worth money and that I was willing to consider an offer."

"Did he make you an offer?"

"Yes. He offered me fifty dollars. That ended the interview. I told him I wouldn't sell it for less than fifty thousand dollars. He bid me good day, and I went out; but I noted joyfully that the old scoundrel kept my piece of sample leather.

"I was preparing to go to Boston to see some big shoe-houses, when old D'Arcy sent for me again. I went to his office a second time. He offered me five thousand dollars for the patent. I refused pointblank. He increased his offer to ten thousand dollars. He said that was the very most he would give. I told him that I'd changed my mind and that I would not sell the formula for a cent less

than seventy-five thousand dollars. Old D'Arcy grew abusive and tried to bully me. I left him again."

"I suppose he did not let it go at that. He tried again, eh?" asked Tom.

"Of course. He sent for me a third time. Young Alfred was present at this interview. Old D'Arcy told me he'd thought the matter over, and that, while the formula wasn't really much of a consideration to him, as he could get along very well without it, and probably would never use it even if he owned it, he'd be willing to pay me twenty thousand dollars for it. He said he was disposed to be generous because his son Alfred and my Angelina had been at school together, and Alfred had always been very friendly toward my daughter. Alfred had informed him that we were very poor, and therefore for my daughter's sake—for the sake of old times, as it were—he and his son were willing to pay me twenty thousand dollars for something that wasn't worth half that amount."

"You weren't foolish enough to sell?" cried Tom excitedly.

"I should say not. I reiterated my demand for seventy-five thousand dollars. D'Arcy and his son both declared that I was crazy—stark, raving mad, to talk like that.

"Incidentally, old D'Arcy asked me casually if anybody else beside myself knew this formula. I told him that I was the only person who knew it, that the secret was locked in my safe, and that only my daughter and myself knew the combination."

"Ah!" exclaimed Tom. "And what happened after that?"

"Well, D'Arcy apparently let the matter drop. His son, however, began calling here, and became very attentive to Angelina."

"Ah!" exclaimed Tom. "Has he asked her for the combination of the safe?"

"Never said a word about it. I was on my guard as to that, and warned my daughter not to disclose the secret under any circumstances.

"Well, young D'Arcy became more and more attentive, until the other day he openly declared his love. His father was furious when he heard about it. He sent for me again. I went to him, thinking that he had made up his mind to pay me the seventy-five thousand dollars I demanded.

"But he did nothing of the kind. He told me angrily that he had forbidden his son to call at my house, but that the obstinate young fool (these were his words) refused to obey his injunction. He declared angrily that he wouldn't hear of his son marrying a beggar.

"I became angry at that. I would have thrown young D'Arcy out of the house, if it had not been for the fact that my daughter had confessed to me that she cared for him. After all, the young man was not responsible for what his father said or did.

"I used diplomacy. I told the old man that I had changed my mind about selling that formula, and that I had determined to give the formula to my daughter as a wedding present.

"Incidentally, I informed the old scoundrel that I had received an offer of one hundred thousand dollars from a Boston concern. I told him that it was useless for him to try to bluff me as to the value of my discovery. I told him that I knew my formula would revolutionize the shoe business, and that if I sold it to a rival concern, D'Arcy & Son would finally be driven out of business."

"What did he say to that?" Tom inquired breathlessly.

"He didn't say anything. He just grunted; but since that time young D'Arcy has been calling on my girl every day, and he's given her an engagement-ring, so I guess the old man has decided to let things take their course."

Tom groaned again.

"You really must not talk any more," said the old man. "I ought to be ashamed of myself for going as far as I have. We'll have you dangerously ill again, if I'm not more careful. You try to take a good sleep now, Watson. I'll leave you alone. Young D'Arcy is down-stairs with Angelina. I guess I'll go down and have a little talk with them. Good-by, young man."

After he had left the room, Tom Robbins groaned once more.

"I wish they'd left me at the bottom

of the creek," he sighed. "I'd like to thrash the man who brought me to the surface. I wonder what sort of a chap this Alfred d'Arcy really is? I wonder if he really loves her? I wonder if he'd continue calling here if he knew the combination of the safe down-stairs?"

CHAPTER IX.

REVEALING A VILLAIN.

UNABLE to sleep, Tom Robbins tossed and turned in his bed all that night.

Of course he was not in love with Angelina Green, decidedly not; but, nevertheless, the news that she was betrothed to young D'Arcy worried him exceedingly.

"Somehow or other," he said to himself, "from what the old man has told me, I can't get rid of the idea that that fellow is not acting on the square. It seems to me that the old doctor's formula is his first consideration, and Angelina only secondary, if she's a consideration at all. I should not be at all surprised if there's some crooked work afoot. I'll have to see this young Alfred, and then I'll be able to judge better.

"But, after all, what grounds have I for these suspicions? The old man tells me that young Alfred has never mentioned a word to Angelina about the formula.

"She loves him, too, and she's a girl of good sound judgment. Perhaps, after all, he's on the level. I hope so, I'm sure, for Angelina's sake."

Now, as a matter of fact, Tom knew that he was trying to deceive himself, and that he did not hope anything of the kind.

It would have given him great pleasure at that moment to be able to obtain definite proof that Alfred d'Arcy did not love Angelina, and that his wooing was part of a scheme to obtain the formula from the old inventor.

As he lay tossing on his bed, Tom made up his mind regarding his course of action.

He would take a look at young d'Arcy and try to size him up. If he felt satisfied that the young man was "on the level," and was really in love with Angelina, he, Tom, would leave town as soon as possible.

Before he had heard of Angelina's betrothal, Tom had almost made up his mind to accept Dr. Green's invitation and prolong his stay indefinitely.

But now he was resolved upon an early departure. if the wooing of young D'Arcy was quite regular and satisfactory. As soon as his legs were strong enough to support him, he would march.

But if he felt convinced that Alfred d'Arcy's motives were sinister, then he would remain. D'Arcy and son, in that case, would need careful watching. If there should be mischief afoot, the old man and his daughter would need help.

The next morning Tom began to learn how to walk. When he was able to traverse the floor of the bedroom with ease, he was allowed to go down-stairs, with Angelina's assistance.

He saw for the first time the neat little dining-room, kept spotlessly clean and decorated by the work of Angelina's clever hands.

In a corner of the room he noticed a little safe with a combination lock.

"Looks like a pretty good safe," he reflected. "It's one of modern make, if I'm not much mistaken. I guess it would be pretty hard to pick that lock."

The Green residence was a typical two-story country frame-cottage, with a wide porch in front and some ground at the back, on which the doctor and his daughter grew enough fruit and vegetables for home consumption.

It was not long before the invalid was able to leave the confines of the house and stroll through the grounds with Angelina.

That was the part of his convalescence which Tom Robbins most enjoyed. The sky was blue, the air rich and sweet, the scenery picturesque, and Angelina by no means an unwelcome companion, even though she was betrothed to another man.

Angelina pointed out the beauties of the scenery to the patient.

"Over there are the Catskill Mountains," she said. "Don't they look magnificent? I never tire of gazing at them. On clear days you can see the white pillars in front of the Mountain House quite distinctly. Yonder is the Hudson,

and down below here the creek which came near proving the death of both of us. Isn't this a quiet, peaceful spot? I think it's the prettiest place in the world. Don't you think so? You'll learn to love it after you've been here a few months. I suppose you've made up your mind to stay with us, Mr. Watson?"

"Oh, no," said Tom; "I'm already thinking of leaving. In a few days I really must be off. I'm afraid I've been here too long, already."

"Nonsense," said the girl. "My father won't consent to your going away. He's taken quite a fancy to you. He wants you to stay. Besides, why should you go? My father tells me that you have no folks to go to and no employment."

"That's just the reason," answered Tom, "I can't remain in idleness all my life. I must be going to New York to look for a job, as soon as possible."

"Supposing I were to find a job here, would you stay with us?" asked the girl mysteriously.

"What kind of a job?" inquired Tom eagerly.

"Well, I've been speaking to somebody about you. I've told him how you almost lost your own life trying to save mine, and he already takes quite an interest in you. Pa told him you were out of employment, and he promised to give you a job in the factory."

"You mean D'Arcy?" asked Tom quickly.

"Yes," replied the girl, with a blush. "He says he'll find out what you can do, and give you a position of some kind in the shoe factory of D'Arcy & Son. Won't that be splendid? You can work in the village every day and board here, if you wish. Alfred—Mr. d'Arcy will be here soon, and I'll introduce you to him."

Tom was so surprised that he did not know what to say. He was not quite sure that he would take the job, anyway, even if the offer was a good one. Somehow or other, his pride rebelled against being the recipient of a favor at the hands of young D'Arcy.

And yet, why not? He could find no satisfactory reason why he should refuse a chance of employment. If he was working for D'Arcy & Son, he would have greater opportunity to watch the pair and find out what their game was.

On one point he had definitely made up his mind. If he took the job he would never be fool enough again to confess that he was an ex-convict. He had changed his name, and a thick growth of beard, acquired during his illness, had altered his appearance completely.

If he obtained employment he would be honest in all respects save this one. He would lie without hesitancy as to his past, if any questions were asked.

Alfred d'Arcy arrived a few minutes later, and Angelina introduced him to Tom.

The latter looked the young man over carefully. There was something about him which reminded him of his brother Peter. The impression was not very favorable. As the old doctor had said, Alfred's manner was cold and a trifle haughty.

"I understand you're the man who saved Miss Green's life," he said. "I learn, also, that you're out of employment, and would be glad of a job. I'm willing to help you, if possible. What's your line of work?"

"I'm a pretty good bookkeeper," replied Tom.

"Good. I suppose you can figure well. We need a clerk in the factory. I'll speak to my father about you. Come to see me at the office, as soon as you feel strong enough. I think we can do something for you."

He walked off with Angelina, leaving Tom standing alone, with clenched fists and scowling face.

"There's no doubt that she loves him. I could see that by her face," he muttered. "I don't think I'll take this job, after all. I guess I'll leave this detestable place as soon as possible."

In a few days, however, he was in full possession of his strength, and found himself, almost against his will, walking to the factory of D'Arcy & Son.

He sent in his name to young D'Arcy —not his real name, but the one he had assumed—and a few minutes afterward the office-boy came out and said that Mr. d'Arcy would see him in his private office.

Tom entered the place, feeling very sullen and miserable.

An old man with sharp gray eyes and a cruel mouth sat at a desk, and young Alfred was pacing up and down the carpeted floor, with his hands in his trousers-pockets.

"This is the young man I spoke to you about, father. He wants a job in the factory," said Alfred, addressing the old man at the desk.

"Humph!" said the latter, wheeling around in his revolving-chair and glancing sharply at Tom. "My son tells me you're a bookkeeper, my friend."

"Yes, sir," answered Tom.

"Are you a quick figurer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Write a good hand?"

"I think so."

"Humph! What have you been doing for a living until now?"

"I was a bookkeeper in the toy-house of James Brown & Co., of New York," lied Tom.

"How long were you in their employ?"

"Ten years," said Tom.

"Can you refer us to them?"

"Not exactly," said Tom, smiling easily. "James Brown died recently, and the firm went to pieces."

"Humph! How old are you?"

Tom was about to tell his real age, but he remembered the gray in his hair and caught himself in time. "Forty-two," he said.

"Humph! Rather old. You're name's Watson, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are boarding with the Greens, eh?"

"Yes, sir. For the time being."

"What do you mean by that last remark?" asked the old man sharply. "Are you thinking of leaving them?"

"I haven't made up my mind, yet," said Tom.

"Well, make up your mind to stay with them," went on old D'Arcy. "They're good people. I suppose you know that I'm interested in them. Dr. Green's an old man, and he's only got his daughter. I'd like to have somebody with them to protect them. You'd better stay on there, Watson."

"I wonder what the old rascal is driving at?" thought Tom. "I wonder what he wants to have me there for? I should think he'd prefer to have me out of the way."

Aloud he said: "All right, sir. I reckon I'll stay with them, if I land a job and can pay my board there."

"Well, we need an entry-clerk here. We'll give you ten dollars a week to start, and promise you a raise if you're satisfactory in every respect. How would that strike you?"

"I guess I'll take the job," said Tom. "When shall I start in?"

"To-morrow morning, if you wish."

"Very good, sir."

"I wonder what their game is?" mused Tom again as he took his departure.

After he had been in the employ of D'Arcy & Son for three weeks he found out.

Old D'Arcy called him into his private office one day. Young Alfred was not there. They were all alone.

"Close the door," said the shoe manufacturer. "I want to talk to you confidentially, Watson."

Tom closed the door and returned to his employer's desk.

The old man toyed with a paper-knife for a full minute without saying anything. He was evidently deciding how to start the conversation.

"How do you like your job here?" he snapped out at last.

"Pretty good, thank you," answered Tom.

"Ten dollars a week isn't much of a salary, is it?"

"Well, it's good enough to start with," said Tom. "I haven't forgotten that you promised me a raise if I turned out satisfactory."

"Yes, we always reward employees who are faithful to us. This is a good house to work for, Watson."

"I don't doubt it, sir," assented Tom.

"If a man is faithful, he can rise pretty high here. What we demand in our employees is that they must be absolutely devoted to the business. They must place our interests above every other consideration. Do you understand?"

"I think so, sir," said Tom, beginning to smell a rat.

"Now, you seem like a bright, able man. Ten dollars a week is no salary for a man of your ability. I need a private secretary. I'd be willing to pay fifty dollars a week, if I can find the right man."

"Yes, sir," said Tom breathlessly.

"Now, how would you like the job?"

"Very much," said Tom, smiling.

"Of course, it would be a confidential job. To be my successful private secretary, you would have to give yourself over to me, body and soul, so to speak. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tom.

"If I gave you the job, would you place this business before every other consideration?" asked the old man sharply.

"I would try to, sir."

"Fifty dollars is a good salary, you must admit. A man ought to be willing to sacrifice himself a whole lot for a job like that, Watson."

"I should say so, Mr. d'Arcy."

"And you think you would like the position?"

"Yes, sir."

"And if I gave it to you, would you be willing to give yourself over to me, body and soul—figuratively speaking, of course—eh?"

D'Arcy wheeled around in his chair and looked at Tom sharply.

"Figuratively speaking, I would," replied Tom.

"Well, supposing I was to ask you to do something for me that wasn't quite honest. Not anything criminal or too dishonest, you know. Just a matter of business. Would you be willing to undertake it, if you were my private secretary, eh?"

"I think so," said Tom, "provided it was not too dishonest; provided it didn't land me in jail."

"Good. I think I understand you. You draw the line at going to jail, eh? Otherwise, it would be all right. I think you're the man I want, Watson. I've been watching you carefully for the past week. I think I'll give you the job."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom gratefully.

"You're still living with the Greens, aren't you?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes. I'm still boarding there."

"And I suppose you have heard about the formula the old man has discovered, eh?"

"Yes. I've heard the doctor speak about it."

"You don't happen to know that formula, do you?" asked D'Arcy eagerly.

"No, sir; I do not. The old man keeps it a close secret," said Tom calmly.

"Well, do you know the combination of the safe in the dining-room?"

The old man fixed Tom with his sharp, steely eyes.

"No, sir. They never told it to me."

"Humph! You're a bright fellow, Watson. I suppose, if you tried hard, you could manage to learn that combination, eh?"

"I might be able to," said Tom.

"Good!" exclaimed the other. "Well, of course, I need not tell you that you must not speak of this conversation to a living soul. One of the essential qualities of a private secretary is his ability to keep his mouth shut. You understand me, I see. I think you're the very man I want. You can start in to-morrow as my secretary, Watson. That desk over there will be yours. Remember, your salary will be fifty dollars a week, and you can have the job for the rest of your life, if you serve us well. That's all."

"Thank you," said Tom, with a great display of gratitude; but when he had closed the door behind him his manner changed.

He clenched his fists, and his eyes flashed.

"The old villain!" he muttered. "You precious pair of rascals. I was right, after all. I know your game at last. I've discovered your plot, you thieving dogs. You'd rob an old man and his young daughter, would you? Well, by Heaven, I'll do my best to foil you."

CHAPTER X.

THE COMBINATION.

On his way to the Green house that night, Tom Robbins made two resolutions.

First, he would lose no time in informing Dr. Green as to the villainy afoot, and, second, he would leave the employ of D'Arcy & Son immediately.

"I've suspected, right along, that that mean-looking cuss, Alfred d'Arcy, was after the formula, and that his wooing of Angelina was only a pretense," he told himself.

"Angelina will be deeply shocked, I suppose, when she learns the truth. It's best that she should be told, though. She'll have to swallow the bitter pill sooner or later, poor girl.

"On second thought, I guess I won't leave the employ of D'Arcy & Son just yet. I think I can best serve the interests of Dr. Green and Angelina by sticking. I'll keep my job at the factory, and watch this precious pair of scoundrels pretty carefully. I'll fight them with their own weapons. I'll take this job of private secretary to old D'Arcy, and I'll fool the scoundrel into the belief that I'm his man, body and soul.

"I suppose he'll expect me to learn the combination of Dr. Green's safe, open it, and bring him the formula. Of course, I won't do that; I guess I'm clever enough to be able to stand him off for a time. I'll tell him I'm trying to learn the combination, and that it is a difficult task, but that I hope to have discovered it in a few weeks. I'll jolly the old scoundrel along.

"He's not going to get the best of that poor old man and his daughter, if I can help it. They are the only people in the world who have been kind to me, and I'll protect them, even at the risk of my life."

When he reached the house, Angelina's quick eyes noticed at once that something was wrong.

"What is the matter, Mr. Watson?" she asked. "Look, father, how pale he is. Something serious has happened. I know it."

"Yes, Dr. Green and Miss Angelina, something serious has happened," said Tom solemnly. "I've been offered the position of private secretary to old D'Arcy, at a salary of fifty dollars a week."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor, holding out his hand. "I congratulate you, my boy. I knew you would rise."

"Isn't it splendid!" cried Angelina. "I'm so very, very glad to hear the good news, Mr. Watson. From the paleness of your face, I thought it was bad news you were bringing to us. I feel too overjoyed for words. I know this is dear Alfred's work. I was telling him yesterday of the great interest we take in you, and how we would like to see you get along. Isn't he a grand, generous fellow? You must be a very happy man to-night, Mr. Watson."

"No," said Tom, "I'm not happy. I'm very miserable. I don't regard this as good news at all."

"And why not, pray," asked the surprised doctor, while Angelina could only look her astonishment.

"Because there is a condition which goes with the offer. I'm expected to give myself over to old D'Arcy, body and soul."

"And what does that mean, pray?" inquired the old man.

"It means just this, doctor," answered Tom. "It's no use beating about the bush. The contemptible scoundrel wants that formula."

"Well, he's going to get it," said Dr. Green. "Haven't I promised that I'll give it to Angelina and Alfred for a wedding present?"

"He doesn't want to wait for the wedding," went on Tom. "To tell you the painful truth, Miss Angelina, I don't think that he intends that there shall be any wedding at all. I'm sorry to have to hurt you by saying this. He has given me to understand that if I want to be his private secretary at fifty per week, I must steal that formula from you and bring it to him."

"The treacherous scoundrel!" cried the old man furiously.

"Of course, they're not going to get the formula, if I can help it," said Tom. "But I want to warn you to be on your guard, Dr. Green. I guess the old villain will stop at nothing to accomplish his purpose."

"He'll not succeed," said the old doctor, trembling with anger. "Only when his son is married to my girl shall he have that formula, and I'm sorry that I promised it to him, even then. If I thought that young Alfred had anything to do with this dastardly plot,

I'd break off this match in a minute; I would indeed, my girl."

"Oh, father!" sobbed Angelina. "How can you suspect Alfred. He's not responsible for his father's faults, is he?"

"I don't know," said the old man, shaking his head. "It's bred in the bone, I fear. I suppose we must give him the benefit of the doubt, until we find out definitely that he's mixed up in this. If we do, we'll throw him overboard instanter, Angelina. You sha'n't marry a scoundrel, if I can help it, no matter how much you care for him."

"Alfred is not a scoundrel, father," protested Angelina, and left the room hurriedly to conceal her tears.

After the old doctor had gone upstairs to bed, Angelina came down into the dining-room, where Tom was sitting, deep in thought.

Tom saw that her eyes were red with weeping.

"Mr. Watson," she said, trembling, "Alfred was not present during your interview with old Mr. d'Arcy, was he?"

"No," answered Tom; "he was not, Miss Angelina."

"And you've got no proof that he knew anything about this plot, have you?"

"No. I can't say that I have," replied Tom. "I've got no proof."

"But, nevertheless, you believe that Alfred does know about this terrible thing, don't you, Mr. Watson?"

"Yes, I think that Alfred knows."

"Well, what reason have you for such a belief? Tell me that."

"Well, I can't say that I have any reason at all for thinking so. Somehow or other, though, I mistrust him, instinctively. I think he and his father are working together, and that they're capable of any villainy and any kind of trick. I hate to say this to you, Miss Angelina, knowing what young Alfred is to you, but it is my honest opinion."

"Oh, but I am sure you are wrong!" cried the girl. "That is why I don't mind what you say, Mr. Watson. You mean well, I know; but you are positively mistaken.

"Alfred is true and honest; he would not stoop to a trick like that. His father, I fear, is bad—very bad; but we can't blame Alfred for that, as I said before."

"I hope that what you say may prove to be true, Miss Angelina," said Tom earnestly.

"Of course it will," protested the girl. "You mustn't jump at conclusions, Mr. Watson. It isn't fair. You must learn to know Alfred better. He is quite different from his father. I know what you think. I won't pretend that I don't. You think that Alfred is deceiving me. You think that he is only wooing me in order to try to learn the secret of that formula, don't you?"

"I never said that," said Tom grimly.

"I know you didn't say so; but I also know that that is what you think, and you don't deny it either, I notice. Well, answer me this question, Mr. Watson. If Alfred's object in coming here has been to steal this formula, why has he lost so much time? He has not once asked me for the combination of the safe or even breathed the subject of the formula to me. Why should he have delayed so long?"

"Excessive caution, possibly," replied Tom. "But probably I'm wrong. I've got no right to talk disparagingly of young D'Arcy. I've no evidence against him. Probably I'm wrong and you're right. I hope so, anyway, for your sake, Miss Angelina."

"Ah, that's better!" said the girl, smiling. "Of course I'm right and you're wrong. Next to Alfred and my father, I've come to regard you as the best friend I have, Mr. Watson. I hope I'm not too presumptuous in saying so. Naturally, I want you and Alfred to be on good terms."

"I hope that you will always consider me your friend, Miss Angelina," said Tom earnestly.

"Of course I shall. Haven't you proved yourself such. By the way, I want to thank you for the loyalty you have shown in this matter. It was a great temptation, I know. I suppose there are many men who would have been willing to betray us and give up that formula in order to obtain the reward that you were offered."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Tom. "No-

body but a scoundrel would betray his benefactors, and you and your father have indeed been benefactors to me, Miss Angelina.

"Besides, you're forgetting that it wasn't in my power to betray you, even if I had wished to do so. I don't know the combination of that safe, you see. I guess it's easy to be honest when it isn't in your power to be otherwise."

"And do you think it would have made any difference if you had known the combination of that safe?" asked the girl.

Tom smiled.

"I wouldn't like to say," he answered. "The temptation was strong. I wouldn't like to say that I would not have succumbed to it, if it had been in my power to do so."

"I don't think so," said the girl, shaking her head emphatically. "You're not that kind of a man, Mr. Watson. You're too loyal and honest."

"How do you know?" asked Tom.

"Well, I've got implicit faith in you, and I'm going to prove it."

"How?" asked Tom eagerly.

"By giving you the power to betray us. I'm going to give you the combination of that safe."

"No! No!" cried Tom hoarsely.

"Yes," insisted the girl, smiling, with tears in her eyes. "I want to show my trust in you, Mr. Watson. I want to prove that I believe in your loyalty to my father and to me. I know that you'd never dream of betraying us, even if you had the power."

"I'm very grateful to you for your confidence," said Tom. "But really, Miss Angelina, I'd rather not know that combination."

"But you must know it," said the girl. "If I did not entrust you with the secret now, it would look as if I did not trust you. There are only two persons in the world who know that combination—my father and myself. And now there shall be three. My father looks upon you as a son, and I as a brother. You shall share our secret with us, Mr. Watson. Here is the combination."

She wrote some figures on a piece of paper and handed the paper to Tom.

He glanced at it almost involuntarily, and the figures branded themselves upon his brain. Then he took the paper and held it over the lamp, burning it to ashes.

"I'm very grateful for your confidence, Miss Angelina," he said brokenly. "But, really, I'd rather not know that combination."

He had destroyed the paper, but he could not help remembering the figures. His mind was too quick and retentive to enable him to forget them.

He was an arithmetical expert, and used to taking in whole columns of figures at a glance.

As he went up to his room that night he said to himself:

"God bless her for the trust she reposes in me! I'll try to be worthy of it."

A second later a sudden thought occurred to him and sent the blood rushing through his veins.

"She's told me the secret, and she hasn't told it to young D'Arcy, her lover," he said exultingly.

"She can't trust him, after all. She trusts me, and she does not trust him. There's hope for me yet."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIP TO BOSTON.

The next day was a day of surprises for Tom Robbins.

The first surprise he encountered when he was on his way to the factory.

He had made up his mind definitely that he would stay in the employ of D'Arcy & Son for a time at least, in order to be in a position to watch the precious pair more closely.

He was crossing the bridge over the creek when his eyes were attracted by a poster, pasted on one of the steel uprights of the structure, and he stopped short before it.

It was evident that the poster had been there for some days; for it was soiled and dilapidated, and part of the text had been obliterated by recent rainstorms.

What remained, however, was startling enough to cause the jaw of Tom Robbins to drop and his breath come quickly.

At the top of the poster was a half-tone portrait of himself.

Under the portrait was printed:

$100 REWARD.

For the capture of Thomas Robbins, whose picture is shown above

Wanted by the police of New York City and Peekskill for Burglary and Arson.

Arrest him on sight and notify police of either of above cities. One hundred dollars reward will be paid for his arrest.

The specific crimes with which Robbins is charged are as follows:

The rest of the text was the part which had been almost obliterated by rain and exposure. Tom was just able to decipher the names "Caspar Dolman and Peter Robbins."

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "This is some of the work of my precious brother Peter. He wants to put me in prison again. Thinks it would be better for him if I was kept out of the way. Truly, he's an affectionate brother. So kind and considerate. Well, I'm not going to prison if I can help it.

"This is the first happiness and contentment I've known for years, and I'm not going to be deprived of it. Otherwise, I'd go and give myself up, for they can't prove me guilty of these charges. But they'd put me in prison for weeks awaiting trial, and I don't want to leave here, especially at this time.

"Now, it's funny that I've never noticed this poster before. From its appearance, it must have been here for days. It's a funnier thing, too, that nobody in this village has recognized me and earned that hundred dollars reward."

Just then he happened to catch a reflection of himself in the water below, and he gave vent to a sigh of relief. He had quite forgotten his altered appearance.

His five weeks of sickness had made great changes in his looks. His face and body were much thinner, and he had allowed a luxuriant beard to grow, unmolested. He wasn't at all like the man on the poster.

"No, I guess I'm safe from being recognized," he mused. "Only a person who knew me intimately would be able to identify me now. What a lucky thing for me that I didn't shave off this beard! I must be more on my guard, however. I'm glad I noticed this poster to-day.

"I guess they've been posted all over town. There's evidently a general alarm out for my arrest. Well, as I said before, they're not going to catch me if I can help it. I'll be very careful."

That was surprise number one.

Surprise number two came when he reached the factory.

Remembering that old D'Arcy had told him he could start on his duties as secretary that morning, he went straightway to the private office, instead of to his desk in the accounting department.

He knocked on the door, and old D'Arcy's voice, from within, bade him enter.

"Good morning, sir," said Tom briskly.

"Good morning, Watson," answered the shoe manufacturer coldly. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm ready to begin my duties as private secretary, Mr. d'Arcy," answered Tom.

The shoe manufacturer frowned.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I was speaking to you yesterday about a matter of that sort, was I not, Mr. Watson? Well, I've changed my mind. I shall not need a private secretary, for the present. You had better continue at your work as entry-clerk until further notice."

"Very good, sir," said Tom.

"By the way, you remember that matter I was discussing with you yesterday?" went on D'Arcy.

"You mean Dr. Green's formula, sir?" said Tom.

"Exactly. I suppose you haven't learned the combination of that safe yet, eh?"

"No, sir," said Tom.

"Well, you need not bother to try to learn it. I hope you did not take me seriously yesterday, Watson. As a matter of fact, you know I was merely testing your honesty. I wouldn't ask one of my employees to steal for me. I take it that anybody who would steal *for* me would steal *from* me, if he had the chance. Now, if I thought that you would really betray your friends and steal that formula, because I asked you to do so, I'd fire you instantly, Watson. I wouldn't have such a man in my office

for an hour. But I've watched you closely since you've been with us, and I feel satisfied that you would never have got that formula for me. Isn't that the truth, Watson?"

"I reckon it is, sir," said Tom quietly, wondering what was responsible for this change.

"They're up to some trick," he thought. "And they no longer need my assistance. I must find out what the new game is. He can't fool me, the old villain."

"By the way," continued old D'Arcy suddenly, "I may want you to go to Boston to-day and stay there for a few days, Watson, on business for the firm. Would you care to go?"

"For how long?" asked Tom quickly.

"For a week or so."

"No, sir, I'd rather stay in Benford," replied Tom.

"There's some mischief afoot, and they want to get me out of the way. I won't go," he told himself.

"Well, I'm afraid we'll have to send you," said D'Arcy sharply. "It's important, and you are the only man we can spare. If you want to rise in this business, Watson, you must be ready at all times to subordinate your own affairs for our interests."

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I can't leave Benford just now," said Tom doggedly.

"And why not, pray?" asked the old man angrily.

Tom pondered hard to find a reason, but could not think of a plausible one.

"I just cannot leave Benford," he said desperately.

"Well, that's nonsense, Watson," rejoined D'Arcy. "You just must go to Boston. When it gets down to it, I'm the boss, you know. I can't have my orders disobeyed."

"I'm very sorry, Mr. d'Arcy," began Tom.

"I'm very sorry, too, to see you display such gross disobedience to orders," interposed the old man. "I've got no time for argument, Mr. Watson. You leave for Boston by the three o'clock train."

"I can't do it," said Tom doggedly.

"Either you leave by the three o'clock train, or you quit the job. I'll give you until then to think it over. This insubordination is very exasperating. I can't tolerate it, Mr. Watson. I've got important business in Boston for you to transact, and if you attended to it properly, I planned to give you that private secretary job. I'll give you until two o'clock to think it over. That will be all now."

As Tom left the private office, he tried to make up his mind as to what he should do.

"I don't want to leave the employ of D'Arcy & Son just yet," he mused. "And yet I can't go to Boston. It's a scheme to get me out of the way. I feel sure of it. They've got some plot afoot, I'll wager. That's why the old thief has changed his mind about wanting me to get him that formula. Something has occurred overnight to cause him to alter his plans. He's going to try something else, and it's necessary to get me out of the Greens' house.

"Well, I won't go. I'll leave the job first. I've got no proof that that mission to Boston isn't legitimate business; but somehow I just feel that it isn't, and I'm not going to take any chances of harm coming to Angelina and the doctor."

When two o'clock arrived, Tom received a summons to D'Arcy's private office.

As Tom entered the room he noticed that Alfred d'Arcy was standing in the background, apparently gazing abstractedly out of the window.

"Well, Watson," said D'Arcy senior, "I suppose you've thought better of it, and are ready to go to Boston, eh?"

"No, sir. I regret to say that I can't go," answered Tom.

"And you can give no reason for refusing?"

"Well, there are reasons why I can't leave Benford just now; but I can't tell you what they are, sir."

"What do you think of him, Alfred?" said the old man, turning to his son. "He came here at your recommendation. Perhaps he'll be willing to explain to you this insubordination."

Alfred d'Arcy left the window and walked over to his father's desk.

"What's the trouble, Watson?" he said quietly. "Why don't you go to Boston, as my father orders?"

There was something in his manner which irritated Tom, and caused him to throw discretion to the winds.

"I'll tell you why," he cried hotly. "I won't leave Benford, because I don't care to leave Dr. Green and his daughter just now. I want to be on hand to protect them. There's mischief on foot, and I'm going to prevent it. Do you understand?"

He repented of the words as soon as he had uttered them, and cursed himself for a fool.

"What does the fellow mean?" asked D'Arcy of his son, with a puzzled look on his face.

Alfred shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't imagine," he said quietly. "Perhaps Watson will be good enough to explain. He knows, of course, that I am greatly interested in the welfare of the Greens, and his startling words fill me with alarm. What mischief do you apprehend, Watson?"

By this time Tom had recovered his presence of mind, and he answered calmly:

"Well, sir, it's just this. I've heard that strange tramps have been in Benford, and I'm afraid to leave the doctor and Miss Green alone at night."

He invented this explanation, hoping that it would allay the suspicions his incautious outburst must have aroused in their minds.

To his great surprise, however, he noticed that his words had an extraordinary effect on both the father and son. Old D'Arcy turned very red, and Alfred's face paled perceptibly.

Tom noticed that a significant look passed between the young man and the elder one.

"Well, your loyalty to the Greens does you credit," said Alfred after a long pause. "I feel too much interested in their welfare to allow my father to punish you for your insubordination. I'm grateful to you, Watson, very grateful. I've heard of no strange tramps being seen in Benford; but if there are any, we'll look out for them. I'll have an armed guard stationed at the house of Dr. Green. That ought to satisfy you. I suppose you'll consent to go to Boston now, eh?"

"No, sir," replied Tom. "If there's going to be an armed guard up there, I want to be the armed guard. You'll have to send somebody else to Boston."

"Then you can leave this factory instantly," thundered the old man.

"One minute!" cried Alfred. "Leave the room, Watson. I want to have a private talk with my father. I'll send for you in a few minutes. Wait outside the door."

Tom left the private office, positive now that mischief was afoot.

About five minutes afterward the door opened and Alfred beckoned to him to come inside.

"My son has interceded for you," said old D'Arcy. "He takes an interest in you, and he's begged me not to fire you, although you richly merit it for your disobedience. You can go back to your desk. I'll get somebody else to go to Boston."

"Thank you," said Tom, and as he left the room he said to himself:

"Now, I wonder what this all means. I wonder why the old man and young Alfred became so rattled when I spoke of strange tramps in Benford. I've got to solve this mystery."

(To be continued.)

THE WELCOME.

COME in the evening or come in the morning,
Come when you're look'd for, or come without warning,
Kisses and welcome you'll find here before you,
And the oftener you come here, the more I'll adore you.
Light is my heart since the day we were plighted,
Red is my cheek that they told me was blighted;
And the green of the trees looks far greener than ever,
And the linnets are singing, "True lovers, don't sever!"

Thomas Davis.

A CONSPIRACY IN GREENBACKS.

By FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

The farmer who was enticed by a "Get-rich quick" process, with harrowing consequences and an utterly unlooked-for termination.

THOMAS WILLIAMS'S face hardened as he turned to his wife.

"Now, Lucy, they ain't no use a harpin' on the subject. I ain't got the money to spare, an' thet's all they is to it!"

"But I ain't hed a new dress for over six years," his wife continued sadly, "and Lizzie Hall jest hed one made to wear to the sociable. My old black one is awful shabby lookin'."

The hard lines around the farmer's mouth shaped themselves into a sneer.

"If I hed as much money's Jim Hall hez—but they ain't no use arguin'—I ain't got it and thet ends it!"

His jaws closed with a snap, and pushing his chair back from the table with a noisy scraping upon the clean, hard floor of the kitchen, he angrily jerked his hat from its accustomed peg, and strode through the doorway toward the stable, to finish the chores.

"Wimmen are so durned extravagant," he muttered angrily. "Jest 'cause one of 'em hez a new dress, it puts it into the heads of ev'ry one of 'em fer miles aroun' thet they must hev one too. They ought t' be a law—"

He stopped abruptly and faced toward the road, as the rumble of wagon-wheels was heard through the gathering twilight.

"S'pose thet's Jim Hall now, deliverin' the mail," he growled, feeling a personal antipathy for the man whose wife he blamed for putting, as he expressed it, "durn fool notions" into his own wife's head.

It was an unusual occurrence for any mail to come for Williams, who was known as the stingiest man in Litchfield County. Nor did he ever look for any, but as he turned to continue his walk toward the stable, he again stopped, realizing that the vehicle had come to a sudden halt in front of his house, then continued on its way.

Forgetting for a moment the unfinished chores, Williams walked toward the little wooden box he had nailed to a post by the roadside. He did not hurry or display any eagerness. To him a letter foreboded trouble—a begging appeal for more time to pay interest upon one of the mortgages held by him.

Reaching the box, he pulled out a letter and roughly pushing it into his overalls-pocket, went to the stable and finished the day's work in darkness.

"Didn't Jim Hall leave a letter tonight?" Mrs. Williams queried, as her husband entered the house again. "Seems like I heard him stop."

"Yep," he snapped, seating himself in his accustomed chair. "Wonder who it is ain't got th' interest on their mortgage this time?"

Mrs. Williams realized that her husband was not in a very genial frame of mind, and refrained from questioning further. But as she continued wiping the dishes, she cast frequent glances in his direction.

Slowly he drew the crumpled letter from his pocket, pressed the creases out carefully, and examined the address. With a grunt of satisfaction, he tore open the envelope and carefully perused the contents. This consisted of one sheet of letter-paper of the Treasury Department of the United States, and upon which was written the following:

WASHINGTON, D. C.

MR. THOMAS WILLIAMS, Riverton, Conn.:

DEAR SIR: Your name having been given me by a mutual friend, I wish to take up with you, through my brother, Mr. Horace B. Lawson, a matter of financial interest and gain to you.

My brother will call upon you in a day or two, and as I am informed you are always ready to investigate an opportunity for a sure investment that will

yield large returns, I trust you will give him, out of your valuable time, enough to allow an explanation of his errand.

I remain, very truly yours,
BURTON B. LAWSON.

As Williams slowly folded up the letter, his wife briefly queried: "What is it?"

"Nothin'—nothin' at all," he hastened to reply, and soon fell into a state of thoughtfulness, from which he awakened to realize that his wife had retired, and that the chill in the air proved the fire in the stove had gone out.

The letter made a great impression upon the close-fisted, penurious old farmer. He wondered how they had heard of him in Washington, and what the investment could be to which Mr. Lawson referred.

With these thoughts upon his mind he sought his bed, and although he remained awake for some time, he was up and dressed at his regular hour the next morning, anxious and waiting for the call of Mr. Lawson's brother, which was indefinitely promised to be made "in a day or two."

He had not long to wait. After breakfast he busied himself preparing some new nests in the hen-house, desirous of being within easy call when the envoy should arrive, and had just started upon the work when the rumble of carriage-wheels attracted his attention. He emerged from the building to find himself face to face with a well-dressed young man, who had just alighted from his carriage.

"Are you Mr. Williams?" he queried, advancing toward the farmer with outstretched hand.

"Yes, I be. And you—"

"Mr. Lawson. You received my brother's letter?"

The farmer nodded.

"Then let us adjourn to the house. I wish to intrude upon your time to a small extent. May I?"

Williams was somewhat taken aback by the free, sanguine manner of his caller, but he mutely led the way and they passed through the house and into the front room, which served as parlor and office.

"This matter is strictly confidential," Lawson began, as soon as they were seated.

Then, in a low tone, he continued: "This is a great opportunity for you, Mr. Williams. My brother is employed in the Treasury Department at Washington, and has charge of the destroying of all the worn and dilapidated bills which have been sent in, and for which new ones are issued. But he does not destroy *all* of them—I have with me a few thousand."

Lawson smiled significantly, as he pointed to a traveling-bag he carried. "Of course, we could not put them back into circulation at Washington—they would get to the Treasury too quickly, and spoil the game.

"But I could sell them to you," he continued, "on your promise not to use them for thirty days. Do not even put them in the bank. At the end of that time we will have cleared up enough for us to — well, not need the Department any more."

He finished with a laugh.

Williams looked skeptically at the man before him.

Lawson noted he had not made the impression he had expected, and continued, as he opened his bag and took from within a huge bundle of bills, all of which were torn and soiled: "This is the way they come. Examine them yourself."

He dropped them carelessly into Williams's lap.

The farmer examined them eagerly, critically. At the sight of such a large roll of money, his excitement rose with his desire to possess it.

"What do ye want fer 'em?" he queried hoarsely.

"Oh, you can have that bundle—there's five hundred there—for two hundred dollars, providing you promise to hold them for one month."

Williams's eyes bulged from their sockets.

"Be they all good?" he queried tremulously, as he carefully examined them one by one.

"Why, of course," Lawson laughed quietly. "It's simply a business deal, that's all. We can't use them in Washington; but if you use them up here in a month, they'll be some time getting

back to the Department, and they may never reach there at all. In any event, they could never trace them to you."

"If I was sure—"

"Why, here," Lawson interrupted, "I'll tell you what I'll do. Select any ten bills out of that bundle—I'll trust you—and take them to your bank to prove their genuineness. But don't leave them there—bring them back. I'll go with you."

This statement allayed any suspicions the farmer had, and with plainly apparent embarrassment for the mistrust he had felt, in view of the other's frankness, he exclaimed: "I think—"

"You need have no fear, Mr. Williams," Lawson broke in. "You have my brother's address, and if at any time before the thirty days are up you wish to recall the bargain, he will gladly return your money. A Treasury Department official—"

"'Scuse me, sir, but I meant no offense to yer brother. I'll take 'em!"

The farmer arose, and going to a large, old-fashioned secretary, unlocked it, and counting out two hundred dollars, put in their place the large bundle of dilapidated one and two-dollar bills, first counting and recounting them.

After shaking hands cordially, the interview was over, and Lawson drove out of the yard, after inviting Williams and his wife to pay him and his brother a visit, should they ever come to Washington.

"Who was thet young man, Thomas?" Mrs. Williams queried as he turned toward the house again.

"Him?" Williams replied absently. "Oh, he was a young man wot come to see me on some bizness. Mighty fine young feller, eh?"

"But wot bizness?" persisted Mrs. Williams.

The farmer faced his wife angrily.

"Look here, Lucy, I ain't botherin' myself with yer runnin' of the house, am I? Well, don't you be botherin' with my affairs!"

With this final admonition, he strode in the direction of the barn, where he busied himself with the many duties demanding his attention there.

He went at his work with a light heart, and more than once a self-satisfied chuckle escaped him, as his mind reverted to the investment of the morning. To make three hundred dollars so easily was a new experience to Williams, and added to this, the fact that he was known and recognized by men of affairs at Washington, put the old farmer in a more genial mood than had been his for many months.

Suddenly the clanging of the old cracked bell that was used by Mrs. Williams as a dinner-call broke rudely upon his ears.

"By gorry!" he exclaimed aloud as he walked slowly in the direction of the house, his head bent toward the ground. "If I could only make three hundred every day—"

He halted abruptly and glanced toward the road, where a carriage had pulled up.

"Does Mr. Thomas Williams live here?" the occupant queried in a loud voice.

"He does—I'm him!" the farmer returned. "Gosh, I wonder if this is another feller goin' to present me with three hundred more," he murmured to himself, with a quiet laugh.

"I want to see you on important business," the stranger called, springing from his vehicle.

With long, firm steps he strode toward Williams, who stood in the driveway, a peculiarly pleased expression upon his face.

As the stranger halted in front of the farmer, he began bruskly: "You had a business deal this morning with a man who called himself Lawson, didn't you?"

For a moment Williams did not answer — his common sense forbade his doing so. In his own mind he realized that in buying the money he made himself a party to the crime, yet he considered at the time the chances of detection so small that they were not worth thinking of. But now he was at a loss how to reply.

"I repeat, did you?" the stranger queried impatiently.

There was a certain seriousness to the question that did not escape the farmer's detection, and he quickly answered: "No, I did—"

"None of that, now!" the stranger

interrupted, throwing back his coat and disclosing a shield. "I am a secret-service detective from Washington, and have been tracing this man Lawson for three weeks. He and his brother, who is employed in the Treasury Department, have been working a clever game. The brother steals the money entrusted to him to destroy, and this one sells it. But a crook always gets pulled up, sooner or later.

"I caught him over in the town a little while ago, and after a good sweating he confessed the whole game, and also that you had bought some from him this morning, knowing fully how he came by it. In other words, you are as great a criminal as he is, and I place you under arrest!"

Seizing the farmer's arm roughly, he ordered: "Come on, without any fuss."

As Williams realized the gravity of the charge, his face turned a deathly greenish-white; and as he staggered, the heavy hand upon his arm tightened its grip.

"Come on, without any trouble," the officer again commanded.

"But—but—I ain't done nothin' wrong," Williams protested brokenly.

The other burst into a harsh laugh.

"You don't consider your aiding a plot to rob the government a crime, eh? Well, I'm not your judge—there are others paid to be that—I'm only paid to get you. So, come on!"

Williams endeavored to speak, but the words would not come. He tried to think, but it was a useless task.

The only picture before him showed his neighbors all gathered together and laughing at his predicament. He knew only too well how they hated and despised him, and how they would gloat over his trouble.

"Thomas, ain't ye comin' in to dinner?"

Williams started at the voice of his wife, and, looking up, beheld her standing in the kitchen doorway, gazing wonderingly at the stranger who was holding her husband's arm so determinedly.

"Yes—no—I'll be there—in a moment," he stammered, glancing appealingly toward the man at his side.

With the first display of consideration the detective had shown, he ordered, in a low tone: "I must ask you to give over to me the money you got from this Lawson this morning, which was stolen from the government—the five hundred dollars. Then we'll go."

"It's inside," the farmer groaned. "Come with me and I'll get it."

But the detective stayed the step toward the house Williams attempted to take.

"Remember, no funny business—I am an officer of the government." Eying Williams suspiciously, he added: "It would only go harder—"

"Man, I ain't no fool," the farmer broke in bitterly. "I been one yesterday—I ain't goin' to be one to-day, too."

The old man's manner, looks, and words showed such sincerity that the detective was immediately reassured.

"Lead the way," he briefly ordered, and, following his prisoner, they passed through the kitchen and into the parlor, where, earlier in the day, the deed had been done that the farmer was now helpless to undo.

As they passed Mrs. Williams, who stood at one side, she noted the faltering footsteps and bowed head of her husband, and wondered, but wisely refrained from questioning.

With trembling fingers, Williams unlocked the old secretary, and drawing out a bundle of greenbacks, handed them to the officer with a sigh of relief, feeling that in a way the return of the stolen money atoned for his part in the crime.

The detective counted the bills carefully, then as carefully recounted them. At the conclusion of the task, he fingered the frayed and worn notes idly, as if in deep thought.

At last he looked up, an expression in his face that was in direct contrast to any he had previously shown.

"Mr. Williams, pardon me for my former remarks and outspoken suspicions," he began kindly, "but in our line of work we meet all classes of criminals, and we always consider a man guilty until we have positive proof of his innocence."

Again he paused, apparently thinking deeply upon some matter of great importance. The farmer's eyes stared directly at him, and through their look of

terror and despair showed a trace of hopefulness.

Suddenly the detective raised his head.

"See here, Mr. Williams, I've been thinking this matter over," he exclaimed. "I don't want to blast the remaining days of an old man, particularly one who has unwittingly made himself a criminal."

"Ye mean, ye won't arrest me?" the farmer burst out. "Ye mean, ye set me free?"

"No—not exactly." The officer was weighing the matter carefully in his mind. "You see, I have to protect myself. My duty is to arrest you; but I hesitate about doing so. If I were positive this Lawson—he and I are the only ones who know of this matter—if I were sure he would not implicate you, I would take all the risk, and not arrest you."

"Oh, sir, don't ye think ye could persuade him not to say nothin' 'bout me?" Williams pleaded eagerly. "I'd do anythin' fer him—"

"Hold on!" the detective interrupted. "Your remark just now showed me the way."

The farmer leaned forward excitedly.

"You see," the officer continued, "Lawson will be wanting a lawyer now, and they cost like the Old Harry. If you will agree to this, I'll let you go entirely and run all risks, although I expect nothing but your thanks. It is that you send him a couple of hundred dollars to help him out. I'll attend to the rest."

For a moment Williams did not attempt to speak, his mouth twitching nervously and his features distorted as if in physical pain.

"I don't see—I can't un'erstand—" he faltered.

"Of course, suit yourself," the officer broke in. "It's really nothing to me. I only suggest it to help you in your predicament, and by so doing I may be putting myself in a hole. You know, I have three other cases against Lawson, and I think two hundred would seal his mouth regarding you—I want nothing for myself except your friendship and the thanks of an old man who has been the dupe of others."

"But he already has two hundred of mine," the farmer groaned. "Wouldn't that do? He kin keep thet, if ye'll only let me go."

"I am afraid that much would not do. In a case like this one, a lawyer would exact a big fee, knowing just what a hopeless case he is undertaking. But I must hurry. I think the best thing to do is to forget our conversation entirely—you had better come along with me."

He arose and placed his hand heavily upon the old man's arm.

"No—not that!" Williams screamed. "I can't go! I'll pay the money gladly if ye can promise me— Oh, what shall I do?"

"Suit yourself," was the calm remark of the other. "It's your affair, not mine. But you must decide quickly."

The farmer buried his face in his hands. He could not reconcile himself to the loss of four hundred dollars, neither could he go to jail upon a crime that magnified itself every moment.

A mental picture of himself in prison, wearing the usual stripes, passed before his eyes.

Slowly he raised his head, and with traces of tears upon his weather-stained countenance, mumbled brokenly: "I trust ye, sir—I'll do it!"

Walking falteringly toward the old secretary, he extracted a roll of bills from within, and, counting out the required number with fingers that shook as one stricken with the palsy, handed them over to the officer of the law.

"Ye'll see he gits them?" he begged, "and thet I ain't brought into the case?"

"I'll do my best, and can safely promise you success. I really think you are pursuing the only plan left open for you. You, a man of wealth and a power in your community, going to jail—"

"Don't—don't—I can't think of it!" the other wailed, closing his eyes to shut out the horrible picture.

The officer was upon his feet instantly.

"I will not trouble you further. It is long past the time I intended getting back to my prisoner, and I am truly glad I am going back alone."

Extending his hand, he seized the farmer's and, clasping it sincerely, added: "Good-by, sir—and take the advice

of one who has had years of experience in just such cases as this—that everything in this world has a face value—when it is offered much below that, unless you know your man and the circumstances relative to its being offered, be suspicious."

Williams could not voice his thanks. He tried, but the words died in his throat, and he mutely led the way to the front door, which he unlocked with quivering, clumsy fingers.

He waved his hand to the officer as he stepped into his carriage, and followed him with his eyes as he drove down the road.

For a moment he stood rooted to the spot, endeavoring to decide just what plan to pursue. He dreaded the questions he knew his wife would ask regarding the visitor, and fully realized that his answers would not satisfy her.

He felt he could not admit the truth—by doing so he would be lowered in her estimation as a sharp, shrewd man of business. And to lose four hundred dollars, and she know of it—he shuddered at the remarks she would make, and was sure this would be a matter to which she would always refer, if refused any request for money.

Glancing fearfully around him, he tiptoed off the porch, and by a devious route through the apple-orchard at the side of the house, he reached the barn without passing the kitchen door, where he knew his wife was awaiting his return—and explanations.

He wanted an excuse to get away—as far away as possible, if only for the rest of the day. An idea occurred to him—early that morning his wife had remarked that a trip to town should be made for a bag of cracked corn, as there was none on hand for the little chickens.

He hurriedly hitched up the horse to the spring wagon, jumped in, and drove to the kitchen door.

"Where ye goin' now, Thomas?" his wife queried before he had an opportunity to speak.

"Goin' to git thet cracked corn ye spoke about this mornin'," he replied, avoiding the eyes he knew were directed so suspiciously at him.

"Ye be, eh? Well, hev ye gone clean crazy—ye ain't hed yer dinner yet!"

"Don't want none. I ain't hungry, anyway."

With a final look of disgust, Mrs. Williams turned from the door to busy herself with her household duties. Heaving a deep sigh of relief, Williams chortled to his horse, and was soon jogging along the dusty road that led to the town.

Arriving there, he tied his animal securely to one of the many hitching-posts that lined the street in front of the mill, and, going inside, received the, to him, pleasant information that they had no cracked corn; but as they were about to grind some, it would be ready in an hour.

A feeling of satisfaction at the delay passed over him as he emerged from the building—he was like a drowning man grabbing frantically at straws. Any excuse to put off facing his wife was good news to him.

"Hallo, Tom Williams!" a cheery voice called.

He glanced up, startled at the sound of his own name, and saw, hurrying across the street toward him, John Kinney, the village constable, resplendent in a new policeman's uniform the town had just furnished him.

Behind the rich blue cloth and the brass buttons, his large frame and sunny face made a picture for which the old man plainly showed his admiration.

"John, ye look fine—jest fine!" he burst out, forgetting momentarily his own troubles. "When did ye git it?"

The constable's face beamed with delight at the praise of the farmer, who was rarely known to express any remarks of a complimentary nature.

"I jest got it yesterday," he replied. "Fits splendid, don't it? Purty fine, eh?"

His eyes glanced approvingly down his broad chest to the tips of his newly polished shoes.

"It certainly do," the farmer agreed, examining one of the large brass buttons that lent added dignity to the front of the long-skirted coat.

"Glad to hev seen ye, Tom," the constable exclaimed; "but I got to go down to Torland on the two-eleven train. It's only three miles, but as long as the town pays my fare, I'm goin' to

ride. Got to deliver a paper fer Judge Sparks."

Drawing from his pocket a large silver watch, he added: "Gosh! It's two-five now—I've got to run. Wish ye were goin' down, too. I'd like yer company, an' I'm comin' right back."

"I'll go, John!" The officer had already turned, but the farmer's words halted him abruptly.

"I'll pay yer fare if ye will, Tom."

This remark was caused by his knowledge of the penury of Williams, so well known to every one for miles around.

"No, ye—"

"Come on, then. We got to run fer it."

With surprising agility for the years and rheumatism of the farmer, and the fleshiness of the constable, the pair started on a dash toward the railroad station. An engine whistle in the distance caused them to redouble their efforts, and they rushed up to the station platform, panting and exhausted.

"Durn—it—all!" the constable exclaimed between breaths. "It's only—the New York train. Ours can't—come in—until that one passes. Ours is probably—waitin' up the—road a piece, on the switch. I'll git the tickets."

With these remarks, he hurried into the little waiting-room.

As Kinney disappeared, Williams turned just in time to see a figure rush from around the corner of the station, and he recognized his caller of the morning, the secret-service agent, who raced up to him.

"Mr. Williams, you are not going—" He glanced around fearfully in all directions, and added: "If you will promise not to have us pinched, we'll return your money."

The farmer was dumfounded. He could not grasp the meaning of the new turn of events, but stared vacantly at the man.

"But ye—" he began.

"Here's your money!" the other interrupted. "Count it quickly. We'll leave town immediately on this train for New York."

Williams seized the bundle of bills thrust into his hand as the heavy train rolled into the station. At that same moment the still puffing Kinney returned to his side, and as he caught sight of the roll of bills the farmer held, his eyes distended to twice their usual size in astonishment.

"Why, Tom—" Kinney exclaimed.

"It's all right," Williams hastened to interrupt, a strange smile settling itself upon his features as a great light dawned upon him.

With an apprehensive glance toward Kinney, the secret-service agent of the morning sprang upon a car platform of the already moving train, quickly followed by the man who called himself Lawson, and who appeared from the other end of the station.

Williams saw and realized. Hastily counting the bills he held, he found they amounted to exactly four hundred dollars.

"They cert'inly hed a slick game," he muttered beneath his breath. "Wonder who else got caught."

"Wot ye say, Tom?" queried the constable.

"Nothin'," was the brief reply.

"Here comes our train," Kinney remarked, glancing up the track.

"Guess I won't go, after all," Williams observed slowly. "I'm goin' home. Oh, here, John, buy a present fer the kids."

He peeled off a five-dollar bill from the roll, and thrusting it into the astonished man's hand, turned and abruptly retraced his steps toward the mill where he had left his horse and wagon.

Knowing Williams's avaricious, close-fisted reputation, the constable gazed at the retreating figure in amazement, then at the money in his hand.

"Well, of all things!" he muttered in a bewildered tone.

The old farmer's steps were light and care-free as he hurried up the street. His first astonishment had given way to a feeling of joy and happiness that he had not known for many years.

"Purty slick critters, them," he chuckled under his breath. "Guess everythin' 'cept the money was a fraud—thet sure was real. An' by them workin' together that way, they could easy clear up a case a day, and then skip the town. I see, now, why that feller Lawson were so insistin' thet I keep the five hundred in th' house—so I'd hev it

handy fer his partner when he come. And when they see me runnin' up with John Kinney, in constable's clothes, they thought I was a goin' to hev them jailed. It's luck fer me—"

He stopped abruptly before a dry-goods store, then entered without the least hesitation.

"I'm goin' to s'prise Lucy—I'll git her thet dress she wanted. And it won't be jest plain black—it'll be black silk. She deserves it, anyway."

SECRET ENEMIES.*

By F. K. SCRIBNER,

Author of "A Conflict with Cæsar," "The Eagle of Empire," "The Ravens of the Rhine," etc.

The man with a difficult trust to execute in a strange country and threatened by foes whom he has no means of knowing.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ARRIVING in Paris to visit his friend, Victor de Marrast, Sir Harold Campbell discovers that the marquis has been consigned to the Bastile through a *lettre de cachet* in the hands of some powerful enemy. Campbell sets out in haste for the Château Bleaumont to aid Mlle. de Marrast, whom he has reason to believe is also in danger. At an inn some distance from Foulon he is overtaken by De Marrast's butler, Jean Labrie, with the news that Mlle. de Marrast has been decoyed from the château by a false message, and that, escorted by three of her enemies, she will probably stop at the inn that night on her way to Paris. In an attempt to rescue her, Campbell and Labrie rouse the Frenchmen, one of whom is quickly overcome. Labrie attacks a second, Destrade, in the hall, while the third, De Charny, engages with Campbell in Mlle. de Marrast's room. Campbell calls to the girl to escape by the window, and forces the fight out of her room into the hall.

CHAPTER VII *(continued)*.

A RAPIER, A TABLE, AND A HORSE-PISTOL.

HIS opponent's back was toward the two Frenchmen, so Campbell could see something of what was taking place between them. Destrade had disentangled himself and rose painfully; but though one hand was powerless, and the blood flowed from a gash in his forehead, he was still able to wield a sword.

Labrie, however, was not so fortunate, for, besides being entirely unarmed, he was pinned down by the table in such a manner that he could not even struggle to his knees.

The expression upon his enemy's face showed he would be pitiless; only a moment, it seemed, stood between the hapless butler and a sword thrust through the body.

Campbell took in all this in a glance, for he dared not take his eyes from the face of De Charny. After the rapid assault and desperate defense, the two men were content to remain motionless for a moment, their blades pressing against each other.

Then Campbell, driven to action by the danger which threatened his companion, renewed the combat fiercely; but this time the Frenchman did not give back.

Destrade limped forward until he stood almost above his prostrate enemy. With the utmost coolness he measured the distance, looking down with angry, narrowed eyes. Then he drew back his arm and poised the point above the breast of the helpless butler.

Labrie's lips quivered, and instinctively he threw out one hand. A ghastly smile distorted the blood-stained face of his enemy. The steel flashed coldly in the candle-light; giving up all as lost, Labrie uttered a groan and closed his eyes.

Then suddenly a voice rang out in the hall. The butler opened his eyes and stared up at the blade hovering above his heart; but the steel did not descend.

*Began *August* ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

Destrade was no longer looking down, but toward the outer door, which opened onto the veranda. In this opening stood the hostler, Fortier.

In his hand he held an enormous horse-pistol, the muzzle of which was pointed at the head of the astonished Frenchman. Between the mouth of this atrocious weapon and Destrade's eyes was scarcely ten feet; he could discern the charge of lead slugs which had been rammed into the black depths.

"Drop your sword, *monsieur,*" said the hostler harshly. "It does not please me that you should murder a helpless man."

Destrade uttered an oath, but understanding perfectly that the hostler was terribly in earnest, he lowered his arm.

"Get up, my friend," continued Fortier.

And Labrie, rolling over, dragged himself from under the table and retreated behind the shelter of the horse-pistol.

"Good!" grunted the hostler. "Now, *messieurs* may be permitted to finish their interrupted argument."

He motioned toward Campbell and De Charny.

But the end came quickly. The Frenchman, thrown off his guard for an instant by the sound of the loud voice behind him, left an opening. Campbell's blade darted through it, and the steel went a hand's breadth into his shoulder.

De Charny uttered a sharp cry, reeled back, and fell upon his knees. Campbell drew back his arm, and the stricken man rolled over upon his side.

For a moment silence reigned in the hall. Then Destrade, with an awkward movement—for he could use but one hand—sheathed his sword.

It was plain he had enough of fighting, and possessed neither the courage nor the determination which had been exhibited by his companion. Fortier lowered the horse-pistol.

"Well, *messieurs*—" he began; then, in a loud voice: "*Mort du diable!* What are you doing there? Cannot gentlemen enjoy themselves but you must poke your noses into the affair?"

And he raised the pistol threateningly.

There was a wild scramble in the rear of the hall. The two servants belonging to the inn, and the stable-boys, who had been aroused from their beds by the tumult, fled back to their quarters. The hostler shrugged his shoulders.

"The devil!" he muttered. "Now I am in a pretty fix. They will tell old Pierre that I have mixed in this business, and he will blame me because his house has been turned into a shambles and the doors and furniture broken. Only I could not resist showing that Reveillon what it is to gain the enmity of the people."

He glanced at Destrade, who was examining his injured hand, then at the body of De Charny stretched out on the floor.

"*Monsieur*—" he began, addressing Campbell, but the latter was no longer in the hall; he had disappeared through the door of *mademoiselle's* room.

"*Mademoiselle*, Mlle. de Marrast!" they heard him call.

There was no reply; after several moments he reappeared in the doorway.

"Guard this fellow," he ordered sharply. Then, to Jean Labrie: "*Mademoiselle* is no longer here—to the stable."

He pushed his way past the others and hurried out through the front door. Destrade began to laugh.

"Silence!" thundered the hostler, and half raised the horse-pistol.

Campbell lost no time in reaching the stable. But though the door was open no other sound except the restless movements of horses greeted him.

"*Mademoiselle!*" he called, but received no answer.

A suspicion flashed into his head. He entered the stable, called again, and listened. It was so dark he could see nothing. Turning, he hurried back to the inn.

Destrade was leaning against the wall; the hostler had handed the pistol to Labrie, and was bending over the body of De Charny. As Campbell appeared, he looked up and said bruskly:

"He is not dead, though you have pierced him through the lungs, *monsieur.*"

But Campbell, at that moment, gave no thought to a wounded man. He addressed the hostler sharply.

"A lantern! We must count the horses; I fear one is missing."

"You mean—" began Fortier.

"That *mademoiselle* has—" answered Campbell; then glanced at Destrade and checked himself.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"It does not interest me, *monsieur,*" he growled. "I was to have received five hundred francs for this affair; now I get nothing but a broken hand and a cracked head. The devil take every one connected with the business."

Campbell understood that De Charny was really the leader of those sent to conduct Mlle. de Marrast to Paris. He turned to Jean Labrie.

"Take him in there and permit him to sit down." He motioned toward the public room. Then, to the hostler: "Come—a lantern."

The faint rays of the sputtering candle lighted up the interior of the stable. Fortier began to count the horses.

"There should be eight, and now there are only seven; one has been taken, *monsieur,*" said he.

"You are not mistaken?" demanded Campbell.

"Five which came from Foulon, those which you yourself and M. Labrie rode from Paris, and one which belongs to old Pierre. I counted them plainly when I closed the door at nightfall. Now there are but seven; a saddle also is missing," replied the hostler.

"And *mademoiselle* has taken it; yet, there is time to overtake her," muttered Campbell.

"Pardon, *monsieur,* if one knows which direction she has gone," suggested the hostler.

"It is to Paris," replied Campbell without hesitation. He remembered now that the girl had urged that no time be lost in hastening to her brother's assistance.

"And you desire to follow at once—toward Paris?" asked his companion.

"At once, as soon as I can summon Labrie.

Fortier ran his eye over the horses and selected three which his experienced eye told him were the swiftest. He began to place the saddles upon their backs in preparation for the journey.

"But there are only two of us," suggested Campbell.

"Pardon, *monsieur,* but there are three. In the first place, I do not care to remain and face old Pierre; and, in the second—well, if Jean Labrie speaks the truth, there is going to be something doing in Paris at which I desire to be present," replied the hostler.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN PARIS BEFORE THE OUTBURST.

THEY found the butler of the Hôtel de Marrast in the public room, guarding the sullen Destrade. It was plain the man's injured hand was paining him dreadfully and his head ringing from the blow he had received in falling against the edge of the table.

When Campbell appeared in the doorway he began to swear fearfully.

How long was he to be kept seated on a hard bench and threatened by a horse-pistol? Had he not already said he was through with the business, and all he desired was to return to Paris as quickly as possible?

Campbell replied shortly that he had brought his misfortunes on himself, but that presently he would be left to his own devices, when he might do as he chose. Doubtless he would be occupied for the remainder of the night in taking care of his two less fortunate companions, one of whom lay in the hall and the other under the window of the room which had been occupied by *mademoiselle.* In any case, it would not be permitted him to ride toward Paris until morning.

Then he explained to Jean Labrie that Mlle. de Marrast was already gone and that they were to follow immediately.

The butler threw up his hands in protest.

"*Monsieur,*" said he solemnly, "I pray that you hasten, but I will remain until morning; then I will go on, in the coach, to Paris. Henri, who has driven *mademoiselle* thus far from Foulon, has nothing to do with these men; also, he is a coward, and I will keep the pistol."

Campbell could not repress a smile. The man's reluctance to remount a horse overcame all other fears and desires. He wished to follow after *mademoiselle,* but the thought of sticking for twenty-four miles in the saddle filled him with dismay.

But the Scotchman had no idea of leaving the honest fellow behind. De Charny, it was true, would make no trouble, but

Destrade and the man laying outside, and who might regain consciousness at any moment, would not hesitate to settle scores if the opportunity was afforded them.

This he explained to Labrie.

The latter wavered; then the restless movement of the horses, which the hostler was holding at the foot of the veranda steps, renewed his reluctance.

Campbell began to grow impatient.

"Come!" said he sharply. "You will not ride alone; and we will overtake *mademoiselle* before we have covered many miles. In any case, your presence is necessary when we reach Paris; the danger to your mistress will be greater there than here."

He did not tell Labrie that, having overtaken the girl, he would urge her not to return to the capital. Either the château near Foulon, or some quiet inn in the country, would be safer for the time being.

He proposed to leave her in the care of the butler and to return to Paris himself, where he would take steps in the marquis's behalf. But he desired that Destrade should believe *mademoiselle* was going to Paris.

The butler resigned himself to his fate, and left the room as though he were walking to execution. Campbell turned to the Frenchman.

"*Monsieur,*" said he gravely, "we are about to leave this place and ride to Paris. I have the right to kill you, for you sought my death, but I am content to leave you as you are. But, if you attempt to follow, I will take the law into my own hands; you understand?"

"I have told you I am through with this affair; you may go to Paris or to the devil, it is all the same to me, *monsieur,*" growled Destrade.

Campbell hesitated a moment.

"*Monsieur,*" said he, "a little while ago you spoke of receiving five hundred francs for your part in this business. From whom were you to receive them? For the information I am willing to pay an equal sum."

Destrade shrugged his shoulders.

"Who, but from De Charny?" he answered sullenly.

"But who stands behind De Charny? You understand what I mean, *monsieur.*"

"*Mort du diable!* How should I know that? It was an evil hour when I agreed to enter into this affair. Now De Charny is dead, or dying, and I have only my trouble for my pains," answered Destrade with a sour smile.

It was plain he could not, or would not, tell anything. Campbell turned and left the room.

Coming out upon the veranda, he found Labrie and the hostler already mounted. He swung himself into the empty saddle.

"*Monsieur,*" said Fortier as he gathered up the reins, "I have assumed the liberty of taking certain precautions; in case any one should desire to follow us, I have turned loose the horses from the stable, even those which were attached to *mademoiselle's* coach."

Campbell nodded. "To the road," said he sharply, and put his mount in motion.

It had seemed that it would not be very difficult to overtake the girl who had preceded them by scarcely a quarter of an hour, but, as the horses covered mile after mile and there were no signs of her, Campbell began to have misgivings.

He understood perfectly why she had seized the opportunity to leave the inn so suddenly. If he, Campbell, had been vanquished, she would then be left in the hands of those whom she had been made to believe were her enemies; therefore it was the part of wisdom to escape while there was yet time. Two things were possible: either she had not ridden toward Paris, or, being an excellent horsewoman, she was riding so rapidly she could not be overtaken.

Not knowing who might follow her, she would scarcely tarry along the road. Campbell accepted the latter as the true solution of the problem.

Clinging desperately to the back of his horse, Jean Labrie managed to keep pace with his companions. And thus, in the early dawn, uncertain whether *mademoiselle* had preceded them, they reached the outskirts of the French capital.

Campbell pulled his mount to a walk.

"My friend," said he, addressing Labrie, "if *mademoiselle* has already entered Paris she has gone straight to the Hôtel de Marrast. Let us proceed thither; you know the way."

The butler, panting and shaken almost to pieces, found his voice with difficulty. Finally he replied weakly:

"Pardon, *monsieur*, but would it not be the part of wisdom for you to avoid the Faubourg St. Germain; there is certainly that Jacques, and perhaps others, watching. It is believed that you have reached Foulon and are no longer in Paris."

He wiped the perspiration from his glistening face.

"I would suggest just this, *monsieur*," he continued. "I have a relative, a discreet person, who lives in the Rue de la Cité; permit me to conduct you and friend Fortier thither. Afterward I will go to the Hôtel de Marrast, and no one will suspect anything."

Campbell recognized the wisdom of this plan.

"To the Rue de la Cité, then, my friend," said he shortly.

Jean Labrie straightened himself in the saddle, adjusted his garments, and became their guide through the streets of Paris. He even assumed a haughty air as he rode through the gaping crowds.

The discreet relative proved to be a Frenchman of villainous aspect and uncertain age. He occupied three rooms on the top floor of a high building near the end of the Rue de la Cité.

He had served several masters: in his younger days, in one of the king's regiments; afterward, as an upper servant to several of the nobility. Now his time was his own, but he served the Tiers Estate, and was considered something of an authority when it came to the discussion of proper adjustment of the laws between the classes.

Further, it appeared that he knew of every one in Paris, but especially concerning those whom the state had domiciled behind the walls of the Bastile. He even knew the interior of the gloomy prison as one knows the rooms of his own house.

It was said he had served Louis the Fifteenth in the capacity of an underwarden in the gray stone pile at the end of the Faubourg St. Antoine.

He was seated in a chair on the sidewalk before the door when the trio rode through the Rue de la Cité and, at a gesture from Labrie, pulled up their horses. The butler slid from his saddle.

"Good morning, *monsieur*," said he gravely.

The man of the Rue de la Cité arose, thrust one hand into the bosom of his shirt, and regarded the newcomers critically; his gaze rested upon Campbell's face the longest. Jean Labrie hastened to get in a word.

"A friend of the people; and *monsieur* is a stranger to Paris," he explained.

Then, taking a step nearer, and in a lower voice: "And a friend of the Marquis de Marrast," he added.

"Then certainly *monsieur* is a stranger, for it is dangerous to be openly the friend of one who has been sent to the Bastile," replied the other in a deep voice.

"Then you already know that my master has gone to the Bastile?" asked Labrie in a voice filled with emotion.

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"Two days ago, at half past four in the afternoon, an officer bearing a *lettre de cachet* was admitted to the Hôtel de Marrast. At five o'clock the Marquis de Marrast was on his way to the Bastile. At five-thirty his name was recorded, he was inspected by the governor, and was assigned to a room in the quarter set aside for prisoners dangerous to the state," said the other in a tone one might employ when reading from a printed report.

Campbell looked at the man in amazement. The occupant of a dingy house in the Rue de la Cité, a fellow apparently without influence or authority, he was able to give the details which pertained to the arrest and incarceration of a member of the nobility.

But Jean Labrie showed no surprise; instead he made a gesture denoting despair.

"It is, then, as a prisoner dangerous to the welfare of the state that my master has become a resident of the Bastile—he is lost!" said he in a dull voice.

"Which explains what I meant when I said that *monsieur* here must indeed be a stranger to Paris when he permits himself to be declared a friend of the Marquis de Marrast," added the other impassionately.

Then, with a harsh laugh:

"But doubtless *monsieur* is able to distinguish between the Rue de la Cité and —shall we say certain other quarters of Paris?"

Campbell, who felt his impatience rising at being kept standing in the street when he desired to learn if Mlle. de Marrast had arrived, turned to Labrie.

"We are forgetting our errand, and—*mademoiselle,*" said he.

"No, *monsieur,* I was coming to that, and M. Reuel understands perfectly well we have not stopped merely to make an early morning call in the Rue de la Cité."

Campbell glanced at the crowd which, attracted by the presence of the horses, had collected on either side of the street.

M. Reuel made a little gesture toward the open door. Labrie turned to the hostler, Fortier, who during all this time had not opened his mouth.

"Remain with the horses, my friend," said he, and indicated to Campbell to follow his new host, who had already entered the house.

Having climbed three pairs of stairs, the newcomers found themselves in a little room whose single dingy window faced the street.

A table, two chairs, and a huge chest completed the furniture of the apartment. Upon the latter M. Reuel seated himself, leaving his companions to follow suit or stand as they chose.

Then he looked at the butler of the Hôtel de Marrast, and nodded.

"In an hour I am due to attend a meeting of the National Assembly," said he bruskly, and leaned back against the wall.

Campbell did not understand what the National Assembly might be, but it was evident the man to whom Labrie had brought him considered his time of value; also, that the butler's admiration for him was immense.

Labrie cleared his throat, hesitated, then, beginning at the moment when Campbell was admitted to the Hôtel de Marrast, related everything that had happened.

"And what do you desire of me?" demanded M. Reuel, when the tale was finished.

"First, that M. Campbell may be permitted to remain here for a few hours; and afterward—well, there is *mademoiselle,*" replied Labrie.

"And nothing more?"

"Well, it might be desirable to get *mademoiselle* out of Paris. Now, if she has gone to the Hôtel de Marrast, to leave the city secretly may not be so easy; and —you understand."

M. Reuel shrugged his shoulders.

"And why should I," he asked suddenly, "who am of the people, put myself out to assist a member of the nobility? What is the misfortune of this marquis to me? Because one noble chooses to cut the throat of another, why should I interfere? Simply because I have kept my ears and eyes open, and am able to accomplish something when—it pays me to do so?"

"*Monsieur,*" broke in Campbell, "it is not necessary for you to interfere in this matter; nor do I know why I have come here."

Angered at the other's tone, and believing time was being wasted, he took a step toward the door. M. Reuel did not open his mouth, but Jean Labrie interposed hastily.

"Wait, *monsieur*—you do not understand."

"Only that I am wasting time; M. Reuel is not inclined to bother himself with this affair, what more is there to say?" answered the young man sharply.

"Wait, *monsieur.* You wish to save *mademoiselle*—perhaps even the marquis," cried Labrie again.

Campbell hesitated: there was a note of earnest entreaty in the man's voice.

"And how can I serve either *mademoiselle* or De Marrast by remaining here?" the Scotchman asked.

"*Monsieur,*" explained the butler eagerly, "as you know, the king and the nobles have in France an excellent system through which they find out and accomplish many things. This system is provided with arms which extend into every quarter of the country and reach even beyond the border. The integral part is composed of numerous secret agents bound by oath to serve a head or master—either the king or some powerful noble. It is even so in your own country, *monsieur?*"

"That is universal knowledge," replied Campbell.

"But you do not know, and not every one in France knows, *monsieur,* that there is another system which reaches deeper, into darker corners, and is more potent than that of the nobility; because greater

opportunity is given to its secret agents. It is the secret service of the people of Paris: of the Tiers Estate—whose agents work not for pay from the hand of a central master, but for the welfare of a common brotherhood. You have not known this, *monsieur,* or that through this secret agency it will be possible to discover the identity of the enemy who sent the Marquis de Marrast to the Bastile: the man from whom *mademoiselle* has so much to fear."

"What are you saying?" demanded Campbell sharply.

And, glancing at M. Reuel, he almost fancied he detected a smile lurking upon the Frenchman's lips.

It was the latter who replied:

"And so you are surprised, *monsieur,* but what is so very wonderful in that? Why should not we, the Tiers Estate—the National Assembly of France—have our secret agents? Shall the common people throw away their opportunity? Can we not be permitted to amuse ourselves after the fashion set by the nobility? And if, in time, we come to use what we have learned, why should the world wonder because we have not shut our eyes and ears?

"There are a thousand servants employed by the King of France; thrice ten thousand by the nobility; M. Jean, here, is butler to the Marquis de Marrast. Why, I ask, should not M. Jean use his ears and eyes? Why should not the coachman who drives you through the Faubourg St. Germain discover something when opportunity falls in his way? Why should a cook in the king's kitchen, a footman in the stable of M. the Duke of Orleans, a maid of the queen's apartments, close their ears?"

"And if each little part brings its information to a common head, what may not the whole become? Perhaps it amuses us; possibly it is something more—the world has yet to learn that, M. Campbell."

The shiftless air of indolence had fallen from the man; his speech did not savor of that of the lower classes of Paris. Campbell realized suddenly that M. Reuel did not properly belong in a dingy house in the Rue de la Cité. He began to understand why Jean Labrie had brought him here.

For several moments pride struggled with common sense; to throw himself upon the good graces of this rough-appearing member of the Tiers Estate must be to acknowledge a limitation of his own resources; but, on the other hand, could he cope alone with the powerful obstacles in his path?

He understood perfectly that what he had just heard was not idle boasting, and that through the assistance of M. Reuel he might hope to save not only Mlle. de Marrast, but her brother also.

"*Monsieur,*" said he gravely, "it is my desire to protect Mlle. de Marrast from such danger as may threaten her; the first step was taken at the inn on the road to Foulon. The second has led me to the Rue de la Cité."

M. Reuel arose from the chest; the villainous expression which had fallen, like a mask, from his face while he was speaking, had returned.

"If it please *monsieur,* he may remain here while Jean Labrie returns to the Hôtel de Marrast; it is possible that, in time, we may learn something," said he briefly.

"And the horses, *monsieur?* We cannot leave them standing in the street," ventured Labrie.

His old deferential manner had returned.

"Sell them, my friend, and divide the money among yourselves," Campbell replied.

M. Reuel was already at the door; on the threshold he turned.

"As *monsieur* has not breakfasted, there is an inn a few doors down the street; not such as *monsieur* is probably accustomed to, but it will suffice," said he.

Campbell took up his hat and, with the others, descended to the street-door. The hostler, seated upon one of the horses, was scowling at the crowd, which had not lost the opportunity to pass jeering remarks.

Labrie explained what might be done with the animals; the hostler nodded, gathered up the reins, and moved off. M. Reuel had already disappeared. Labrie returned to the door.

"I will be back at the earliest moment, *monsieur,*" said he.

Campbell watched him disappear into

the crowd, which was dispersing—some following the horses, others going about their business. Impressed by the statement he had heard a few minutes before, he noted what otherwise might have escaped his attention.

The men and women who filled the narrow Rue de la Cité were not the light-hearted, careless rabble common to the poorer quarters of Paris. Certain things appeared to be out of joint. It seemed as if those who laughed laughed less heartily, the scowls upon the faces of those who scowled were darker and more sinister. Every one appeared to watch his neighbor furtively, with cunning glances.

The Scotchman stepped out on the sidewalk, walked down the street, and entered the public-house of which M. Reuel had spoken. The room was poorly lighted, for the little window-panes were stained and dingy.

Seating himself in a corner, he ordered a light meal from the slouchy waiter who presented himself. Customers were constantly leaving and entering the place, and in idle curiosity Campbell glanced at each in turn.

Then suddenly the face of a newcomer attracted his attention—a man who was dressed more neatly than the majority that frequented the place. This man glanced carelessly about the room and dropped into a seat near one of the windows. For a moment Campbell could not place him, though he knew he had seen the man before. Then the fellow's identity flashed into his head.

It was Jacques, under-butler at the Hôtel de Marrast.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE GATE OF THE TUILERIES.

THE Frenchman's profile was silhouetted against the light, and Campbell knew he could not be mistaken, for the face, once seen, could not be forgotten.

He had observed the man only casually in the hall two nights before, but to an excellent memory for faces was added the interest imparted by Labrie's story at the inn, to the effect that the under-butler was in the employ of the marquis's unknown enemy.

From behind his coffee-cup Campbell now studied the man attentively, while the other, unsuspicious, despatched his breakfast with deliberate slowness. And while he ate, and Campbell from his corner watched him, a plan took root in the Scotchman's mind.

Finally the Frenchman paid his bill, arose, and walked to the door. For a moment he stood looking out into the street, as though hesitating which way to turn; then, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, he crossed the threshold and walked at a brisk step down the Rue de la Cité.

Campbell, well in the rear, took up the trail. Probably he would have nothing to show in the end for his trouble, but it pleased him to keep an eye on M. Jacques.

The latter continued for some distance along the Rue de la Cité, then turned sharply into a side street, traversed this, and plunged into a more crowded and bigger thoroughfare.

Campbell had no idea of where he was or of where he was going; following doggedly, he kept the other in sight. For half an hour the chase continued, then, passing suddenly into a more open boulevard, Campbell saw the Seine and its bridges before him.

The Frenchman turned to the right and took up a course parallel with the river. They were now in a better part of the city and the street was less crowded, therefore Campbell was forced to employ more caution in keeping out of sight of his quarry.

Presently a pile of gray stone building loomed up ahead, the street broadened on either hand, forming a semicircular park. Then, for the first time, Campbell was able to get his bearings: he was approaching the Tuileries, the Paris residence of the king.

The man whom he was following slackened his pace as he drew near the stone-flanked gates of the palace. For several moments he hesitated, then, seeing the guards eying him suspiciously, he approached and addressed one of them.

The soldier shook his head and motioned for the fellow to pass on, but M. Jacques seemed in no hurry to depart. Though some way off, Campbell could see he was becoming violently excited.

Another guard joined the first, and to

him the man addressed himself, talking rapidly and gesticulating. Campbell approached nearer, curious to discover why the under-butler should seek to gain admittance to the royal residence.

For several minutes the scene continued: M. Jacques arguing excitedly, the soldiers shaking their heads and refusing him admission. It is probable the affair would have ended by the man being thrown into the gutter had not a sudden interruption occurred.

A little group of horsemen appeared on the inner side of the gate; the guards sprang to attention, and one, seizing the intruder by the collar, jerked him backward so suddenly he measured his length upon the ground. At the same moment the foremost of the horsemen rode through the gateway.

A crowd, attracted by the appearance of the cortège, had collected around Campbell, who turned to a man standing at his elbow.

"Is it the king?" he asked.

"No, *monsieur,* the king is at Versailles, but it is the Duke of Orleans—that first one, on the white horse," replied the citizen.

Campbell looked with curiosity upon this powerful nobleman who, some claimed, exceeded in authority even Louis himself. And at the moment an unusual thing happened.

M. Jacques scrambled to his feet, and, eluding the guard, who made a second grab at his collar, darted forward.

The half-dozen horsemen who were accompanying the duke from the Tuileries were past the gate also and close behind the nobleman. In his haste to elude the guard, Jacques stumbled into the midst of the party.

Then, evidently fearing to be knocked down by one of the horses, he sprang back and came into violent contact with the animal on which the duke was mounted.

For a moment the riders were thrown into confusion; then by a quick movement Orleans recovered himself, and, snatching off one of his heavy riding gauntlets, struck the fellow a resounding blow in the face with it.

An officer of the guards hurried forward and seized the dazed Jacques roughly by the shoulder. The duke looked down, his eyes blazing with anger.

"Take the fool away and put him where he can play no more boorish pranks. It is possible he may learn something with those of his kind across the river," said he sharply.

The officer began to drag the man off, but M. Jacques, whose face had become white as chalk, except where the red welt crossed his cheek, threw out his arms.

"*Monsieur!*" he cried, "in God's name, *monsieur,* I did not mean—"

A second soldier rushed forward and clapped his hand over his mouth. The unfortunate man began to struggle desperately, and a sound like the cry of a wounded animal came from beneath the guard's fingers.

The duke nodded to his followers and touched his horse lightly with the spur. The cavalcade passed on, leaving the unfortunate under-butler in the hands of the soldiers.

Then began a struggle which, though brief, was terrific. M. Jacques became suddenly possessed with the strength of despair; he struck right and left fiercely and his teeth sank into the hand clasped over his mouth.

"Save me, *monsieur!*" he cried. "I was but obeying orders—to tell you the Englishman is again in Paris."

A blow on the head laid him upon the cobblestones. The duke and his escort were already some rods away, and no one turned to look back.

Two of the soldiers picked up the unconscious man, as though he had been a log of wood, and carried him inside the gate.

The Frenchman at Campbell's elbow uttered a deep growl.

"It is that way they use a citizen who happens to bump against one of their horses." He ended the sentence with an oath.

"Where will they take him?" asked Campbell.

His heart was beating rapidly, for he believed he had discovered through accident the identity of the Marquis de Marrast's enemy.

Jacques had been ordered to inform his master if he, Campbell, returned to Paris. It was to carry out this order that the man had hastened to the Tuileries and—the person he sought was the Duke of Orleans.

And if it was this powerful nobleman who had sent De Marrast to the Bastile, and was plotting against *mademoiselle*, what chance had he, a stranger, to accomplish anything? For the first time he felt his courage failing.

He was recalled to himself by the Frenchman, to whom he had put the question, replying:

"Where but to the Conciergerie, which is only a little better than the Bastile itself, and from the Conciergerie to the galleys at Toulon. It will be many years before our friend sees Paris again, *monsieur*."

The crowd began to disperse. Campbell looked at his watch; it had been over an hour since he left the house in the Rue de la Cité, and Labrie might already have returned from the Hôtel de Marrast.

He must know at once if he had heard anything of *mademoiselle*. She must be found, if possible, before the Duke of Orleans learned she was in Paris.

By inquiring the way he at length again reached the Rue de la Cité, and hurried up the three flights of stairs to the room of M. Reuel. It was empty—Labrie had not returned.

For another hour he paced the floor restlessly; at times he was tempted to rush from the house and hasten to the Hôtel de Marrast. Then, after what seemed hours instead of minutes, footsteps sounded on the stairs. The door opened, and Jean Labrie entered the room.

Campbell turned toward him quickly.

"Well?" said he, suppressing his eagerness by an effort.

The butler was wiping the perspiration from his forehead with an immense handkerchief.

"I have been to the Hôtel de Marrast, *monsieur*," said he calmly.

Campbell could have seized his collar and shaken him.

"And *mademoiselle*—is she there?" he demanded.

"For the past two hours," replied Labrie briefly.

"Then, in God's name, let us lose no time!" cried the Scotchman, reaching for his hat.

The butler's face expressed mild surprise.

"Of course, *monsieur*, but as it is a hot day, and haste is not necessary, I would suggest—" he began.

Campbell seized him by the front of his jacket.

"And while we stand talking the last chance may slip from our grasp. Have you lost your senses that you say haste is not necessary? Let us bring *mademoiselle* here—anywhere—only that she be not found in the Hôtel de Marrast," he burst out.

"It is evident *monsieur* does not understand," replied his companion.

"I understand that unless we make haste it will be impossible to accomplish anything," cried Campbell impatiently.

"*Monsieur*," answered Labrie, "that is not what I was about to say; it was that I have just learned at the Hôtel de Marrast that the Vicomte de Lesse is in Paris."

"And who the devil is the Vicomte de Lesse?" demanded Campbell, no longer trying to conceal his irritation.

"The *vicomte* is an officer in the king's service; he is also a cousin of the Marquis de Marrast, and therefore of *mademoiselle*, whom he loves like a sister. No one will dare to molest her, now that he has afforded his protection—the more especially as he is a favorite at Versailles."

"Then, why did not De Marrast call upon this excellent person for assistance?" asked Campbell dryly, his irritation by no means subsiding upon being informed that he might retire into the background.

"You see," explained Labrie gravely, "the *vicomte* returned to Paris only yesterday, having been absent from France for some weeks on a secret mission. Knowing that, the marquis could not call upon him for assistance at a moment's notice. But now the *vicomte* has taken up his residence in the Hôtel de Marrast, and *mademoiselle* will be under his protection. He will also take steps to free my master from the Bastile."

"And you have seen him and doubtless explained everything?"

"I have not spoken to the *vicomte*, for he was absent when I reached the house; but the Comte de Plauex has explained everything first to him and this morning to *mademoiselle*."

"Who believes that this *vicomte* will free her brother from the Bastile, now that he is on the ground?" retorted Campbell.

"She has not seen him, but does not doubt he will accompany her to Versailles, where, together, they will lay the matter before the king," answered Labrie.

Justly or unjustly, Campbell experienced a feeling of resentment at the turn affairs had taken. Having risked his liberty, and perhaps his life, in order to carry out the request of his friend, De Marrast, he now received a hint that his services were no longer required.

"Well," said he dryly, "it is doubtless fortunate the Vicomte de Lesse has returned to Paris in the nick of time; yet I fancy he also may find himself powerless. The Duke of Orleans is not an enemy to be despised, even by one who is a favorite of King Louis."

"The Duke of Orleans?" cried Labrie.

"So it would seem; and I imagine your *vicomte* will find his hands full before this affair is concluded," replied Campbell bruskly.

His companion's face expressed consternation.

"*Monsieur,*" he stammered, "I do not understand. You have learned something —the Duke of Orleans—"

"Has put De Marrast into the Bastile; and it is doubtless he who sent messengers to Foulon to bring *mademoiselle* back to Paris. Now he has but to call at the Hôtel de Marrast and his purpose will be completed."

Campbell was human enough to enjoy springing this information upon the astonished butler.

Labrie almost collapsed into a chair; the perspiration gathered in great drops upon his forehead.

"The Duke of Orleans!" he murmured. "It is not possible, *monsieur.*"

Campbell's irritation vanished; he even experienced a feeling of shame that he had permitted himself to indulge in such childishness. Having reduced the self-contained Labrie to a state bordering on panic, he hastened to explain.

Rapidly he related how he had followed the fellow Jacques, and just what had occurred at the gate of the Tuileries.

For several moments his companion remained silent, then gradually an expression of relief overspread his face.

"*Monsieur,*" said he, "pardon, but I believe you are mistaken; it is not the Duke of Orleans who is the Marquis de Marrast's enemy."

"But who else? For it is evident that fellow went to the Tuileries to accost the duke. If Orleans is not interested in this affair, why should the man have cried out to him: 'Save me, *monsieur*—I have come to tell you the Englishman has returned to Paris'?" replied Campbell.

Labrie passed his hand across his forehead.

"*Monsieur,*" said he, "it is evident you have forgotten one thing. Did not the marquis say in his letter: 'And it is I who first took him to Versailles'? Now, it is perfectly evident that the Marquis de Marrast did not introduce the Duke of Orleans to the court at Versailles, therefore he must have meant some one else. Also, if it really was the duke, it is not probable he would personally have engaged the services of such a fellow as that Jacques; he would have given his orders to some one who has a better head on his shoulders, who, without mentioning names, would in turn employ his own agents.

"Let us consider this matter from another point of view, *monsieur.* It was not the duke to whom Jacques addressed those words, but rather to one of the other horsemen. The enemy of my master, the marquis, was one of those who followed the Duke of Orleans through the gateway of the Tuileries. Jacques, knowing this person was at the palace, went thither to communicate with him. Seeing him about to ride away, he forgot prudence, and in his zeal nearly unhorsed the proudest man in France, with the result that we are rid of him for good and all. He betrayed his master; for punishment, he will pass the rest of his life chained to an oar in a galley-ship at Toulon."

The sigh which accompanied the conclusion of this speech testified to the relief which Labrie experienced in proving to his own satisfaction that it was not the Duke of Orleans who was De Marrast's enemy.

Campbell shared in this feeling, for he understood perfectly that the marquis

could not have had the duke in mind when he penned the lines to which the butler had referred. He tried to recollect the faces of the half-dozen horsemen who had accompanied the nobleman, but as he had paid no attention to any one except Orleans, he could recall nothing that would help him.

"*Monsieur,*" continued Labrie, "we were speaking of the timely arrival in Paris of the *vicomte,* when you frightened me nearly to death by declaring you had discovered in the Duke of Orleans my master's enemy. I was about to deliver to you a message from *mademoiselle,* who has not forgotten what you did for her at the inn last night."

"And what did *mademoiselle* say, my friend?" asked Campbell.

"That you accompany me to the Hôtel de Marrast, when it is her purpose to introduce you to the *vicomte,* her cousin. Knowing in what regard the marquis holds you, and of your zeal in her behalf, she will beg that you remain her friend. You see, *monsieur,* that in an affair of this kind two heads are better than one; *mademoiselle,* and the *vicomte* also, will accept your assistance with gratitude."

Campbell's feeling that his premature irritation had been an injustice to the girl accelerated his decision to accept this invitation. Moreover, he did not believe that the secret enemy would retire from the contest because of the arrival of the Vicomte de Lesse on the field. Nor did he share that confidence which was apparently held by Jean Labrie: that Mlle. de Marrast was no longer in danger.

"Let us go at once," said he, moving toward the door.

At the end of half an hour they were in the Faubourg St. Germain, and approaching the Hôtel de Marrast. As they reached the broad entrance, Jean Labrie made a little gesture.

"Pardon, *monsieur,*" said he, "but I will go round and enter by the gate which opens into the alley."

For the second time, Campbell found himself standing alone before the door of the De Marrast residence. As he reached to grasp the bronze knocker, the sound of a window being opened quickly somewhere above attracted his attention.

Looking upward, he noticed a small white object which, fluttering in the air, was descending toward him. Wafted by an almost imperceptible breeze, it zigzagged for a moment, then fell upon the sidewalk a few feet from where he was standing.

Withdrawing his hand from the knocker, he stooped and picked it up.

It was a piece of white paper crumpled into a ball. As he straightened he heard the window above close softly.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN BEHIND THE DOOR.

CAMPBELL unrolled the ball of paper and smoothed out the crumpled sheet, which appeared to be the fly-leaf torn hastily from a book.

It did not require more than a casual glance to determine the identity of the writer of this strange missive. Even had a signature not been appended to the few straggling lines, the old-fashioned, precise lettering revealed the handiwork of the Comte de Plauex:

> Come to me at the first opportunity, *monsieur,* but move with caution for I am watched closely. A wolf has entered the home of your friend the marquis. Be on your guard. DE PLAUEX.

For a moment Campbell stared at this perplexing communication; then the truth which lay behind the words rushed upon him. The old nobleman was virtually a prisoner in the Hôtel de Marrast, but had outwitted his jailer by dropping from a window the note which otherwise must never have reached its destination.

The solution of the mystery depended upon an interview with De Plauex, and at any cost he must see the old man.

Campbell crumpled the paper in his hand, but hesitated what course to pursue. Should he enter the house openly and demand to see the *comte* or await a favorable opportunity when he might do so secretly?

The decision was taken out of his hands. Suddenly the door swung open and Labrie appeared. Conflicting emotions were written upon the butler's face —fear, consternation, and perplexity.

"*Monsieur,*" he stammered, "she is no longer here!"

Campbell crossed the threshold and motioned to the other to close the door.

In the hall, filled with its atmosphere of gloom, he turned to Labrie. The butler's hand was trembling as he turned from pushing home the bolt.

"When I left to go to the Rue de la Cité, not an hour ago, *mademoiselle* was here," he explained in a dull voice. "I had been gone scarcely fifteen minutes when a message was delivered to her. Though dreadfully fatigued, she left the house almost immediately in the carriage which had brought the messenger."

"And this message?" asked Campbell quickly.

Fortunately, as Labrie explained, the girl in her haste had left it upon her dressing-table. Upon being informed that Mlle. de Marrast was gone, the butler had rushed to her room.

It was evident she had stopped only to change her dress, for the dust-covered garment she had worn during the ride from Foulon was lying across a chair. Convinced that his mistress had really departed, he was hastily leaving the room when the sheet of paper on the dressing-table caught his eye.

He had at first thought it was a note left by *mademoiselle,* but a glance showed him it was the missive which had caused her hurried departure. He now drew it from his pocket and placed it in Campbell's hand.

In itself the brief note was only a request that the girl should proceed without delay to meet the writer at Versailles, when together they would lay the matter of the marquis's arrest before the king. Under ordinary circumstances it would not have seemed fraught with importance, but two circumstances struck Campbell as worthy of attention.

The note was signed "Henri de Lesse"—and had therefore evidently been written by the *vicomte,* the man who had supposedly come to Paris from the south the night before.

But how had the Vicomte de Lesse learned that *mademoiselle* had returned that morning to the Hôtel de Marrast? When he had visited the house the evening before, she was supposed to be at the Château Bleaumont, eighteen leagues away.

According to Labrie's statement, he had not revisited the residence of the Marquis de Marrast that morning. Therefore, some one who had been stationed to watch the house in the Faubourg St. Germain had reported that Mlle. de Marrast had returned.

And secondly, the note which the old nobleman had dropped from the window referred to a new element of danger which threatened Campbell, for he was warned to act cautiously and to be on his guard. "A wolf has entered the home of your friend, the marquis."

Who, to his knowledge, had entered the Hôtel de Marrast during his absence? The Vicomte de Lesse! Taken together, these two facts gave to the message a sinister import.

Campbell folded the note carefully and put it in his pocket. When he turned to address his companion his voice had in it the ring of determination.

"My friend," he said calmly, "it would appear that you have been deceived. At this moment Mlle. de Marrast is in greater danger than when we found her at the inn on the road from Foulon."

Labrie seemed to be struggling for utterance; the perspiration gathered in great beads upon his forehead.

"You mean—you mean, *monsieur*—that it is the Vicomte de Lesse?" he stammered.

"I do not say this precious *vicomte* sent the marquis to the Bastile. But it is evident he has lured *mademoiselle* from this house; for what purpose it remains for us to discover."

"Let us hasten to Versailles. We may even overtake the carriage," cried Labrie.

"Rather let us first interview the Comte de Plauex, for it is necessary to learn everything possible," replied Campbell.

As he had done once before, he followed the butler up the wide stairway, past half a dozen doors, until his guide stopped before one near the extreme end of the corridor.

"It is the *comte's* apartment," said Labrie.

Campbell rapped upon the panel. For several moments only silence answered. For the second time the knocking echoed through the corridor. There was a footstep within and the sound of a bolt being

drawn. The door opened a few inches and a gruff voice demanded:

"Who is there?"

"It is the Comte de Plauex I desire to see," Campbell replied.

"Pardon, *monsieur,* but that is not possible," replied the man back of the door.

The butler, standing close behind Campbell, drew a sharp breath.

"*Monsieur,*" he whispered, "that is not one of the servants; and why is he guarding the Comte de Plauex?"

"That is what I propose finding out," replied Campbell in a determined tone.

Then, before the guardian of the comte's apartments could guess his purpose, he pushed the door farther open.

With an exclamation, the fellow tried to close it, but Campbell had inserted his foot in the aperture.

The man uttered what sounded like an oath, and shoved the door yet harder, figuring that the pain would force the intruder to withdraw his foot. But this move only nerved Campbell to more desperate measures.

He took one of the pistols from his pocket. At sight of the weapon the man drew back, but still held the door.

"Two can play at that game; begone, or it will be the worse for you," he cried.

Campbell drew back suddenly, then sprang forward and hurled himself against the panels. Taken unaware, the other was driven backward with such violence that he measured his length on the floor.

When he scrambled to his feet he looked into the muzzle of Campbell's pistol, while a knife lay upon the carpet where it had fallen.

Campbell saw that he had to deal with one of those so commonly found among the lower classes of great cities. The man's chief characteristics were brute force and a certain element of cunning.

It was perfectly evident he stood in no great fear of immediate danger from the threatening weapon, but understood that a resort to violence might bring unpleasant consequences. Therefore he remained quiescent. blinking into the muzzle of the pistol.

The room in which this tableau was being enacted was of small dimensions and evidently an anteroom which opened into a larger apartment beyond. Campbell raised his voice and called the *comte's* name. There was no answer, and a grin appeared on the sullen face before him.

For the second time he called to the old nobleman, with no better success, yet surely De Plauex must be within reach of his voice. A disquieting suspicion took possession of him that violence been done.

He took a step forward, the pistol still leveled at the other's breast; at the same time he called to Labrie to lend assistance, directing him to tear down the curtain cords and bind the man securely. It was plain the fellow would not be frightened, and he dared not lower his weapon.

Labrie began to untie the cords of the curtains draped on either side of the doorway. With these—several yards of strong silk rope—he approached to obey Campbell's order. Then, for the first time since he found himself a captive, the man spoke.

"*Monsieur,*" said he in a whining tone, "of what do you accuse me?"

"Of nothing. Hold out your hands, my friend," replied Campbell shortly.

The man did not move.

"Because an aristocrat offers me fifty francs to guard a crazy man, and, desiring to earn an honest living, I accept the bargain, why should I be tied up like one who is being led to execution?" he continued sullenly.

"And who offered you fifty francs?" demanded Campbell.

"How should I know, only that he was an aristocrat and brought me to this house? I was forbidden to permit any one to enter, because that old fool in there becomes violent at the sight of company. But a few moments ago I caught him opening a window; he was about to throw himself into the street. Well, I knew what to do, and now he is sleeping soundly. And for my services, instead of receiving fifty francs, I am to be tied up and perhaps turned over to the police."

For an instant Campbell was thrown off his guard. He even fancied the fellow might be honest, after all, and was simply following instructions—to guard, as he thought, a crazy man.

He partially lowered the pistol. The mistake was a fatal one.

(*To be continued.*)

CUPID IN A CRUSHED HAT.

By JOHN MONTAGUE.

An adventure by rail that after all was not much ado about nothing, and which had an outcome suggesting the title of yet another Shakespeare play.

"A FOOL and his money are soon parted," said some wise person ages ago, and Denton U. Benson now came to a full realization that he was a fool. Indeed, he had been hoodooed from birth by a set of initials which spelled "Dub," a nickname that had stuck to him like a leech to a wound ever since his earliest recollection.

His every endeavor seemed to result in failure, and at the time of this little narrative he found himself the possessor of the handsome sum of two dollars and a half.

Over that part of his life when he was prosperous we will pass quickly, though sorrowfully. Left a few thousand dollars at the death of his father, he had started West to make his fortune. An investment in a mine proved a bonanza—for the other persons concerned—and Benson soon found himself an almost penniless wanderer in the neighborhood of the Rockies.

Efforts to secure lucrative employment were futile, and after five years of unsuccessful attempt to strike it rich, he turned his face to the East, full of tan and experience, but nothing more. And so it was that he found himself at the opening of this story on board a train from Philadelphia to New York, with the said sum of two and a half dollars in his trousers-pocket.

With that economic instinct which comes of an embarrassed financial condition, he directed his footsteps in the direction of the day-coach where no extra charge is made for a seat. There had been days when he had traveled in state, but that time now seemed ages past.

His route lay through the parlor-car, where passengers were able to extract some enjoyment from the trip for the paltry sum of an extra fifty cents. Every chair was occupied — Benson could feel prosperity in the atmosphere, and at his heart gnawed a feeling of bitterness for his own pecuniary condition.

He walked on, steadying himself by the backs of alternating chairs and keeping his eyes on the carpet, with the hope that no one in the car would recognize him. He had almost reached the rear door when he was plucked by the sleeve, while a familiar voice struck upon his burning ear.

"Why, Dub—Mr. Benson!"

Had the train ditched at that point he would have been thankful; for of all the persons in his long list of acquaintances and friends, the one he most wished to avoid at this particular time was Teresa Sheridan. Under ordinary circumstances he would have been delighted to see her—but these were not ordinary circumstances.

This he keenly realized as his hand sought and crushed the two and a half in his pocket, while he raised his eyes and looked into those of his former sweetheart.

"Teresa—you?" he exclaimed, trying to simulate a warmth of greeting which he did not feel. "Where under the sun did you come from?"

Her answer was tinged with sarcasm.

"You really don't wish to know, do you, Mr. Benson?" she asked in a mocking tone. "I might have died, been buried, and be now on my return to earth for all you know. One might be coming from 'most any place after five years."

"Five? As long as that, Teresa?"

"Oh, of course you could hardly be expected to keep track of the flying months, especially when you have been busy piling up a fortune. A girl's memory keeps greener than a man's, especially if she has a *sisterly* interest in one's rise to fame."

Fame! Fortune! Benson nearly groaned aloud. What mockery! The cruelest irony of fate is the assumption of a condition that has not been realized.

"I presume," she went on in a lighter tone, "that by this time you own several automobiles, a yacht or two, belong to all the clubs, and have become a god among members of the susceptible feminine sex."

Benson forced a smile, in spite of the bleeding at his heart. He did not answer her questions, but switched the conversation by one of his own.

"Are you going to New York?"

"Yes," she replied with a little sigh. "And I had been looking forward to a monotonous journey. But now that you have come back from the grave, as it were, I shall take advantage of your presence to while away the time. Please get a chair in this car and keep me company."

Benson had been squeezing the fortune in his pocket until he felt sure he had murdered the eagles on the several coins. A seat in this car would cost fifty cents—a fifth of his entire wealth—which he would have to part with or disclose his true state.

The latter he could not do, after the assumptions voiced by the girl to whom he had been a devoted slave some years since.

Therefore, he called the conductor and asked for a seat. As a breath of refreshing air in a stuffy cell, came the response that every chair was sold.

"Isn't that too bad?" exclaimed the disappointed Teresa, and then, as a happy thought struck her: "But stay—the man who has this chair next me has not occupied it since we left Philadelphia. Sit here until he comes."

The conductor had gone about his business, and, with a sigh of relief, Benson started to avail himself of the vacant seat. But, all eyes for the girl who controlled the strings to his heart, he inadvertently seated himself square on a Derby hat which the owner of the chair had left while he went into the smoking compartment.

Benson arose with alacrity. To his embarrassment he beheld the result of his carelessness, and inwardly cursed the fate that had directed his steps through the parlor-car.

Gingerly he picked up the crushed chapeau and glanced anxiously at the maker's mark. His worse fears were confirmed—it was a five-dollar lid!

"Heavens!" he groaned inwardly, regarding the hat much after the fashion of *Hamlet's* inspection of poor *Yorick's* skull. "Just my luck. A hoodoo certainly hangs over my head."

And then he almost jumped out of the window. A bare-headed man had entered the car and was making his way toward him.

Benson turned his back and held the ruined Derby out of view of the approaching stranger. He strove to smile at his predicament, but something in his throat made him gulp so ludicrously that the frightened Teresa had to laugh in spite of herself.

The bare-headed one drew nearer, and Benson felt the man's breath on his burning neck. The fellow would doubtless be so angry that a fight would ensue, as he was a burly, uncouth sort of person.

"Beg pardon," he said gruffly, and Benson whirled to apologize as best he could, but he almost fainted with delight when he discovered that the man without a hat merely wished to pass him in the aisle in order to gain the rear door.

"Oh, what a relief!" he whispered, glancing at Teresa, who had turned her head away. "I felt in my bones that was the man. For once Fate was kind to me."

"I don't see why you should act so scared," rejoined his companion. "It was an accident, pure and simple. If the owner says anything, give him the price of a new hat; that should satisfy him."

The price of a new hat! Where was the price to come from? That was the question which worried Benson; and to make matters worse, the conductor appeared at this most inopportune moment to announce that the drawing-room on this same coach was vacant.

"Oh, that's just what we want!" exclaimed the delighted Teresa. "Get the drawing-room, and we can talk together the rest of the way. I'll go in and wait until you have fixed things. You had

better find the owner of the hat and make matters right with him first."

So saying, she left Benson with the conductor — Benson, the tanned and rugged, who could have been knocked over with a straw!

"What's the cost for the drawing-room?" he asked rather coldly.

"Three dollars," replied the official, preparing to make out the necessary checks.

"Hold on," rejoined Benson. "Why —er—you see, the lady already has this chair—"

"That's all right. That doesn't make the drawing-room any cheaper."

"How much did you say it was? Three?"

"Yes, three. Do you want it or not? My time is valuable."

"So is mine," returned Benson haughtily, knowing nothing better to say, and trying to gain time.

"Well, do you want it?" demanded the conductor, point-blank.

"I'll see you later about it," answered Benson, affecting the expression of an imbecile, which the angry official immediately put him down to be, and departed without further ado.

The train rolled on, and Teresa, in the drawing-room, waited patiently for the "Dub" who failed to come. She tried to read, but every word seemed to spell Benson, while before her mind's eye floated visions of scenes of five years agone.

She loved him far more deeply than she dared show, for she was not sure that his affection was of equal warmth.

As mile after mile was traversed, and he failed to come, she began to grow impatient.

"Probably he was having trouble straightening out the matter of the crushed hat," she reasoned, and waited on; but when fully twenty minutes had passed and he did not appear, she returned to her seat in the chair section.

Here she was surprised to find her returned lover missing. She sat down to await his reappearance, but after a while, instead of Benson, there came the man who owned the chair next her own.

He was a middle-aged man, of refined, intelligent appearance, and Teresa was glad when she saw him, for she knew Benson would have little trouble in fixing up his accident with this cultured gentleman.

Reaching his chair, he picked up the hat thereon and, in the act of seating himself, paused. Something about the hat struck him as strange, and he turned it over in his hands.

Glancing inside the crown, he gave a start of surprise and looked hurriedly about the car. Then he adjusted his glasses and inspected the interior of the hat more minutely.

"Hum-n, hum-n," Teresa heard him mutter, and in the little looking-glass at the side of the car she saw the stranger scratch his ear in a perplexed way. Finally, he took a step in her direction and spoke.

"I beg your pardon," he began courteously; "but have you been in your chair right along? I ask," he hastened to explain, "because, upon my return to my own, I find a strange hat."

"A strange hat!" repeated Teresa.

All along, she supposed the stranger had been examining the cracks in the crushed head-gear.

"Yes," continued the other; "but what is still more strange, it contains the initials of one for whom I have been searching for several years. They are initials so out of the ordinary that I feel positive the owner, who evidently has taken my hat by mistake, is the man I want."

"Man I want!" The words fell like icicles upon Teresa's anxious heart. They sounded terribly ominous, and she began to grow nervous.

Why did this man want Benson? Had he done something wrong? No; she would not tolerate the thought, and banished it. But she decided not to assist this stranger, for whom she suddenly conceived a dislike.

So she said nothing; and taking her silence as a termination of the interview, the other, after a third scrutiny of the hat, went in search of the owner.

Teresa could not figure out the matter. Why had Benson not come to her in the drawing-room? Where was he? From the middle-aged man's remarks, Benson had evidently not settled for the ruined head-gear, but had left his own in exchange.

Was he still on the train, or had he got off at one of the stops? Why did he not come to her? What could his neglect of her mean?

She began to entertain doubtful thoughts, and was on the point of tears, when her chair was pushed around and in front of her stood the man of her heart, a transformed, a different Benson.

His eyes were aglow, his hands were trembling with a suppressed excitement. He tried to speak, but failed. In pantomime, he motioned for her to follow him, and started up the aisle.

Half-way, he met the conductor.

"I want the drawing-room," he said.

"But it's only twenty miles to New York," returned the official.

"I don't care if it's only a quarter of a mile; I want the drawing-room. Here's five dollars—keep the change."

He took his little checks in exchange for the bill which he thrust into the hand of the astonished conductor. Then he hastened on, with Teresa at his heels.

Reaching the drawing-room, he flopped himself down on the sofa and regarded his mystified sweetheart with the look of a man who had been pulled back from the sliding edge of a precipice. He was breathing as hard as though he had just finished a five-mile foot-race.

"What under the sun is the matter with you?" demanded Teresa. "You act, honestly, like a—"

"A lunatic, a fool. I know, I'll finish it for you," he laughed. "And, to tell the truth, that's just what I do feel like. Pinch me, Teresa; please pinch me. I am positive I am dreaming."

"Will you tell me what's the matter with you!" she exclaimed with a woman's characteristic impatience when some secret is withheld. "I'm getting so nervous over your antics that I can hardly sit still."

"Well, I wish you would sit a little closer," laughed the idiotic Benson, sliding his arm around her waist. "Tell me, Teresa, are you really glad to see me back again?"

"Yes, yes, of course I am; but what has that to do with your secret?"

She was struggling to release herself.

"Teresa, darling, I have loved you all these years; but, to tell you the truth, I met with so many misfortunes that I was too dejected to write you a line. I lost all my money in a fake mine out West, and then I went on a ranch and worked for my bare existence. I have been hoodooed since my birth; but an idea has come to me. Do you know, I believe I could banish that hoodoo if I were to—"

"What?" she asked as he paused.

"Get married," he finished. And then, continuing: "Teresa, dear, do you love me enough to marry me?"

"Why, my dear boy, if you can't support yourself, how do you propose to support two persons?"

"Then you won't marry me?"

"I didn't say I wouldn't," she broke in quickly as the tears came into her eyes. "I'm willing to engage myself to you, Denton, if you think that will be an inspiration to achieve things. I know you have it in you, if you only get the proper opportunity."

"Then you'll marry me — say, in a year?"

"Yes, but in the meantime you must show me—"

But he was kissing her, and might have kept it up until New York was reached, had it not been for the entrance of the middle-aged man.

"Oh, I beg pardon," he stammered.

"Not necessary, not necessary!" exclaimed Benson. "Come right in and meet my fiancée, Miss Sheridan. This is Mr. Robertson, Teresa. Tell her about it, Mr. Robertson."

"Well," replied the other man, "I don't know as there's much to tell that would interest Miss Sheridan."

"Oh, indeed, everything interests me—if it is about Den—Mr. Benson," she rejoined.

The other man continued:

"I am simply the executor of the late William B. Chanler's will. Mr. Chanler was Mr. Benson's uncle, and Mr. Benson, being the only heir—"

"All out for New York!" interrupted the porter.

And it was not until several years after their marriage, which, by the way, did lift the hoodoo, that Benson told his wife the extent of his embarrassment during that trip from Philadelphia to New York.

TAKING BIG CHANCES.*

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "A Lump of Bullion," "The Tail of the Lumberbeast," "The Great Bank Robbery," etc.

The series of fearsome happenings that set wide-awake a certain little sleepy village on the Atlantic coast.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Upon finding a murdered man in the house which he rents in the little town of Broggan, the young author, Joseph Dell, sends for his friend, Dave Warson, a detective. Warson finds in the man's pocket a paper which reads: "Scipio—600,000—Cash," which he takes to have reference to the buying or sale of some ship. He is led to suspect Dell through the fact that the author has had dealings with the shipping firm of Baymer Brothers.

Warson returns late one night from a trip to Boston, and the next morning is found dead by Dell, in his neck a wound similar to that discovered in the murdered man. Knowing that he will be suspected of this second murder, Dell carries the body of Warson into the woods, where it is found by a villager, Joel Bankred. From Baymer Brothers he learns that the victim of the first murder is William Wratton, from whom the company had bought the ship Scipio.

One morning Dell finds on his desk a note in feminine handwriting, telling him that the writer has been sent to kill him, and that the warning may cost her life. Two nights later he is startled by a ring at his bell. Answering the summons, he stumbles over a huddled heap on the threshold.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTACK.

WHAT I saw at my feet was a woman. And her clothing was soggy with salt water.

I thrust my revolver into my pocket, and picked her up in my arms. She was unconscious.

Unmindful of the water that dripped all over me, I carried her into the room that had been occupied by Warson. Here I laid her down, and hurried out for the lamp.

When I got back I saw with horror that she was severely wounded and apparently dying.

Her face was scarcely beautiful, but she was dark and of a handsome type, with something wild in her wet and tousled hair and velvety skin.

I poured some brandy down her throat. I tore her waist open at the throat. I knew, if she had made her way from the sea to my door, she was not half drowned. It was the wound with which I had to deal.

It was in her shoulder—a bullet wound—foully sent from behind.

I was in a terrible frenzy now. I knew that this was the woman who had written the letter. I knew that she had come to me either to warn me or to have me assist her.

What tragedy of the sea had taken place I could not even conjecture. But there I was, with my own life threatened, with a wounded and probably dying girl on my hands.

Although I worked over her with all the skill I possessed, which I am free to confess was not much, I failed to see any signs of returning consciousness.

The wound had stopped bleeding, and I could bandage that well enough. I tore a sheet into strips, and made as good a job of it as I could. But I knew there was something to be done which I could not do.

The girl had been in the sea, and so recently that she was still dripping. And I knew that with all her clothing in that soggy condition there was danger for her life.

* *Began August* Argosy. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

What was needed was a woman. I couldn't undress the girl.

Once thought of, my resolve was made. I could do her no good by remaining. I might save her life by bringing some one who could help.

But bring whom?

Mrs. Bankred, Joel's mother!

I knew that almost every old country woman is a home-made doctor, and, giving a last look at the girl and finding her breathing apparently a little easier, I locked the door of the room and put the key in my pocket.

It would not take long to bring Joel's mother, but I took this precaution in case some one else came to the place meantime.

I rushed out to the stable, and in less time almost than it takes to write it I had the horse harnessed, and was off like a flash.

It was not even a long walk to Joel's house, and the horse covered the distance in a few minutes. I jumped out of the wagon and banged on the door with my fists.

"What's wanted down there?" demanded Joel's voice from an open window. "Who's down there?"

"I, Joe Dell. I want your mother—quick!"

"What's up?"

"Get your mother up! Quick!"

His head disappeared, and the minutes seemed like hours, though they were only minutes, and not many of them at that, when the door opened, and Mrs. Bankred, about half-dressed, appeared.

"At this time of night—what's the trou'le?" she asked.

"I'll tell you on the way. Quick, get a shawl around you. Don't wait to finish dressing. It's a girl needs you."

"Ha! The ghost at last," exclaimed Joel as he joined us.

He was exactly as he left his bed.

Mrs. Bankred rushed back, and came out again with a great Paisley shawl wrapped around her.

"Joel," I said, "get dressed and come to the house. I may need you."

"All right," he said. "I'll be there soon."

I almost hurled the old lady into the wagon, leaped in myself, and the horse darted back toward the big house.

I told Mrs. Bankred in as few words as possible all I knew of the girl.

"Poor thing!" she said.

"Of course," I said, "I am not sure this is the one who left the letter for me. If it is, I don't see why she didn't come by the secret way, wherever that is."

"We'll do what we can for her, and let her tell her story. When Joel comes we'll let him go for the doctor. He knows where he lives."

By this time we were at the house. Not more than twenty minutes had elapsed since I had locked the girl in, yet I almost expected her to have flown in some mysterious way.

But she was there, still breathing, and still unconscious.

Mrs. Bankred told me in quick, sharp tones just what things she wanted, and I hurried to get them, as far as possible, from what I had on hand. I never saw a hurriedly awakened nurse take hold of a patient before, but certainly that woman was a marvel.

"There," she said. "Now some dry towels."

I got them.

"Now you can go smoke till Joel comes. No use telling you where the doctor lives. It's on a mean road, and turns through woods. Joel knows. He'll go."

I left her, and she closed the door. I went to the library and sat down. I couldn't sit still. I got up and paced around.

What were my feelings in regard to this girl now? Of course, I did not know what wild thing had happened out at sea that night to send her like a wounded bird fluttering down to my very door; but that she had come to warn me or beg my protection was certain.

It was equally certain that if she wanted my protection she was going to get it against all comers.

I was standing staring moodily at the rays of light that seemed to dance in my library windows, when something struck me. I fell forward, unable to cry out, but yet half conscious.

"Quick—the cloth!" came a whispered voice, and a thick bandage was fastened tightly and securely around my mouth, effectually stopping all outcry.

I struggled desperately, but the blow had almost deprived me of strength.

"Good thing the girl didn't get here," said another voice in a whisper. "Tie his legs and arms."

My resistance was reduced to practically nothing. And there flashed through my brain the conviction that my assailants were not aware that the girl had arrived.

A great fear welled up within me that Mrs. Bankred would bring the girl's wet clothes out to hang them on a line.

But these miscreants worked quickly.

"Hurry up," said one. "Jim's a blame poor marksman, and maybe he didn't kill her, after all. Dash her eyes! What a mess! She could have saved us this. But he'll get all that's coming to him now."

They were afraid of the girl. They knew she was on her way to warn me, and had shot to kill her and prevent the giving of the warning. Surely I had no reason to hate the girl.

"Now for the blindfold!"

A heavy cloth was tied over my eyes.

My arms were fastened straight down along my sides, and my feet strapped together. I was trussed up like an Egyptian mummy.

"Now," I heard a whisper.

I was lifted by two men, one at my head, the other taking my feet. I was carried swiftly, feet foremost, somewhere. My legs were bent downward, and then I was slid slowly, both men clinging to me, into some kind of passage in which I hung suspended perpendicularly.

"Get in on the ladder," I heard a whisper.

I was roughly handled while they changed their grip, and I knew they were following me into the hole, whatever it was.

From below me there came a cool, damp draft, smelling of the sea. We were somewhere over salt water, and yet inside of the big house.

Then I heard a mild little grinding noise like a door on well-oiled hinges, yet a door that was little used.

Then I felt myself being gently lowered. There came a peculiar humming and singing to my ears, which kept getting louder and louder.

"Shall we give it to him here and drop him?" asked one, now in an ordinary tone.

"Him? No. The prick is too good for him. It kills too quick and without pain. He's caused us enough trouble. We'll fix him all right. Wait till we get to the cave."

Lower and lower I descended, till my two carriers were puffing with the exertion of holding me. I could now hear the roar of water, like confined waves lashing the sides of their prison.

And at last I was swung to one side and my feet touched a hard floor.

"Now, Mr. Joseph Dell," chuckled one of my captors, "you've had the pleasure of a ride through the secret passage. But you'll never take another."

And then they both laughed.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TERRIBLE POSITION.

Bound and blindfolded as I was, all there was left to me were hearing and thought. What I heard was to the highest degree alarming, and my thoughts were far from pleasant.

Had nothing occurred before to show the desperate villainy of my captors, I might have felt some hope. But the devilish ingenuity of the poisoned dagger, the murder of William Wratton, and the murder of Warson, together with the latest tragedy of the sea, the shooting of the girl to prevent her from warning me, all proved that I was in the clutches of a gang that would stop at nothing.

While I suppose I had displayed the ordinary courage of an ordinary man since I had taken up my quarters in the so-called haunted house, I must confess that my bravery oozed perceptibly while I was being lowered into some kind of hellhole the nature of which I could not even imagine. I knew I stood on rock, and I knew that the sea was washing around my feet.

"Tie him to the ladder," said the voice of one of the men.

The cords that had bound my arms to my side were cut away. I was placed in an upright position, with my back to what seemed a ladder of iron, and my hands, as I thrust them back, touched a wall of rock.

I was as helpless as an infant, for my feet were still tied together, and if I attempted to strike out at my captors I would lose my balance and go plunging

into the sea that I knew lay at my very feet.

I was tied securely to the iron ladder, a rope being passed around my chest, and then each wrist was fastened to an upright of the ladder. The cord then being drawn tight, the upper part of my body was as firmly secured as though I had been riveted there.

The next operation performed by my captors, who were constantly chuckling at this device of theirs for incalculable cruelty, was to cut my feet free of the old cords, and tie them, one to each of the uprights of the ladder.

"Take off the blind," said one voice. "There is no pleasure equal to watching oneself die."

In a moment the eye bandage was whisked away. The cloth which gagged me was left in place. It was not the purpose of these scoundrels to permit me to call for help.

It must be remembered that all this occurred at dead of night. When the bandage was taken from my eyes, for a moment I could not see at all, and they might just as well have left it on.

But from my left the moonlight streamed in through a great arch in the rock, and in what was left of the rays by the time they reached me I finally gained my vision.

I seemed to be in an immense grotto. The arch through which the moonlight streamed was about as far from me as the edge of the cliff was from the stone house. At least it seemed so to me, as I measured it with what little senses I had left.

This arch opened to the sea, and the water flowed in and out in accord with the action of the waves outside.

Looking up, I could see nothing, it was so dark. But I knew the ladder extended straight upward for a considerable distance and led to the secret entrance to the house.

Before me the water came almost to my feet. I was standing on a narrow ledge of rock, and just in front of me there lay a boat. It seemed to be a small launch, evidently the tender of a larger boat.

In this boat now sat two men. I could not see their features, at least well enough to identify them again, but their voices and accent, even though they spoke good English, proved them to be from some other part of the world than the northern portion of the United States.

"Back away," said one. "The tide is rising. We'll watch him from the entrance."

It was evident that by "entrance" he meant the mouth of the cave. For the launch slowly backed away and passed just outside the opening, where it stopped.

There was apparently a ring or chain fastened to the rock there, for I saw one of them tie the boat. Then they lighted cigars and lounged there, waiting.

I knew that along this coast the tide rose to the height of anywhere from six to eight feet, and even the lower rise would be enough completely to engulf me, for I was far from six feet in height.

I understood the cruelty of their arrangements. They had no fear. Why, when they had dreaded the arrival of the girl before, they ignored her completely now I could not understand. The girl must know the secret of the entrance.

But they certainly feared nothing.

I will not even pretend to portray here what I felt. Life was sweet to me. I was young, was not in want, and was in a fair way to make a name for myself in literature. Had I not cared for life, I would not have come to Broggan to rest and recuperate.

But as the black water swirled and swished against the rock I saw no possibility of escape.

Certainly these devils would not relent. They had murdered Wratton. They had murdered Warson. They had tried to murder the girl. There was no reason to believe they would not murder me.

But I could not understand why they took this slow method when they could have ended it all in a moment. But no one can fathom the workings of a mind gone wrong and warped with crime.

The other murders had been done quickly because they had to be. They had plenty of time to amuse themselves with me, and watch my dying agonies as the water gradually rose to overwhelm me.

My mind dwelt bitterly on the fact that the girl had succumbed at the very door. Had she lasted but a moment longer—

long enough just to breathe a hint of the secret entrance—it would have enabled me to meet my enemies and give me a show for my life.

I wondered if anybody would miss me. Of course Joel would arrive. But Mrs. Bankred had told me to go and smoke, and in the agitation she knew I felt it was just as probable that I might light a cigar and wander out in the woods, or along the cliffs, as it was that I would sit idly in the house.

They would miss me. I realized that. But they would wait for me. Joel would be sent for the doctor. It was late, and the physician would be in bed. Physicians don't rush off half dressed after being wakened, and I knew it took them longer, according to the anxious minds of those who call them, to get on their clothes than it does anybody else.

It would be perhaps an hour before Joel got back. Even then there might be a chance because it would take a few hours for the tide to reach my neck. But would the fellows in the boat get tired of their fun?

Would not the long waiting jar upon them and cause them to end it with the knife or pistol and to go their way?

All these thoughts were far from pleasant.

"If you get thirsty, Joseph Dell," called one of them, "don't be impatient. You'll have plenty to drink by and by."

The other laughed.

Even now the water was swirling around my feet. The tide was rising swiftly. I knew that in some parts along the coast it rose with great rapidity, the slack water remaining longer than in places where the tide had farther to travel into bays and up rivers.

At least, I thought I knew this. I confess I didn't know much about tides, and don't even now.

Whether the tide rose with any greater swiftness there than at any other point I don't know. But it seemed to fairly leap. It reached my knees.

The sensation of having water rising about you while you are fastened like Andromeda waiting for it to overwhelm you is far different from wading in with your arms free and able to take care of yourself. It sent cold and horror all through me.

I even imagined myself to be already dying. A peculiar numbness assailed me. I shut my eyes. The moonlight on the rushing waters assumed grotesque and horrible fantastic shapes. Great hobgoblins danced before me. There was a horrible roaring in my head.

Suddenly I heard a voice above me. Then a stream of light shot down.

I looked up—a lantern was swinging in the passage.

"By Heavens!" I heard Joel say. "Give me that revolver and a sharp knife quick. They've got him tied to the ladder."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOMENTS OF AGONY.

JOEL'S voice, while it came down to me and filled me with a leaping thrill of hope, did not, evidently, carry out to the men at the mouth of the cave. I looked up, and saw his big body bend out. He held the lantern in his teeth while he reached across the upright passage and grasped the ladder. He then swung himself in, and, hand over hand, was coming down to me.

And now another terror assailed me.

He did not know the men in the boat were at the mouth of the cave. The moment he came in sight with his lantern they could shoot him, and he would be helpless to return their fire.

Yet I was unable to give him the slightest warning.

Down, down he came, slowly, as though feeling his way. I tried to make a noise. All I could do was to emit a grunt.

"All right, Mr. Dell," he said cheerfully. "I'm coming."

He did not understand the warning.

My Heaven, how the blood surged through me! Here was my deliverer coming—coming to his own certain death—when, if I could but give him a hint, he might save us both.

All the horror I had felt before sank into insignificance compared with what I felt at that moment. I could see no possible hope. The men in the boat were laughing and talking, but their eyes were always turned my way, and they would surely see Joel before he saw them.

It was so.

"Look! A light in the chimney!" exclaimed one.

I could see both straining their eyes at the unwelcome sight.

"Somebody coming down to rescue him. That accursed girl has told."

I saw the man—my tongue cleaving to the roof of my mouth in terror—unfasten the boat from its temporary moorings. The little engine was not started, but with their hands they caught the edge of the rock and drew the launch inside. Then, with a push, they sent it toward me.

Oh, that was really a moment of hell! Joel was almost down to me. The lantern, swinging in his teeth, cast the shadow of his feet and legs upon the boat as it came to a stop right where he must step to the rock.

I tried to yell. With the muscles of my throat I attempted to move the gag so that I could shout a warning. But these fellows knew their business, and not a sound could I make except that senseless grunt which Joel evidently thought was an expression of pleasure because he was coming.

My blood froze. I could feel ice in my finger-tips and clutching at my heart.

"Don't worry, Mr. Dell," he said. "I won't step on your head."

Oh, if he only would, and knock that accursed bandage off!

The two men got out of the launch quietly.

They stood there waiting. In the light of the swinging lanterns their faces became the faces of fiends. Their hands were ready to grab Joel the moment he emerged from the upright passage.

His feet were scraping the iron rungs just above me. His right foot now came slowly down along my head.

"Move your head to the right—your right," he said. "I want room on the ladder."

Instead I pressed my cheek with all the strength of the muscles of my neck against his descending heel. It caught in the cloth.

He felt it—feared he was stepping on me, and drew it up. But he had pushed the cloth down about an inch.

"Look out! They are here!" I shouted.

With a curse, one of the men struck me a smashing blow in the face that drove my head back against a rung and for a moment stunned me. But I heard an exclamation from Joel.

The next instant they had grabbed his legs. The lantern fell with a hissing sound into the water.

Joel came splashing down, almost knocking the wind out of me.

But the warning had not been entirely too late. Though a raw country boy, Joel Bankred was possessed of prodigious strength. Of course, he had no science as to how to use that strength; but in his position I doubt if any amount of science would have helped him. He fell on his hands in the water.

With a roar like that of an enraged bull, he kicked out with both feet, and one of the men fell over in the boat and the other in the water.

In an instant Joel was on his feet on the ledge, the water up to his knees. The man in the boat drew a revolver and fired. Joel's revolver, which was the one Lavin had given me, had been dropped and now lay at the bottom of the water in the cave.

With another roar, such as I had never heard from a man, seemingly part terror and part rage, Joel leaped into the boat.

"Now, goldarn you, man to man, I'll have your lives!" he yelled.

He grabbed the man in the boat by the throat and rained blows on his face. The flood tide was now carrying the craft so near the roof that in another moment it would be impossible for the boat to leave the cave. The opening would be too small.

And the man in the water knew that. Leaving his comrade to continue the fight, he began swimming and pushing the boat before him to the mouth, and still Joel fought. The boat rocked from side to side, and I thought it would overturn every moment.

But the fellow got it outside. The pistol was fired again, and I fancied I heard Joel cry out that he was hit.

The boat, when it was past the opening, was carried from my sight by the tide, and my heart sank. For now, wounded as he was, he would have two to deal with.

But even then, above the roaring of the

inrushing tide there came his ferocious bellow, and then all was still.

It was over. My brave friend, who had come to rescue me, had been overcome, and this was the end. The water was now getting so high that it seemed to want to lift me, tied even though I was.

But I had my voice. I shouted as loudly as I could for help. I shouted again and again.

"I'm here," I heard a voice.

It came from the mouth of the cave. It was Joel's voice. I saw his head as he was swimming inside the mouth. I looked for the boat, but it did not follow him, nor did I hear any more shots.

I gazed in surprise and wonder as he swam through the swirling water with mighty strokes, and was soon on the ledge beside me.

"Where are they? What happened?" I asked breathlessly.

"I kicked their blame boat over—that's what happened," he answered savagely. "But I suppose they can swim, so we've got to hurry. I gave 'em each a good crack, though. It may take them a minute to wake up."

He still had the knife, and with quick, true strokes was cutting me free.

"How did you find the secret passage? What is it? Where?" I inquired, asking question after question.

"Never mind—you'll see. Get up that ladder as if the devil was after you—and he is."

Up I went, and he followed.

"When you get to the top, put out your hand and feel that thin little wire hanging down."

My head bumped against what seemed to be a solid floor. I put out my hand and felt the little thin wire.

"I've got it," I said.

"Pull it down hard."

I pulled quickly, with all my strength, and had the surprise of my life.

(To be continued.)

Bill Beans's Bump of Observation.

By ROBERT CARLTON BROWN.

The rustic with an ambition to shine as a detective, with an account of the experience that cooled his ardor, and also accomplished something else.

"I'M a detective," announced Bill Beans, as he lolled his awkward bulk over the cigar-case in a Bowery pool-room.

"That so?" smiled the proprietor. "Got yer gun an' gum shoes in yer pocket?"

"Got my gun an' star, anyway," snapped the big fellow, placing a big, old-fashioned pistol on the show-case and throwing his coat open wide to display a cheap tin star.

"Well, that's very pretty. How long you been in the profesh?" was the proprietor's question.

"Just a day."

"Thought so," smiled the man behind the case.

Bill Beans had come down from up-State to startle little old New York with his prowess.

A traveling phrenologist had told him that a certain bump—where he had been hit by a bat in his school-days—was his bump of observation, and showed that he was a born detective.

Forthwith Bill threw down the plow and answered the alluring ad. of a correspondence detective course.

His unusual acumen in the science of detection gave him an insight that allowed him to complete the course in six days.

He then took sixty dollars that he had saved and came on to New York.

His first day in town he spent in awaiting a promised assignment from the school that had graduated him with honors as a detective.

But the assignment did not come, in fact it never came. So at the end of a week Bill, with only forty dollars left, turned his attention to the classified advertising columns.

His eyes immediately caught the following insertion:

WANTED—Ambitious young detective in New York Bowery district. To locate criminals from their photographs. Answer at once and a trial will be given.
THE SHARP-EYES DETECTIVE AGENCY,
Boston, Mass.

Of course Bill Beans answered the ad. He would have answered a score of that kind. In fact he hadn't seen anything like it in the nine days that he had been a full-fledged detective.

As he slipped his studied reply into the mail-box, he swelled visibly and could not help but smile at what the folks up home would say when they heard of his great success on this, his first chance.

"The correspondence course says: 'A man who keeps his eyes open and has energy cannot help but succeed.'" Bill smiled to himself. "Now, some fellers wouldn't have answered that advertisement. An' some probably didn't see it at all; but you see, *I* done both. That phrenologist feller said right when he told me I had the powers of observation unusually high in development."

An envelope was delivered to Beans two days later. It was a bulky affair and looked highly businesslike. Inside was a printed form that read:

We have received your reply to our advertisement and offer you a trial herewith.
We enclose photographs.
We will pay you twenty dollars a piece for the location of criminals and fifty dollars for each criminal that you succeed in arresting.
Yours truly,
THE SHARP-EYES DETECTIVE AGENCY,
Boston, Mass.
NOTE—Wire news at our expense.

"Well, that looks good now," cried Bill, fingering over the three photographs that were enclosed. "Twenty for locatin' an' fifty for arrestin'. By gosh, I'll arrest 'em!"

Slipping a pair of shiny new handcuffs into his pockets—they had come with the correspondence course—Bill pulled his cap over his eyes, adjusted his star, and sat down at his small table to scrutinize the photographs.

"Gee, this feller here'll be hard to find, only gives the back of his head. How do they expect a feller to know a man by the back of his head? Ah! There's a scar right near the neck; I can tell him by that all right. I'll get *him!*"

He placed the photograph carefully in his pocket and, closing his eyes, recalled it perfectly.

Then he picked up the second portrait.

"Gosh! Side view; *that* feller can't get away from me. Look at that nose now, I never seen th' like; looks like a pig snout. He'll be easy. That mustache curls up an' looks sassy. Kind of a *I*talian by his looks."

As he started to put this one into his breast-pocket, his keen eyes caught a bit of writing on the back.

"Under alias of 'Panhandle Pete.' Well, that's a name fer yer!" he cried. "Reckon he wouldn't register that way though."

Taking out the back view he found the name of "alias Joseph H. Jones" on that.

The third photograph was a full front view, and on the back was scrawled—"As P. Pierpont."

Having memorized the picture of each criminal, Bill Beans drew his massive bulk together and pounded a beefy fist on the table.

"I'll catch each an' every one of them fellers, an' I'll do it now," was his loud decision.

With that he left the room and sauntered down the Bowery.

A notorious pool-room was the first place he visited. As he sat looking out from under the low brim of his hat he suddenly recognized a man that entered.

Bill almost dashed forward to greet him, he remembered his looks so well. Then he changed his mind and tried to recall where he had seen that face before.

A sudden shock shot through him.

"Why, that's the feller with the nose!" he gasped, under his breath.

Stealthily withdrawing the photograph of the side view he compared it with the original. The nose was an exact match, and Beans grinned to himself as he thought of how easily he had run down his first man.

For some minutes he sat planning the best way to effect the capture. Suddenly the man he was watching slipped through the back door into an alley.

Bill jumped to his feet and followed. His suspect was just skulking down the alley when the new detective rushed up behind, clapped a strong hand on his shoulder, and bawled, "You're under arrest!"

"The Hades I am!" bellowed the man, crashing a savage blow into Bill's face.

Bill staggered back, but in a minute he recovered himself.

Throwing both arms around the Bowery tough he pulled him close in a terrific hug. The man squirmed, but that was all.

Beans, hugging him tighter every minute, dragged his catch up the alley until he came to the near-by police-station. There he forced him through the doorway and shoved him into the arms of an awaiting policeman.

"Lock him up!" he told the officer.

"What's the charge?"

"He's a criminal."

"But I can't put nobody in fer that. Where's the warrant?"

"Lock him up, I tell you. He's a criminal!" repeated Bill Beans.

"I'll lock you both up," the policeman flared out. "This ain't no way to butt into a station an' start things."

The desk sergeant heard the commotion and stepped into the hallway.

"Jerry!" he exclaimed, as he recognized the man Beans had dragged in. "You slipp'ry eel. It's mighty glad I am to see you here. Dougherty's been lookin' for you on that Mott Street job."

The prisoner was booked, Bill was questioned, released, and sent on his way rejoicing.

"Well, I've landed one of 'em, anyway," he grinned. "There's an easy fifty dollars. This is some better than plowin'."

He stopped with a small crowd before a display window and looked in absently, debating whether or not he should telegraph the detective agency at once.

The head of the man in front of him attracted him strangely. He wondered vaguely where he had seen a scar similar to the one on the back of the fellow's scalp.

A sudden realization came to him and he secretly drew out the photograph labeled "Joseph H. Jones," and showing the back view of a head.

Bill's face expanded in a huge smile.

"By gorry, here's another of them fellers! Well, if I ain't got luck!"

He edged up to the man and scrutinized his profile.

Certain of the identification, he awaited an opportune moment to effect the capture.

In order to appear thoroughly unconcerned he stepped around beside the man, stood a little in front of him, and gazed into the window with interest.

He had been standing there for some minutes when a peculiar sensation was telegraphed to his brain. Without moving, he tried to look at the man beside him out of the corner of his eye.

Everything seemed all right, but Bill was still cognizant of the peculiar sensation.

A sudden dive of his hand into his coat-pocket, and his fingers clutched the wrist of the man next to him.

With a dexterous twist he turned and secured the man's other hand.

"Tryin' to pick my pocket, was you?" he demanded.

The man who was in the habit of carrying his hands in other men's pockets struggled to free himself. A policeman rushed in and heard Beans's complaint.

The pickpocket was held until the hurry-up wagon came, and then Bill accompanied him to the station to make his complaint.

"What! You here again!" snapped the sergeant, as Beans entered with the policeman and the prisoner.

"Sure!" beamed Beans. "Got another criminal. They're as thick down here as swallows is up home."

A quizzical smile spread over the police officer's face.

"How long you been here?" he asked Bill, as he booked the prisoner.

"Nine days."

"What's your business?"

"Somethin' th' same as yours. I'm a detective," the young fellow answered proudly.

"Well, you're certainly a live one, all right. Ain't afraid of nothin', are you?"

"Well, I was chased by a bull once an' I don't think I'd care for it again," the embryo detective smiled.

"You're all right. Where do you live?" asked the sergeant.

Beans gave him his address and went out with a radiant face.

Pulling the third photograph from his pocket, he looked at it intently. It was the one of the full front face.

"He's the only feller left," smiled the amateur detective. "Lucky gettin' them other two in less'n two hours. Guess I'll telegraph Boston the news that they've been caught."

He stood reflectively for a moment.

"A hundred in a hour," he murmured. "That ain't bad. I allus knew I was cut out fer a city feller. Why, I'd a worked four months fer that up home. This is a durn sight better'n pitchin' hay. That phrenologist feller was certainly right. I'm a born detective. Why, I recognized both them fellers from their pictures in a second."

The photo of the last man wanted was still in his hands. He took another good look at it.

"Geeminy!" he cried, "I'll bet I seen that feller in a cigar store yesterday. Sure I did! I've seen him there before. Yes, sir, them same long eyelashes an' funny ears. I'll get him!"

Beans started off at a great stride, intent upon doing his job thoroughly and having the third man arrested.

As he passed a telegraph-office sign he stopped abruptly.

"Guess I better let them fellers in Boston know I've got two. It said to telegraph at their expense, so it won't cost me nothin' any way."

The energetic detective dashed into the office and slowly scratched out the following message, with utter disregard of all telegraphic customs.

SHARP-EYES DETECTIVE AGENCY,
Boston, Mass.

GENTLEMEN: Have caught two of them criminals. The one named Alias Joseph H. Jones was a pick-pocket. The other, Panhandle Pete, was a criminal that the police wanted too. Am on trail of the last one and will land him in the station in a few minutes. Yours truly,

WM. B. BEANS.
238 East First Street, New York City.

Having condensed the message somewhat, and marked it "collect," the operator began ticking it off, and told Beans that he could go.

With that the young farmer swung out of the office and rushed off for the cigar shop, to look for the third criminal.

Unluckily the man was not lounging there as usual, and Beans stood waiting for an hour.

At length he gave up his search and went to get dinner.

Having eaten, he returned to his room to wash.

As he entered the door the landlady rushed up to him feverishly, and pushed a yellow envelope into his hands.

"A telegram, Mr. Beans. Oh, I do hope nobody is dead. Try to fortify yourself, sir," the good soul sobbed.

Beans burst open the envelope and spelled out the message.

It read:

WM. B. BEANS,
238 West First St., New York City.
Photos sent were three different views and aliases of *one* man. He was arrested Chicago this morning. You are a fool.

SHARP-EYES DETECTIVE AGENCY,
Boston, Mass.

Bill Beans's big hand shook, and he leaned weakly against the wall.

"Don't! Don't tell me it's your own mother!" wailed the landlady.

Without answering, Bill Beans went up-stairs to his room and flopped into a chair.

"What a fool you air!" he blurted out to himself. "Thinkin' them three pictures was of different men."

He pulled out the photographs and looked at them dully.

"Any blame idiot could see they all looks alike an' was just took in different positions," was his caustic comment.

Turning to the backs of the portraits he read, "Under alias of Panhandle Pete. Alias Joseph H. Jones. As P. Pierpont."

"Why, that's plain enough for any baby!" he snapped.

"Here I've been an' arrested two men an' traced another, when only *one* was wanted. There's a hundred an' fifty dollars gone. Oh, gee, I guess the farm's the place fer me."

Bill sadly arose from the chair and counted his money.

A knock at the door interrupted him.

The trembling landlady pushed her hand through and handed in a note.

Tearing it open Beans read:

DEAR SIR:

The two men that you brought to the station this morning have been wanted for some time.

You have nerve and energy and would make good on the police force. In a conference with the captain of this station he requested that I send for you. He admires your courage and will find a place for you on the force, if you want it.

Yours truly,
SERGEANT TIMOTHY DOLLAN.

"Geeminy!" grinned Bill Beans, "I'll just take that job! I'd rather be a policeman anyway; this detective business is too confusin'. I guess I ain't got such a surprisin' bump of observation after all."

WASHINGTON OR—WORSE?*

By EDGAR FRANKLIN,

Author of "The Taking of the Liberator," "The Chase of the Concession," etc.

Certain astounding happenings that broke the calm current of life in a banana republic.

CHAPTER XIII.

TURNING A TRICK.

GIRTON drew in a quick breath.

"Yes, and— D'ye see his face?" he demanded. "D'ye see who it is?"

Bending forward, the Secretary of the Treasury strained his eyes. He straightened up suddenly, and an uncanny little chuckle escaped him.

"By the piper that played before Moses!" he cried under his breath. "It's the main guy of the whole business, Steve! It's the fellow that's running the show and had us down for the next turn, at eight-thirty, and—hush!"

Carefully he looked over his rifle. His free hand patted a revolver-butt.

"He's all of three hundred yards ahead of them now, too!" he whispered. "He's—"

The hoofs beat steadily toward them. Nearer and nearer, and ever nearer, came the big animal. The hiding pair held their breath as they slipped from their own mounts and came nearer the edge of the clearing.

And then, suddenly, the man was in the shadow, and:

"*Señor!*" Hemmett cried quickly and softly.

The big horse slid to a standstill. The cold voice of the white-faced man came promptly:

"Who goes there?"

"*Libertad sin cesar!*" Hemmett responded as readily.

"The password?"

"Victoria, *señor.* Will you approach?"

Slowly the horse came forward. Foot by foot he neared them, the rider peering curiously ahead into the gloom of the trees.

"Who is there?" inquired the imperious voice.

Out of the darkness a figure suddenly appeared at either side of his steed. A rifle-barrel was thrust fairly into either side of his body, and:

"Halt!"

"I—"

"Halt!" snarled Hemmett. "Keep your mouth closed, if you ever want to open it again in this world. Give me that pistol! Take the other, Steve! As for *you, you* command those gentlemen of yours to halt, right where they are!"

There was a moment of hesitation. In the stillness a pistol clicked ominously near to the mysterious one's head; a cold barrel was thrust to his temple.

* *Began July* ARGOSY. *Single copies,* 10 *cents.*

"There, Mr. Root and Branch of the Revolution!" Hemmett cried exultantly. "You let off one good long yell before I count five, or you'll stand a chance of being buried, right here and now! You tell your friends to stay where they are! One—two—three—"

A gasp came from the mounted man. A noisy intake of breath; and suddenly his voice rang out in Spanish:

"Vanesca! Rudino! Remain where you are until I return!"

There was another pause. The group heard—halted two hundred yards away. The pistol still held its place; and Hemmett tried hard to stifle the yell in his voice as he cried:

"Perhaps we haven't smashed the revolution, Steve, but we've dug up the roots, and potted 'em good and plenty!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE POINT OF THE PISTOL.

For a while, there was a tense pause in that particular patch of scrubby woodland.

Then the big horse, prodded slyly by a spur, gave a leap forward.

As quickly, Hemmett had the bridle, and had brought him to a standstill with a mighty effort. And as he caught his breath, he commented:

"You may just get down on your feet, my friend! There's no need of acrobatics here! Down!"

"And if I don't choose to obey?"

"You'll be shot—and I'll have your horse!" came with equal calm from Hemmett.

The man on the big horse considered for a second or two. Uncommenting, then, his leg came over the saddle, and he dropped gently to the ground.

Hemmett laughed aloud.

"If you'll keep him covered for a minute, Steve, while I moor Pegasus to one of these primeval pines," he suggested. "Then—"

He stopped, as he tethered the horse to a tree. He turned, then, and approached almost at a skip.

"And now, Mr. Man," he chuckled, "we've got *you*, haven't we?"

The stranger laughed slightly and contemptuously.

"You are in my presence, if that is what you mean."

"It's rather a swell-headed way of putting it, but the idea is there," Hemmett commented joyfully. "And now—"

"And now, I should advise you immediately to restore my guns and my horse, Mr.—er—Hemmett."

"We take advice between nine and five, daily," the Secretary of the Treasury responded with a renewed chuckling that was little less than ghoulish. "It's after hours now, you blamed scoundrel, and—"

"Be a little careful with that tongue of yours!"

"It's not necessary!" responded Hemmett with some anger. "Your—"

"On the contrary, it *is* necessary!" The imperious quality seemed not to diminish one whit. "I am in command of this—"

"You *were*, you mean!"

"On the contrary, I am! And whatever may be the point of this little prank, however you may have made your escape, I can assure you that it will not alter to-morrow morning's program in the slightest. You will be shot—well, decently, if I may use the term, if I am released at once. If you persist in this absurdity, it is quite possible that you will be shot after you have burned a little while!"

The utter calm of the tone, for the moment, disconcerted even Hemmett and Girton. The former, then, stepped closer, and laid a hard and heavy hand upon the shoulder of the captive.

"My egotistical friend," he said sharply, "have you ever had the pleasure of eating in a Bowery restaurant, in New York?"

"Eh?"

"In a good many of them they have fly-cages on the tables, with a little puddle of molasses to lure the innocent insect, and a nice wire-netting affair to keep him put, as it were. Catch the idea?"

"I—"

"I believe you *do* grasp it!" Hemmett continued. "Therefore, if you can conceive one of those little captive flies talking up, real good and sassy, to — say, to the professional bouncer of the place, you may get some

faint idea of the weight your threats have with this particular pair of citizens! Catch that?"

"It is interesting to hear you talk." The comment came with the slightest diminution of the utter superiority.

"It will be infinitely more interesting to see—and feel—us act. My man, we've got you. You're going to follow instructions, or become the deadest thing that ever happened around these parts."

"Mr. Hemmett, upon the first evidence of actual violence, I shall call upon my people—"

"No, you won't, and I'll tell you why!" the Secretary of the Treasury interrupted in a curiously businesslike tone. "You're no more in love with these people than you are with the inhabitants of Mars. You're here because a certain governmental clique in Europe sent you here to kick up trouble. You don't believe we're going to kill you, for you think we're afraid of the job. On the other hand, you are very much averse to dying, for that would cut off your interesting career."

The captive was silent.

"And having made that part clear," Hemmett concluded, "I have only to inform you that, unless you go to the edge of that clearing and announce in the clearest and least involved Spanish that Mr. Perdon is to be mounted on a horse and brought here instantly, you're going to be so filled with bullet-holes that you'll resemble a sieve more than anything else."

The moon was filtering through the trees now. Hemmett glanced at it—glanced at his rifle. He snapped the magazine, then, and the hammer lay back, palpably ready for action.

He propped the weapon comfortably under his arm, the muzzle trained on the stranger's heart.

He brought out his watch, then, and consulted it.

"I am going to give you three minutes to obey, my man," he said very quietly. "At the end of that time, if you haven't ordered Perdon brought here, you'll be dead!"

His low voice died away. Dead silence fell upon the little woodland patch, broken only by the uneasy rustling of the horses now and then.

It was to be a test of nerve, then—a test with no advantage upon the stranger's side, however he might view the case. In the dim light he surveyed them rather curiously, and he seemed little encouraged.

"One minute!"

The stranger's hands fell to his sides. His brow contracted, suddenly and thoughtfully. He took another quick survey, and—

"Two minutes!"

"One moment, Mr. Hemmett!"

"Well?"

"May I ask whether, in event of my compliance, I am to be allowed a peaceful return to camp?"

"If you do, you'll get a mighty flat assurance that you're going to do nothing of the sort!" Hemmett laughed shortly. "And now—time's up, and—"

The rifle came to his shoulder. With a bound the stranger made for the edge of the shadow — seemed about to dash forth. Hemmett's finger pressed dangerously on the trigger, and:

"Vanesca! Rudino!"

"Aye, *señor?*" came the hail.

"You will proceed to the cave, and have Señor Perdon brought to me here, mounted upon one of your horses!"

"And all the others may return to camp, you to follow later!" Hemmett supplemented, as the gun-barrel came into contact with the base of the stranger's brain.

"And the others may return to camp!" the captive shouted, in Spanish. "I shall return alone!"

"It's a lie, but we'll try to forgive it!" Hemmett chuckled. "Step back here again."

Resistance seemed to have been banished by the diplomatic brain of the captive. He obeyed passively enough.

"You see that stone—the whitish one in the moonlight?" Hemmett asked.

"Naturally."

"Sit down on it, in full view. If you move, you'll be shot on sight!"

Silently the captive took his seat. Hemmett retreated half a dozen paces, his rifle still handily directed toward the man. Girton followed him into the shadows.

And there the Secretary of the Treasury broke into a soundless laugh.

"I'll bet that scoundrel's having a taste of the nerves he gave us!" he commented. "Steve! Do you suppose two men ever got another one so downright 'good' as this?"

"It couldn't have been much better. If the rest of his crowd hasn't tumbled to his plight—"

"If they have, it's because they've transposed plain, every-day Spanish into some sort of superhuman cipher!" chuckled Hemmett. "No, we've got him, and we'll have Perdon in a little while, if nothing slips! And then?"

"For the woods on the other side, and the guide!"

"The surest thing you ever knew!" The Secretary of the Treasury sighted lovingly along the barrel. "I could take every button off his coat with this gift of the eccentric angel!" he observed parenthetically. "Yes, then for the trail—and Puerto Carlo—and *Washington!*"

"Eh?"

A low laugh was his only answer. Hemmett, leaning against a tree, was absorbed in his own thoughts.

Minutes were passing now, as the silent man remained motionless upon his stone, head down, thoughtful, too.

A dozen of them had gone when, distantly, came the trampling of hoofs. In an instant Hemmett was alert, and Girton as well. Noiselessly they stepped forward and peered through the trees, one eye ever upon the captive.

Horses were coming up the mountainside — three of them. The foremost seemed to bear the man Vanesca. The second unquestionably carried Mr. Lucius Perdon. The third, Rudino.

Upward they jogged lazily enough. The chief had ordered it, and the natives were there to obey. The center figure held his reins limply, it seemed, with the grip of a man entirely hopeless.

Now only a few hundred yards separated them from the woodland patch; now a solitary hundred, and Hemmett commanded briskly:

"Tell them to ride straight in here, my friend!"

The captive stirred. For an instant, in the growing moonlight, he faced their own hard countenances — and a bitter smile came upon his lips.

"This way!" he shouted. "Come here!"

The horses swerved a little and quickened. An anxious minute or two, and they trotted straight into the shadow, and:

"Vanesca! Rudino! Halt!" cried Hemmett. "Here! None of that!"

A bullet sped through the air, clipping a neat stretch of skin from Vanesca's right hand, as it went toward his holster! A little cloud of powder-smoke floated toward the natives as Hemmett went on:

"Throw your guns away!" He waited an instant. "That's right! Dismount, now! Quick!"

There was a sudden, very startled commotion in the neighborhood of the two Guanamans. They came to their feet together then, and stood stock still.

"And as for you, Perdon!" Girton almost shouted. "This happens to be Girton and Hemmett!"

A hoarse, sudden shout of joy escaped the little man. A kick at his mount's sides, and he was with them, and the Secretary of the Treasury was wringing his hand.

Hemmett broke in suddenly on the flow of words, as he called across the intervening few yards.

"Cut out that congratulatory shouting, gentlemen!" he ordered cheerily.

Then, as he turned to the natives: "Keep our agitator friend covered, Steve. Now, Mr. Rudino! It's my duty to inform you that you're going to be tied hard and fast to a tree!"

"*Señor!*"

"*Señor,* be damned! Give me that bridle of yours, and slip out the saddle-girth, too, and the stirrup-straps! Come! Here's the argument!"

The rifle-barrel popped into Rudino's face. Swiftly he obeyed the command.

"As for you, Big Chief Vanesca!" the Secretary of the Treasury rambled on joyfully. "You'll stand right there, and give an impersonation of a marble statue dyed brown. Move, and you'll have more to keep you interested than that scratch on your fist! Back up against that tree, Rudino!"

Chattering breathlessly, wholly unresisting, the native complied. No novice at knots, Hemmett trussed him swiftly

to the tree. A brief search of his pockets, a final pull at the strap which bound his hands behind the tree, and the Secretary of the Treasury hurried to his friends.

"And *now* we'll get out!" he decreed. "Here's your horse, Mr. Unknown! Get aboard!"

Rippling with excited laughter, he watched their chief captive mount.

"You first, Steve! Follow our late friend's direction. You next!" and he slapped the big horse. "You follow after, Vanesca! We're going to turn you loose in the woods in two or three hours, I think. Now, Mr. Perdon, I believe we'll ride side by side and exchange a few calm views on the Guanaman situation as it stands at present!"

"And you're actually—actually—in hope of getting clear. Mr. Hemmett?" came breathlessly from the Governor of Guanama. "I understand—"

They were out of the woods now, and moving upward in single file. The Secretary of the Treasury burst into a jubilant laugh.

"No man understands anything in this country until he sees it before him!" he cried. "At present, all we can understand is that we're headed for the railroad and freedom—and that we've got the chief actor of the whole affair right in the hollow of our hands!"

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE VOLCANO'S BRINK.

THE moon was well up now, bathing the whole eastern side of the mountain in golden light.

Behind, the patch of trees was growing small, as the little file of mounted men climbed toward the crater. Overhead, and not so very far overhead now, the dull red glow of El Demonio's eternal caldron of fire blazed against the sky.

One of the unending series of rumbles from the bowel of the mountain gave a slight tremor to the ground, and Hemmett turned to Perdon and muttered:

"Great old joke on us if she should start up an eruption now, eh?"

"It could hardly be more startling than the story you have just told me, Mr. Hemmett!" the Governor responded gravely. "This chance at escape, even though it prove unsuccessful, is—"

"It won't prove so, if the luck holds!" the Secretary of the Treasury laughed softly. "And after such a run of providential happenings as we've seen to-night—eh? What's Girton stopping for?"

The Secretary of State had indeed taken sudden pause, and with him their mysterious captive, and the man Vanesca.

They seemed to have been struck by the same impulse, too, for their eyes were turned northward along the mountainside, toward the distant covered wagons with their death-dealing contrivances of steel and wood.

Silently, with no little curiosity, the rear guard followed the gaze.

There was nothing to see at first, as they came together in a huddled group.

Then, as they watched, from between the upmost pair of vehicles issued a sudden flash of white—a man on horseback, it seemed; or, had it not been so incredible, one might have fancied that the breadth of white expanse indicated a skirt!

A moment, it went swiftly by the foremost wagon. It whisked about the end, then—disappeared altogether.

Through the still air came a very, very distant whinny of a horse. The hard-faced man on the big animal started noticeably. The Secretary of the Treasury smiled.

"Something wrong, friend?" he inquired.

He was wholly ignored. The man stared on, angry amazement written large upon his face.

Then, by the wagons, another form or two appeared on foot—men this time, beyond a question. They seemed to hurry to the front of the foremost wagon.

Another came into view—and in either hand he held a horse's bridle. Another and still another appeared, until some six or seven were about the vehicle.

"Ammunition going down to camp?" Girton queried evenly of the captive.

"It is not!" escaped that imperturbable person. "No order was—"

Shortly, angrily, he bit off his words; his lips closed tight as he stared steadily

again toward the fifteen thousand rifles of the projected Free Guanama.

And there was much to be seen just now, much that was amazing, inexplicable, confusing to the very last degree!

More little groups of three or four had appeared! More men were about more wagons! More horses, too, had come into sight—suddenly, unaccountably from the woods behind!

"And as I had figured out matters," Hemmett observed aloud, "about all their horses were running loose at the north end of the camp, in the flat forest!"

The captive winced. His eyes contracted to little slits as he strained them toward the phenomenon. His lips opened—and opened wider suddenly, and in uncontrollable amazement he shouted:

"In the name of God—!"

"Dry up!" Girton commanded without turning.

The man's teeth closed again. His breath came hard and fast. Like the rest of them, he leaned forward in his saddle and glared at the impossible sight across the mountain.

For the wagons were moving!

Not moving downward, not moving either toward them or away from them, but moving straight upward, for the edge of El Demonio's deep, blistering crater!

A second or two, perhaps, not one believed his eyes. Then conviction was forced upon them. There was absolutely no doubt of what was occurring; with the foremost wagon a hundred yards nearer the crater, the whole line was moving straight upward!

Slowly, steadily, they climbed.

From somewhere below them came one or two flashes of fire; a moment later the echo of several shots. From the spot where the last wagon had stood, another sheet of flame flared forth—and firing ceased from the bushes below.

From the side, then, came further shots. As promptly as before, they too were answered by crouching figures on the bare hillside.

And the wagons climbed on—and on—and on—until, abruptly, the first seemed literally to be tottering on the edge of the crater.

Then, abruptly, it stopped short. Men clustered around the horse's heads. Arms waved—in the moonlight, the white flash appeared again—and vanished!

The wagon began to turn. Half way 'round it stood now. Now it had turned completely, and the rear end was facing the vast gulf of the seething crater.

A pause—some distant shouting. The horses seemed to have been cut loose very suddenly, for they trotted a few paces away and were caught.

Men clustered around the heavy vehicle then, and bent their back to pushing it upward.

It rose some few feet. It rested, suddenly, upon the very brink of the crater.

Another crouching of the little, distant group—and the wagon vanished altogether.

"One—thousand—rifles—went—into—that—crater!" Hemmett gasped mechanically.

He found no reply.

One and all, the amazed group watched the second of the big vehicles. More rapidly than the first, it was wheeled about at the edge. Steadily as the first, it climbed to the crater edge—and upon it—and over! The second load of rifles had disappeared as abruptly as the first!

There was the faintest of distant rumblings, the faintest reddening of the sky as heavy wooden beams flamed up in the crater. And—the third wagon was approaching!

The little dots which represented men were racing furiously now. Clusters ran back, to push at the wagons as they climbed. By the dozen, it almost seemed, they herded around the wheeled things.

Three had disappeared now—now four—now six of the loads had been fed into the crater of El Demonio!

Then:

"That was the tenth!" Hemmett announced, in a curiously quiet voice. "Unless I'm altogether wrong—"

"Mr. Hemmett! If you will allow me—" burst tensely from their chief captive.

"We'll allow you to remain where you are, on penalty of being shot!" Girton announced. "There she goes—eleven!"

"And there's the twelfth!" Perdon muttered hoarsely. "Are they—are they—"

"It doesn't matter just what they are,"

said Hemmett. "They're sending their rifles to certain perdition—and that's enough!"

The thirteenth wagon climbed to the crater. The horses were cut loose and the vehicle too, like the others, disappeared altogether!

The fourteenth followed. But a single one remained below. It started upward, briskly, too, for well on to a dozen horses were hitched. To the top it fairly raced, and to the edge of the crater.

The horses were cut loose, and a man tumbled upon their backs. And other men shoved at the wagon—and shoved and shoved—and it dropped into the crater of El Demonio!

The figures took to racing wildly now. One after the other, men found horses and were astride them. Other little men turned and ran pell-mell, not toward camp, but around the summit.

That peculiar, mounted flash of white shot after them—and El Demonio's slope was bare!

Girton regained his senses with an effort. One last look at the empty space, and he broke into a yell!

"Ned, they've sent every last gun into that fire-pot!" he screamed. "Start for the woods! The guide's waiting for us, and—"

"And not only have we got the cause of the revolution," Hemmett roared, frantically, *"but the revolution's smashed!"*

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CARD THAT CAME ON BOARD SHIP.

AROUND all the square before Puerto Carlo's railway terminal, people were packed, and carriages and automobiles as well.

American flags waved aloft, big ones and little ones. American cheers, too, rent the baking, sunshiny air. Flowers were thrown into the big square, handkerchiefs were fluttering.

To the left, almost at the wide door of the depot, the famous Field Music of the One Hundred and Eighty-ninth Regular Infantry blared inspiringly; the drums rolled. The music ceased, and the bugles blared out another long call, as the cavalry rode in, four abreast, and slid from their horses.

For the United States troops were starting up-country!

Five thousand of them, and nearly a quarter of that the finest horse regiment the regular army boasts, were headed for the forests behind Felipe.

Armed perfectly, amply supplied with ammunition, thoroughly backed by the trainloads of supplies that were even then being trimmed on the freight tracks, American troops were on the way to the seat of the—now wholly unarmed—rebellion; American discipline was on its way to enforcement.

And, with that beautiful inconsequentiality which characterizes the Guanaman people, the native element in the jam of humanity cheered even more loudly than the white-skinned contingent!

Or perhaps there was little of the inconsequent in the action; perhaps it sprang from the soundest of logic. For, since morning of the day before yesterday, uncensored telegrams from Santa Maria and the up-country had been telling of the amazing return of thousands upon thousands of men—men who had left to go nowhere; men who had returned now from nowhere, apparently quite ready to undertake the pursuits of peace!

Toward the center of the square, two automobiles were standing.

In the foremost, alone, but thoroughly guarded nevertheless, stood Mr. Lucius Perdon, Governor of Guanama, erect and pompous as ever. His collar was white and stiff as of yore; his tie was white and smooth; his brow was altogether unruffled, as he bowed to one officer after the other.

In the sceond machine, sweltering under the affliction of frock coats and tall hats, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury maintained their statuesque attitudes.

Majestic, erect, they remained, until the last trooper had passed, with his saber at salute, until the last horse had been led out of sight and the last cavalryman had disappeared from view within the stifling, packed depths of the railroad station.

And then, with an inaudible grunt, Hemmett sat down suddenly and glanced at his watch:

"So endeth the fireworks!" he ob-

served. "Now, we haven't any too much time to—"

"That's right. It's within twenty minutes of twelve now!" the Secretary of State whistled. "Well—we'll have to bid Perdon farewell and skip for the dock."

A word to the chauffeur, and the automobile lined beside the Governor's. Girton leaned over with outstretched hand.

"We're off now, Governor," he said. "Good-by."

"And you are returning to Guanama?" Perdon smiled quietly as he took the hand.

"Some time—somehow. We're not prepared to fix a date this morning. Perhaps it's because we're all too thankful to be in the land of the living!" replied Hemmett.

The Governor mopped his brow daintily.

"It was the most providential escape in history, gentlemen!" he said gravely. "But for you, I myself might now be—"

Hemmett's hand went forth as well.

"Don't think about it, Perdon," he said. "It's over, and we're out of it—and nothing short of a Higher Power could have engineered affairs for us. But so long as we're breathing still and safe—!"

"Exactly, Mr. Hemmett." The larger motor took to whirring. Mr. Perdon, the same calm and dignified statesman of former days, despite all, removed his hat and made a deferential salutation.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I bid you *bon voyage!*"

The motor started. The crowds burst into further lusty cheering, as they opened to make a passageway for the automobile.

Placid, unruffled as the Rock of Gibraltar, the two sat back in stately fashion, bowing here and there and everywhere.

"Slight contrast to being stood up in a sunless glade and having that lantern-jawed sphinx inform you that the death-rattle is due at eight-thirty!" Girton observed.

Hemmett laughed softly and in wholly satisfied fashion.

"Never mind," he said; "we have that gentleman where he'll be quite harmless."

The thick of the crowd was past now. Methodically, some eight or ten of Puerto Carlo's imported and white-skinned mounted police ranged about the machine and broke into a brisk trot.

Silently, the occupants leaned back—silently and contentedly. The residential districts were behind now, with their flying flags and their fluttering handkerchiefs.

They were spinning through the business end of town, through streets lined with warehouses and mercantile establishments. And these in turn were passed and the water-front reached—and the automobile whirred out upon the long new wharf and came to a standstill beside the new liner Guanama, bound for the city of New York.

The police ranged 'round. Bowing to a new crowd, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury stepped down and made for the gangplank; and up to the new deck they climbed, to disappear momentarily among the waiting throng.

A minute or two, and they were leaning over the rail, looking downward and waiting for the last call of "All ashore!"

The Secretary of the Treasury sighed a little, and his partner turned questioningly.

"Well, sorry to be leaving?"

"Not altogether." The words came reluctantly. Hemmett's uneasy eyes searched the crowd with ill-assumed carelessness.

The Secretary of State laughed a little to himself.

"Let bygones be bygones," he said. "Remember the present, Ned—remember that you're well out of a mess that might have proved the very devil—remember that Providence has taken care of us to an amazing extent."

Hemmett nodded.

"And now," he said, "we've got Mr. Somebody, from Somewhere, down in his stateroom below, with a pair of handcuffs on him and Bill Burrows and four others watching him in a circle!" He chuckled slightly. "I wonder precisely what's going to happen to that genial manufacturer of revolutions? I presume he'll be

neatly jugged, for twenty or thirty years, after the Federal courts get done with him."

"I don't."

"Eh?"

"No, sir! I doubt it very much. See here, Ned; here's a notion that appealed to me last night. I spoke to Perdon about it, and I believe he has cabled to Washington. This captive gentleman of ours, let him represent and work for that *the* European Power however much, is, nevertheless, out for himself. He's lost this deal altogether."

"Yes."

"Well, don't you imagine that if he was thoroughly sweated and made to confess in full on the promise of being turned loose—if all the available Secret Service men were given a good look at him in the flesh and pictures of him taken and circulated through the service—that he'd be—well, slightly unlikely to try another scheme against the United States?"

"Well—"

"And more than that, with his written confession, wouldn't we have the most beautiful possible club to hold over that same *the* power—eh?"

Slowly, the Secretary of the Treasury smiled acquiescence.

"That's right!" he remarked. "And if—what?"

He turned suddenly as a steward appeared at his elbow. Girton, some two yards distant, saw him receive a card—saw his face suddenly undergo the most remarkable of transformations.

CHAPTER XVII.

WASHINGTON—FOR BETTER.

In the merest fraction of a second Hemmett was electrified. Without one backward glance, he was off.

Through the crowd, he fairly jammed his way to the gangplank. Sailors were gripping the ropes, the captain himself stood at the head. And the latter dignitary, Mr. Hemmett addressed with the loveliest of assurance.

"You'll have to hold this boat a few minutes!" he announced as he stepped downward.

"But—my dear sir! I—"

"I don't care a cuss whether it's convenient or not!" came cheerfully from the lower end of the runway. "It *has* to be done—official business, understand!"

Rather amazedly, the brass-buttoned officer gave a word or two. The men's grasp on the ropes relaxed, their astonished eyes followed the hurrying form of Mr. Edward Hemmett.

From the rail, Girton's eyes were following, too. Through the mass of people went his friend, a dozen or two following.

A word to one of the police officers, and the dozen or two were driven back, and the Secretary proceeded on his way alone.

He now broke into a run, headed toward the street end of the dock, and here he stopped suddenly—before the tall, slim, veiled figure of a girl.

Even at that distance his lips were seen to be moving rapidly, close to the impenetrable veil. Their hands met then, and they talked on and on and on.

From the Guanama came a long, powerful blast of the whistle. People turned on the wharf, people looked down from the rail, people began—for they were in the main Americans—to criticize the line, for was it not now eight minutes past twelve?

Frowning, Girton watched on. The second long blast came, and with it an apparent start from the distant Hemmett. An instant, he looked hastily toward the vessel.

Then the veil was raised suddenly, the girl's arms were thrown about Hemmett's neck. Even at the distance there was not the slightest doubt in the world about it.

The Secretary of the Treasury had kissed the lady! And it was absolutely in no hesitating or timid fashion!

He turned then, did Hemmett, and raced headlong for the gangplank.

Unconscious of all eyes, he leaped up the incline and to the deck of the liner—and the plank began to slide almost before his feet left it. Unconscious, he pushed his way back to Girton's side as the big boat started to move.

He seized that gentleman's arm and piloted him unceremoniously to the stern; and here, by the rail, he turned

upon the Secretary of State a countenance of such beaming qualities that the latter almost turned weak.

"The person," he said, "who is responsible for our regular respiration today—for our escape—for the smashing of the revolution—is *Inez!*"

"Who was also the person responsible for all our trouble!" Girton observed quietly.

"*What!*" Sudden fury flared into Hemmett's tone. "Well—good Lord, man! No mortal can do more than repent—*the Bible'll* tell you that!"

The big liner began to ease out of the wharf and into the big harbor. Mr. Hemmett removed his hat and whistled blithely for a little.

"Steve! That girl's a wonder—*a wonder!*" he observed. "There isn't another woman like *her* alive! She got the fit of repentance when word went around that we were to be shot! She saw the light then, and saw what a fool business it was, and went to work to undo it!"

"Yes?"

"That long-legged cuss who passed us the weapons and steered us out was her second cousin," Hammett rambled on. "He's been trying for five years to marry her. It was on her promise to have him that he went to work and, with her assistance, corrupted his whole troop of horse—the bunch that engineered the guns over into El Demonio!" He gasped a little at the thought. "Thunderation! See what a man'll do for a pretty woman!"

"I have seen!" Girton muttered very softly.

"And now she's bound to jump the country for a while," the Secretary of the Treasury went on cheerfully. "Her cousin and the rest of the troop are in hiding. Inez is sailing for New York on the fruit steamer to-night—going to spend a year or so there with her aunt. Um!"

Mr. Hemmett's eyes were glued upon the end of the wharf.

"I suppose dear cousin and several of his friends in the late troop will have their several stretches of epidermis punctured with nasty knives for this," he remarked thoughtfully. "May not, though. Things'll quiet down now, and—" he broke off for a minute. "I say, Steve! That fruit steamer'll dock in Philadelphia the day after we reach New York."

"I presume it will."

The Secretary of State was smiling slightly as he watched the absorbed gaze toward the pier.

In a way, his mind was working around to the conclusion that even a maiden of Guanaman blood and blessed with such beauty as the Señorita Vanniera's must, after all, be endowed with a rather remarkable degree of that most admirable quality—sheer pluck. Repentance, too, which goes to such lengths that—Girton smiled slightly.

"So that I presume also one of us at least will stop off at Philadelphia on the way from New York to Washington?" he inquired slyly.

The broadest of grins was turned upon him.

"And I seem to deduce also that—er—everything is now forgiven and smoothed out?"

"Well, Stephen, if your eyes are good—" began the Secretary of the Treasury.

The Secretary of State pursed his lips. There was a queer sort of last, flickering, vague doubt running through his unsmitten mind. All things considered, it did seem a bit idiotic to be hurled headlong into the jaws of death by one frail young woman; and thereafter to be jerked out bodily from the same jaws with as little ceremony, as little consent on the part of the hurled, as if—

"Steve!"

"I—eh? Yes? What?" gasped Girton.

"There! Right on the end of the wharf now! She just came out! See her, Steve! *There she is!*"

The Secretary of the Treasury had torn the hat from his head and was waving it frantically toward the slim, veiled figure on the end of the pier.

For an instant the Secretary of State hesitated. Then, abruptly, he surrendered for good.

Mr. Girton, too, waved his hat enthusiastically in the direction of the black veil and the fluttering white handkerchief.

THE END.

THE INNOCENTS.

By EDMUND E. FIELD.

How a matter of circumstantial evidence put two men in jail and caused the victim of the crime to take to her bed.

"HALLO, Central! Give me the police! What's that? Who do I want? Why, I stated plainly enough—police! Police station! Central, this is a very important matter, and I must have— What do you say? Busy! Oh, dear!"

Patiently waiting a few minutes, and hearing no further response from the instrument, Mrs. Weston hung up the receiver.

She began pacing up and down the room, showing evidence of fear and anxiety; then, glancing in the direction of an open door, she stealthily reached and closed it, turning the key.

"Mercy, if they should still be in the house!" she murmured.

Then the telephone-bell rang. A deep, heavy voice answered her: "Hallo! This is the police station! Did you call?"

Mrs. Weston thereupon informed the officer that her house was full of burglars—that she could almost hear them packing up her silverware in the dining-room below. Yes, they had most certainly been in the house, for she had seen the evidence of their work, and, upon hasty investigation, had missed some valuables.

"We'll come immediately," responded the voice. "Try to hold them till we get there."

When the detectives finally arrived, Mrs. Weston nervously informed them that during her absence of a few hours burglars had entered the house, had been to her room, and stolen a diamond ring.

"And it is quite possible they are still here," she added, with a little shiver.

The officers quieted her fears, and she accompanied them while they searched the house.

Everything appeared to be in perfect order—at least, no attempt had been made to disturb her precious silverware. Finally they reached her bedchamber.

"My diamond ring has disappeared," she cried now.

"What was its value?" inquired the detective.

"Three hundred and fifty dollars."

"When did you miss it? Where did you leave it?"

"In my hurry to keep an appointment with the dentist," she explained, "I positively remember removing it from my finger and laying it upon the dressing-table, intending to replace it after I had washed my hands. This I neglected to do, and did not discover my carelessness until after I had left the house. But I did not wish to be late for my appointment, so I proceeded on my way.

"It was two hours before I got back. I came right up here. My ring was gone! I hunted high and low, notwithstanding I knew I had placed it there," pointing to a spot on the dressing-table.

The detective carefully questioned her concerning the house, about her family, and as to how many servants she had. Did the latter report any callers during her absence?

"My husband and myself constitute the family," was her reply. "He is a traveling salesman, and left home early this morning for a few days' trip. I have one maid."

"When you returned home, and discovered your ring missing, did you speak to your maid about it?" asked the officer.

"My maid was not here when I came in. In fact, she is away for the day."

"Do you remember how long it was before you left that the maid went out?" the detective inquired.

"Well, really, I can't recall whether she left before or after I did. You see, I was in such a hurry myself that I paid little attention to her."

The detective frowned, and spoke rather sharply:

"Do I understand that you left the

house without inquiring whether the maid was here or not? Are you in the habit of leaving her alone, with diamonds left lying carelessly about?"

"Sir, I am not in the habit of leaving diamonds lying carelessly about," she quickly responded. "In fact, it is the first time anything of the kind has ever occurred. Furthermore, I have every confidence in my maid. She has been with us for some time, and has proven trustworthy."

"We have had to deal with the trustworthy kind before," remarked one detective to another, with significant emphasis.

"Madam," went on the one who had been handling the case, "our remarks are not intended as a reflection or criticism. Our duty now is to ascertain how your ring disappeared, and, if possible, to recover it. You can be of great service to us by remaining absolutely silent; especially, say nothing to your maid when she returns as to what has occurred, for—"

"It may be possible," she interrupted, "that the maid came into the room after I left and put the ring somewhere for safe-keeping."

"In that case the maid will inform you immediately. If so, notify us at once." Whereupon the detectives departed.

II.

WHEN the maid returned that night Mrs. Weston waited anxiously for some reference to her ring. The girl appeared to be in her usual happy frame of mind. She talked a few minutes, and, after a pleasant "good night," went to her room.

Mrs. Weston was now fully convinced that her ring had been stolen, not by her maid, but by a burglar who had entered during her absence.

In the meantime, the detectives were busy. Whatever opinion they had as to how the ring had disappeared, they kept to themselves. One of them suspected the maid. There was no doubt of this, from the remarks he had made about "trustworthy" people in the presence of Mrs. Weston. He decided to shadow the maid, ascertain where she went, and with whom she spent her spare time. The head of the detective bureau was easily persuaded to insist upon Mrs. Weston allowing the maid, under the some pretext, to be at leisure the next afternoon.

It is the usual custom of the police, whenever a valuable piece of jewelry is stolen, to notify the pawnbrokers and jewelers, giving a minute description of the property, with instructions to report to them immediately if the missing article comes under their notice.

The next morning one of the detectives had just finished describing the lost ring to a certain jeweler, when a young man entered and handed him a diamond ring such as the detective had just described.

Betraying no uneasiness, however, he remarked pleasantly: "This is an unusually large and brilliant stone."

The young man did not seem interested in the jeweler's comment. "I would like to have the size of that ring changed," he said. "Can it be done?"

"Yes," answered the jeweler; "if you know the exact size you want. That, of course, is very important."

Fumbling in his vest-pocket, the young man handed the jeweler an ordinary plain band ring, remarking: "Here is one the girl wears; you can get the size by that. Can you have it ready to-day?"

"Excuse me a minute," said the jeweler, and joined the detective at the rear of the store.

"Is that the ring in question?" he asked. "What action shall I take?"

The detective, having heard all that had been said, replied: "Tell him the ring will be ready in an hour or two. I'll keep him under surveillance; I suspect there are others in the game. Don't let him think you suspect anything."

The young man left the store, happy in the assurance that his ring would be ready very soon, blissfully ignorant that a detective was trailing him.

"What, back so soon? What became of your man? Did he get away?" excitedly inquired the jeweler, when presently the sleuth walked in on him again.

"No; I met another detective, whom I instructed to shadow him. By the way, I wish you would take your magnifying-glass and examine the inside of the ring that fellow gave you for size. See whether any marks are inside."

The jeweler did as requested, and reported: "There are three initials—'E. A. W.'"

"Thanks. I think I will go up to Mrs. Weston's and see whether she has anything new to say. I'll take the diamond ring along for positive identification."

When the detective reached her home, and showed her the ring, Mrs. Weston's surprise was out of all comparison with her joy.

"You are quite positive it is your ring?" inquired the detective.

"Quite positive? Absolutely! I would know it among ten thousand."

But when the detective requested the return of the ring, Mrs. Weston was amazed. In fact, she hesitated about complying. It was her ring, and she could not understand what further action was necessary.

"The ring is evidence, and must be used as such—first to make an arrest, then to convict the party in whose possession it was found, together with any others who may be implicated in the theft," the detective explained.

"What are your initials in full?" he added.

"B. L. W.," she answered.

"Do you know the initials of your maid?"

"E. A. W.," was the reply.

"Just as I suspected," the detective told himself.

Leaving the house, satisfied that he had another link in the chain of evidence, he returned to the jewelry store.

It was planned there that he was to assume the attitude of a customer examining goods, with a view to making a purchase, in order that he could be ready for action. In due course the young man appeared.

"How about my ring?" he inquired.

"I have not done anything with it," replied the jeweler.

Before he could proceed, the detective turned suddenly toward the customer, and bluntly demanded: "How did you come into possession of that ring?"

"I don't know that it's any of your business."

"Now, don't get too flip! You might save yourself a lot of trouble by being civil."

"I don't propose to have you jump on me as if I was a crook," responded the young man.

"It remains to be seen whether you are one or not," put in the detective. "Some crooks throw a pretty stiff bluff in assuming the innocent dodge when they begin to get cornered. You know you have a stolen ring. If you didn't do the job yourself, you know who did. You certainly have a lot of nerve to try your game so soon. Don't give me any of your talk—cut it out! I am a detective, and place you under arrest. You come to headquarters. The chief wants to see you."

With repeated exclamations that it was an outrage, the young man was fain to submit.

The chief was at his desk when they arrived, but he could get little satisfaction from the prisoner, who assumed an air of defiance. He was held for a hearing in the morning.

III.

THAT night the papers printed a lengthy article about a stolen diamond ring having been recovered, much to the satisfaction of the jeweler, whose name figured very prominently in the account.

At the hearing next morning Mrs. Weston, her maid, the jeweler, and a few other people were to be heard.

Mrs. Weston explained to the court how she had discovered the loss of her ring, identifying the one in evidence as her property.

The jeweler testified that the ring had been offered to him for alteration by the man charged with the theft.

The prisoner, who gave his name as John Jones, told what seemed to be a straightforward story.

"A fellow, Dick Bush, friend of mine, called to see me the other day. He asked me if I wanted to buy a ring. 'It's a beaut,' he said, handing me the ring; 'and the best imitation diamond you ever saw. You can throw an elegant bluff with a big thing like that. I'll bet it's worth at least twenty-five dollars.'

"I told him that I didn't want to buy any ring. 'Buy it and give it to your girl,' he said. 'You can have it for ten dollars.' So I bought it, and next morn-

ing took it to the jeweler to have him change the size."

"To whom did you intend to give the ring after you had it altered?" the court inquired.

"Emma Williams, a friend of mine."

"Where did you get the flat band ring you gave the jeweler for size?"

"It belongs to Emma. She gave it to me."

"Did you ask any one the value of the diamond ring when you had it in your possession?"

"I didn't know it was a real diamond ring. I thought it was a fake stone. Dick Bush said it was."

"But you did not think ten dollars was too much to pay for a fake stone, did you?"

"I thought I was paying all it was worth."

Emma Williams was next called, and asked what her occupation was. She nervously replied: "I am the maid in the employ of Mrs. Weston."

When handed the plain ring she identified it as her own, stating that she had given it to Jones upon request, as he was a particular friend of hers.

"You say Jones is a particular friend. What do you mean by that?"

"Why," she blushingly replied, "I expect to marry him some day."

"Did Jones say anything about a diamond ring at the time he requested your band ring, or intimate in any way what he wanted it for?"

"No. He only said: 'Emma, let me have your band ring.'"

"Did Jones call often to see you at the house of Mrs. Weston?"

"Once in a while; not often."

"When was he there last?"

"He met me there last Wednesday morning."

"How long did he remain in the house?"

"He waited down-stairs in the kitchen about fifteen minutes, while I was upstairs putting my hat on to go out with him."

"Was that before or after Mrs. Weston went out?"

"It was after Mrs. Weston went out."

"That was the day Mrs. Weston's ring disappeared, was it not?"

"I did not know anything about Mrs. Weston's ring having disappeared. She didn't say anything to me about it."

Dick Bush was then called, and asked by the court: "What is your business?"

"I am not doing anything just now," he answered.

"Is it not a fact that you seldom do anything, if you can help it?"

"I am willing to work when I can get something to do."

"Where did you get that ring you sold to Jones?"

"I found it down near the railroad depot," was the answer.

"When did you find it?"

"Last Wednesday morning."

"Did you show it to any one before you sold it to Jones?"

"No."

"You simply found it, and ran around to Jones to sell it to him?"

"Yes."

"How did you know Jones would buy it?"

"I knew he was stuck on a girl, and might want to buy it to throw a bluff."

"What were you doing down at the depot last Wednesday morning?"

"I carried Dr. Fischer's grip down for him. He was going on the morning train."

"Was it before or after you reached the depot you say you found the ring?"

"On my way back—about a block. I was looking for snipes, when I saw the ring lying in the gutter."

"What do you mean by 'snipes'?"

"Cigars thrown away by men before they reach the depot."

"How did you guess the ring was worth twenty-five dollars?"

"It looked pretty good to me."

"If you thought it was worth twenty-five dollars, how did you come to sell it for ten dollars?"

"I needed the money."

"Judging from your record, I should imagine when you need money you would adopt almost any method to get it. It is a question in my mind, if you had realized the ring was worth three hundred and fifty dollars, whether you would have sold it for ten dollars. On the other hand, if you really did know you had a valuable ring, you may have wanted to get it out of your possession as soon as possible.

"The question to be determined is, did you really find it? Were you in reality near the railroad station Wednesday morning?"

Mopping the perspiration from his brow, Bush began to show signs of uneasiness. It was a case of a fellow with a shady record, and circumstantial evidence was closing in upon him.

"I can prove I was at the depot, your honor," he pleaded.

"You will have a chance; also to prove where you were before and after."

Mrs. Weston was asked if, when on her way to or from the dentist Wednesday morning, she was in the vicinity of the depot.

She replied she was not.

"The depot is half a mile from my house, in the opposite direction from the dentist," she added.

She again declared that she positively remembered laying her ring on her dressing-table, and that it could not possibly have been lost in the street.

One of the detectives, who had been following up a clue, now entered the court, accompanying a new witness, whose statement was:

"On last Wednesday morning I was at the depot, delivering freight. I drove the team back by way of the East End. When passing Henry and John Street I saw Jones and his girl coming along. I thought it was pretty early in the day for them to be out for a stroll. Jones left her standing there, while he went over and said something to Bush, who stood in a doorway near the corner. It was not more than a minute or so when he joined his girl, and they went on. The whole thing slipped my mind until this morning, when the detective pumped me and said: 'I guess you had better come down to court.'"

When asked if he was positive it was last Wednesday he saw the two, he answered:

"Sure thing. That's the day I bought my new suit of clothes, and I wore 'em that night to the Truck Drivers' Ball, and got soaking wet on my way home."

The judge then inquired: "Are you friendly toward Jones and Bush? That is, have you any grudge against either of them?"

"Certainly not," was the answer.

The deeper they probed into the case the tighter it closed around Bush.

Was he simply a tool in the hands of Jones, acting the part of an innocent victim?

Jones knew that Mrs. Weston was not at home that morning. Was his meeting and hurried talk with Bush accidental or designed?

The judge, a man of long experience, was known to be a careful and thorough investigator. "If you can pass the critical examination of Judge Minns, it's as good as an acquittal," was a common expression among the undesirable citizens and their sympathizers.

Tapping his lead-pencil upon his desk, where he had been making notes of the case, as was his usual custom, the judge now glanced in the direction of Jones, who stood up.

"Why did you go to Mrs. Weston's house for the girl so early on that particular day?" the judge inquired.

"I knew that Wednesday was the day that Emma had to herself, and I happened to be in the neighborhood. I thought I would call for and take her to the car. She was going to her home," answered Jones.

"Did you know that Mrs. Weston was not at home before you called?" asked the judge.

"I saw Mrs. Weston going up the street from her house when I stood on the corner," Jones replied.

"Had you thought of calling for the maid before or after you saw Mrs. Weston on the street?" the judge inquired.

"It was after I saw Mrs. Weston. I knew then that she was not at home, and couldn't kick. If I called on the girl in the morning she might not like it," explained Jones.

"What were you doing walking the streets that morning, when you should have been at work?" quizzed the judge.

"The engine at the factory broke down, and we were laid off for the day," was the prompt answer.

"When you and the girl were walking down the street you left her standing a few minutes, while you spoke to Bush. What was it about?"

"I told him I would be at home all morning if he wanted to come around to play cards," explained Jones.

"You and Bush seem to be very intimate—close friends, I suppose?" the judge went on, with a searching glance.

"I know Bush gets knocked a whole lot by the boys, because he doesn't care to work very much. I feel sorry for him, and try to treat him square. I bought the ring from him, just as I told you, judge. If he touched Mrs. Weston for it, honest to God, I don't know anything about it."

Jones's voice was quivering with emotion as he spoke.

Just here quite a commotion was caused by the maid, who became hysterical and cried out: "This is terrible! Terrible! Why should John be blamed for it? Oh, why did he ever have anything to do with that loafer, Bush?"

The judge sounded his gavel, and ordered the court officers to restore order,

"Quiet that girl, or take her from the room!" he commanded.

"It's all up with Bush," remarked a fellow with a black eye to his companion, as they both grinned at the stir in the court-room.

The court attendants quickly quieted the maid, with the assistance of Mrs. Weston, who by this time was bordering on a nervous breakdown herself.

When order had been restored the judge, with a determined expression, warned the spectators that in case of any further unnecessary disturbance he would clear the room.

Dr. Fischer, whose grip Bush claimed he had carried, now appeared, and Bush was ordered to the stand.

"Doctor, do you know that man?" the judge inquired.

"I certainly do not," he answered.

"Do you remember having seen him before?" the judge asked.

"Not to my knowledge," replied the doctor.

A death-like silence filled the room. Necks were craned from all directions to get a glimpse of Bush. Here was the witness upon whose testimony he depended to establish the fact of his presence near the depot, according to his own testimony.

"In the interest of justice, doctor, I will try to refresh your memory. When you went to the depot, last Wednesday morning, the prisoner claims to have carried your grip there. Do you remember the incident, and do you recognize the man?" the judge gravely inquired.

"Your honor, I did not go to the depot last Wednesday. As a matter of fact, I have not been out of town for two months. I learned early this morning that my name was mentioned in connection with the case, and on my way to visit a patient I dropped in to correct the mistake."

"Thank you, doctor, for your thoughtfulness. You are excused from further testimony," the judge smilingly remarked.

The fellow with the black eye, on the back seat, nudged his associate and whispered: "It's twenty-three for Bush, all right."

Bush by this time was as white as a sheet, and trembling from head to foot, an object of pity rather than of condemnation. The judge, anticipating he might make a confession of his guilt, now asked: "What have you to say to Dr. Fischer's testimony?"

"I certainly carried a grip to the depot, all right. If it was not Dr. Fischer's, it was a fellow who looked a lot like him," meekly answered Bush.

"Listen to him; listen to him," said the fellow with the black eye, trying to suppress his laughter.

Just then a court officer touched him on the shoulder, and commanded him to leave or be locked up.

The judge ordered Bush held under one thousand dollars' bail. Turning to Jones, he said: "I will have your record looked up. In the meantime I'll hold you under five hundred dollars' bail. The case is adjourned until Monday."

IV.

When Mr. Weston arrived home that night he was met at the door by the maid, who, with tear-stained cheeks and swollen eyes, exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Weston! Oh, Mr. Weston!"

Fearing something terrible had happened to his wife, he dropped his grip in the hall and, without waiting for any explanation from the maid, bounded up the stairs two steps at a time.

Entering his wife's room, he found her in bed, under the care of a physi-

cian. "John, John, John!" was all she could moan, tossing her head from one side to the other.

Mr. Weston stood there dazed. A thousand thoughts flew through his brain. Recovering himself, he gasped: "What on earth is the trouble?"

"Oh, John; the court, the trial!" hysterically cried his wife.

"What does this mean?" he inquired of the doctor, who stood anxiously looking on.

"This is all I can tell you," replied the physician. "I was called here hurriedly by the maid, and found Mrs. Weston in this highly nervous state."

"My head! My head! No, judge; I did not go near the depot that day. In jail, both of them! Why should I be put to all this suffering?" were the incoherent sentences that now came from Mrs. Weston.

Her husband bent over her, and tried to draw forth some definite explanation. All efforts proving vain, the doctor suggested sending for the maid.

"Why don't they give me my ring? Why do they keep it from me?" moaned Mrs. Weston from the bed.

"Her ring? What ring?" asked Mr. Weston.

"Why, her diamond ring that was stolen?" explained the maid.

"Her diamond ring that was stolen?" excitedly cried Mr. Weston. Reaching into his vest-pocket, he drew out a piece of paper distractedly; then, after searching each of his pockets in turn, he moaned: "I've lost it. I had it, and I've lost it."

"Lost what?" inquired the doctor.

"Why, my wife's diamond ring! I understand now; it all comes to me. I left home last Wednesday morning to be gone a few days. When I reached my office, and while arranging some papers I intended to take with me on my trip, I discovered a very important one missing. Presuming I had left it on my desk at home, I hurriedly went to get it.

"When I arrived there my wife and maid were both out. Going at once to my desk I found the paper I sought. As I passed through the room I noticed my wife's diamond ring lying upon her dressing-table. She had frequently requested me to have it reset, as she feared the setting had worn thin and might let the diamond slip. So I decided to take it with me, as I knew of a jeweler where I was going who made a specialty of that class of work. I wrote her a note stating that I had taken the ring for that purpose. I intended to place the note upon her table, and really thought I had done so, until I found it in my vest pocket a few minutes ago. I can't understand how I came to make such a blunder; it would have obviated all this suffering.

"And now what did I do with the ring? I can't find it in any of my pockets. This is terrible! Why, I—why, I know I took it; fool that I was to bother with a valuable piece of jewelry like that when my mind was so full of business matters. I never gave the ring another thought from the time I left the house Wednesday until I came home to-night."

Mrs. Weston by this time was sitting up in bed anxiously listening to her husband.

"Oh, John, it couldn't have been that you took it; you must have forgotten it, and a thief broke into the house and stole it while I was out. You couldn't have taken it."

"I know I did. I positively remember putting it in my wallet for safe-keeping, but it's gone. I had that wallet out a dozen and one times since I left and never once thought of the ring. I've lost it—I've lost it! But where did I lose it, and how?

"I remember hurrying to get the train Wednesday morning, and when within a short distance from the depot I took out my wallet, while on a half run, and opened it to take out a bill in order to save time when buying my ticket. It never occurred to me that I had placed the ring there. Could it have dropped out then?"

The doctor was intensely interested in Mr. Weston's story, and suggested that he go at once and state the facts to the judge who had tried the case.

"Just think what an awful predicament to be placed in! I almost dread to meet the judge. But there is no other way. I must face it," sighed Mr. Weston.

When he had finished his explanation

to the judge, the latter thoughtfully nodded his head and remarked:

"It is very evident that you lost the ring. Your unfortunate neglect to leave the note of explanation naturally caused your wife to think it had been stolen. She was not to blame for the actions of the detectives in suspecting the two men who are now in jail. Dr. Pierson, just returned to town, was here a while ago, and stated it was his grip Bush carried to the depot Wednesday morning.

"There is no doubt in my mind but that Bush found the ring as he testified, although a strong case of circumstantial evidence was woven about him. It certainly was a most unusual occurrence; but as Shakespeare says, 'All's well that ends well,' and the men shall be freed at once."

CHASING RAINBOWS.*

By DOUGLAS PIERCE,

Author of "His Good Right Hand," "The Shaft of Light," etc.

The pursuit of fortune in town by a fellow from the country, with an account of the jolts he received in the process.

CHAPTER XIV.

"WHAT'S SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE."

KING'S smile from Fortune came to him in this wise.

He had never relinquished the idea that through the grafters he might be able to get a line on the true inwardness of that rubber company deal, and serve his employer by recovering the money so recklessly invested, while at the same time putting in a jolt or two at the colonel on his father's account.

He was now more than ever convinced that the enterprise was a fake, pure and simple, for after getting all the money he could from the sale of stock, its promoter seemed to lose interest, and the operations which had so glowingly been promised to start "within three months with dividends at the end of the first year," kept being delayed first upon one excuse, and then upon another.

It was really to "get next" to Scott and Newman, as he phrased it, that John had arranged to throw the "long shot" securities their way, and he managed afterward to keep in touch with them, and to do them one or two additional good turns, so that by the time he got ready to broach the subject of the colonel he had won his way pretty well into their confidence.

"Tell me," he said one day, when he was settling up with them on some minor transaction he had entrusted to their charge, "didn't old Lindon know the line of trade you fellows were in, when he got you to place that rubber stock?"

"'Course he did," grinned Scott. "He told us at the start that it was flim-flam artists he was looking for, and that our play must be to pass over any customers who might want to make an investigation. 'Confine yourselves chiefly,' he told us, 'to young chaps with money, who will gulp at the bait without noticing the hook behind it.' Failing these, however, we could go after old ladies and clergymen."

"Yet to hear him talk," observed King, deftly injecting his poison, "you'd have thought no one could be more surprised than he, when he found out you were crooked. Why, the way he went on about you that night at Chase's was something scandalous. He couldn't have abused you worse if you had been a couple of horse thieves."

Now, the average crook is even more resentful of unjust aspersion than is an honest man, and both Scott and Newman took fire on the instant.

"Abused us, did he?" railed the former. "Why, the slimy old scoundrel, he has forgotten more crookedness than we ever began to know! I doubt if he ever made a straight turn in all his life!"

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"Then he had no rubber plantation, eh?" questioned King, striking while the iron was hot. "The whole scheme was pure fraud from beginning to end?"

"No," Scott shook his head, while a puzzled look came into his eyes. "He has the plantation all right. I know, because I've seen the title deeds, and all the papers for it; and it's a mighty valuable piece of property, too, so far as I can find out. What's made him juggle around with it, the way he has, is more than I can get through my nut, as I've often said to Billy here, but I guess the true solution is that he's gone crooked so long, he can't go straight now, even when it would be to his advantage to do so."

"But, if the property is all right, as you say," rejoined King, "why don't he do something with it? Here, he has his company organized, all the money he needs in the treasury; yet the months go by, and not a hand is turned, while all the answer he vouchsafes when any of the stockholders put up a kick, is a pack of lies which wouldn't deceive a child."

"Oh, ask me something hard," gibed the grafter. "Why, I'm surprised, King, that a chap as shrewd as you can't see through a deal of that sort. The colonel's got the money, hasn't he, and also a controlling interest in the stock? Well, if by these shilly-shallying tactics he can depreciate the shares, and frighten the minor stockholders into believing that their holdings are of no account, he can freeze them all out, can't he, and buy up their interests for little or nothing? Then he will have stock, money, plantation and everything else all to himself. It's as plain as the nose on your face, and I am only surprised that he has not started the gobbling-up process before this."

"I guess the explanation for that," put in Newman, "is that he is pretty well tied up with a similar deal which he is trying to put through over in New York. I was talking only the other day to a fellow who had seen him there, and he told me that although the colonel would undoubtedly come out as usual with flying colors, he is pretty hard pressed just at present for ready cash."

It was this conversation which suggested to King a rapid road to fortune, and all at once illumined his horizon with the rosy glow of hope.

He took occasion next day to consult an eminent lawyer, and to make some other inquiries, and then when he had all his data fully in hand, he approached Arthur Chase.

"Chief," he began in an off-hand way, "what have you ever done with that rubber company stock you bought from Lindon? Still got it?"

"Oh, yes," laughed Arthur, with a wry grimace, "I have it all right; small chance of getting rid of it. But why do you ask? Want to put it on the bargain counter as you did my other 'hostages to experience,' and get rid of it for me?"

"No, indeed," the excitement which was thrilling King's bosom commencing to show in his voice, "I want you to take me in as a partner on it; and if you do, I'll make it the most valuable asset in your possession, worth more than the entire estate left you by your father."

He spoke with such conviction and certainty, that the other could not fail to be impressed.

"Do you know," he said, "I always thought mighty well of that rubber stock myself, and believed that something would come of it; but the thing has dragged on so long now, and old Lindon has handed us so many fish stories, that latterly I have been commencing to lose hope. What have you heard, though? Is there a chance of his beginning operations on the property at last?"

"Not the slightest in the world."

"Well, then, how do you make out that it is going to be such a valuable asset?"

"First, let me know if you stand ready to give me a half interest in your holdings?"

"Willingly; provided you can play the magician as you say, and get out for me what I put into the rotten deal."

"I'll do far, far better than that. In fact, if we play our cards right, there's not less than a cool five million apiece for us in those seemingly worthless certificates."

Then King sat down and related all that he had found out concerning the value of the property, explaining at the same time the colonel's crafty purpose in letting it lie idle and unproductive until

he should tire out the patience of his dupes.

"But I still don't see how that helps me out," frowned Chase. "My stock is no good until he does start things to moving, and that may be years from now; while in the meantime, my one hundred thousand dollars remains hopelessly tied up, and I am losing each year the interest which should accrue from its investment."

"Ah, but I was not proposing to wait upon the colonel to start things up. On the contrary, my idea is to start things up ourselves."

"And how can we do that?"

"Simply by taking a leaf out of his own book, and securing possession of the entire property — plantation, company organization, and all. As a minor stockholder, you have the right to go into court complaining that the concern is being mismanaged and asking for the appointment of a receiver; and upon the showing that can be made, there is no doubt that any judge in the land would grant you the desired relief.

"Then," John continued, "when the company is out of his control, and in the hands of men who can ventilate his past shenanigan, Lindon will be so afraid of suits against him for malfeasance in office that he will be ready to sell out at almost any price we choose to offer, while the other stockholders, scared at the application for a receiver, can also be bought up at a song. In that way, we easily acquire the whole shooting-match."

"Yes, I see your plan, but can we do it? Won't Lindon fight us tooth and nail, and force a protracted struggle through the courts?"

"He can't. If we strike now, we catch him at a disadvantage, owing to the way he is tied up over in New York. He will be almost obliged to take whatever we see fit to give. The game is practically in our own hands."

CHAPTER XV.

RAISING THE WIND.

EVERYBODY to whom the scheme was presented, or whose advice was asked in regard to it, including a corps of high-priced lawyers, gave it an enthusiastic endorsement, with the sole exception of King's old friend, the traveling-man.

"Better go a little slow," was his caution, "and look very carefully before you leap. I've seen lots of prospects just as promising as this which turned out to have claws in them before the fellows who were monkeying with them got through. The trouble with that sort of undertaking is that it's easy to get in, but sometimes almighty hard to draw back. I don't say not to tackle it, mind you; but I do urge that you first make very sure where you are going to land."

But any hint of delay was distasteful to King's impetuous spirit. He grudged every moment which the lawyers took to draw up their papers and arrange the preliminary details of the case. He wanted that fortune just as soon as he could lay his hands on it; not only for the fortune's sake, but because its possession would give him the right to speak to Kate.

Therefore, he turned from the traveling-man's counsel with impatient frowns, and jeered at the latter with such contemptuous epithets as, "Slow coach," "Old fogy," and "Stick-in-the-mud."

"I fail to see where your policy has been such a shining success in your case," he argued hotly. "When I get to your age I intend to have a good deal more to show than a few thousand dollars put away in the bank, and a reasonably good job. I am going to be a millionaire."

The traveling-man smiled placidly. He was satisfied with his lot, and could afford to regard John's frenzied outburst in a spirit of kindly tolerance. So, although he felt like quoting that verse from Scripture about the time for boasting being when one "putteth his armor off," he refrained, and thereafter let his young companion "dree his own weird."

But if John was enthusiastic and wrought up over the enterprise, Arthur Chase was more so.

He hated to be considered merely the son of a wealthy man, and wanted to prove that he could succeed in his own right. So now that he saw a chance to win his spurs, and achieve at one *coup* more than his father had accomplished in a whole lifetime of endeavor, he threw

himself into the undertaking without reserve.

How those two planned and consulted and went over the ground together again and again! At first, everything seemed to be coming their way, and, flushed with elation, they congratulated themselves upon a speedy victory; but presently, as in all such campaigns, unexpected obstacles and delays cropped up to hold back the moment of triumph.

Still, neither of them ever doubted for a single instant but that they would win. It was costing them far more than they had reckoned on, yet Arthur never murmured, deep though he had to dip into his resources for the necessary funds.

Nor did King complain about the sleepless nights he put in; for the brain-work and strategy to be employed fell to his province, and sometimes when things seemed to be going against them, the long strain of anxiety lined his face and bowed his shoulders like those of an old man.

The colonel, for all his handicap, fought them viciously as soon as he found out what was in the wind; and tricky and full of ruses as an old fox, he made it interesting for them every step of the way.

"You may beat me eventually," he once grinned at Chase when they were leaving the court-house after a hearing upon one phase of the question, "but, by Jove, you will find it has cost you a pretty penny when you do!"

Yet they could not stop now, even if they had been willing to do so. Step by step, as the colonel had succeeded in tangling up the litigation, or inventing new excuses for postponement and delay, they had gone deeper, until at length Arthur Chase's entire patrimony was involved.

As the traveling-man had said, it is easy to get in, but sometimes almighty hard to draw back.

At last, however, the wily colonel was seemingly run to earth. His lawyers came forward with a proposition to compromise; and although John and Arthur at first indignantly rejected his terms as outrageously exorbitant, they finally realized that it might be to their advantage to accept.

As their counsel pointed out to them, the old rascal had still plenty of fight left in him, and by drawing out the legal proceedings he might succeed in making it cost them more than if they effected a settlement at the present time, even upon a somewhat unfavorable basis.

Accordingly, a period of haggling ensued where first one side would concede a point, and then the other; but after about a week of this sort of jockeying, the young men's lawyers advised them that their opponent's limit had been reached, and that as the news from his New York venture had been rather more encouraging in the last few days, it would be wise to close promptly.

The young men asked for two hours to consider the question; but when they were alone faced each other with drawn and anxious faces.

"Can we possibly raise that much?" questioned John, although he well knew what the answer must be.

His associate shook his head.

"I don't very well see how. As you know, I have already strained my credit beyond the limit, and it was almost by going down on my knees for it that I got that last ten thousand. Great Scott, when we started on this thing, I never had any idea that it would call for the mint we have poured into it!"

"Yet it is practically wasted unless we can meet this new demand, while, on the other hand, meeting the colonel's terms will finish up our troubles once and for all, and place us in incontestable possession of the property. Oh, we must raise the amount!" John insisted passionately. "Think, Arthur! Think!"

The other wrinkled up his brow, dug his fists into his temples, and scowled at the floor; but apparently to no purpose, until at last, just as John was about to give up hope, he raised his head with slow, hesitating consideration.

"Well," he said, "Kate could, of course, help us out, if she wanted to; but she told me once when I wanted her to go into this very rubber scheme, over two years ago, that she absolutely refused to enter any speculative venture, and ever since I have rather shied at asking her to help me."

"But, good Heavens, man," interjected John fiercely, "this isn't a speculative venture! It is safe and sane as a

mortgage on the City Building. Tell her so; assure her that there isn't a possible chance for her to lose. What on earth are you waiting for? Get along with you, and see that you don't fail to come back with the funds. If we miss this one opportunity we may lose the battle altogether."

Then, after Arthur had snatched up his hat and disappeared, he sat on nettles, nervously drumming his fingers on the table, and striking match after match to light the cigar between his teeth, and then, after a puff or two at it, abstractedly allowing it go out.

Finally the telephone-bell tinkled on the other side of the room, and, dashing across to it, he quickly placed the receiver to his ear.

"Hallo, King!" It was Arthur's voice speaking. "She says we can have the money all right; but she first wants a guarantee from you that you consider the enterprise absolutely without risk and would advise her to go into it."

John hesitated just a second. Then he spoke with crisp determination.

"Tell her to come to the phone."

"Hallo, Mr. King." Kate's tone was like a strain of exquisite music to his ear.

"Hallo, Miss Chase! Your brother tells me that you wish my opinion concerning this deal. All I can say is that if you go into it, you will do the greatest stroke of business you ever can hope to accomplish in all your life."

"And you have no fears of failure?"

"Failure? This is an undertaking which simply cannot fail."

CHAPTER XVI.

A VANISHING POT OF GOLD.

For a week or so the partners lived in a state of feverish exultation. They had won. The long strain was over, and the rubber plantation was theirs. Now, all they had to do was to exploit it properly, and fortune was assured.

Then vague, disquieting rumors began to reach them, to which at first they paid little heed; but which gradually waxed more detailed and insistent, and finally resulted in their sending off an emissary to Central America to investigate.

With what anxiety they waited for news may be imagined; yet when the cablegram came, although it should have found them in a measure prepared, its tidings broke upon them like a thunderclap.

Briefly, it corroborated the worst that they had heard. There had been a revolution in the little banana republic where their domain was situated, and the new régime had taken over the rubber industry as a government monopoly, canceling all existing concessions on the ground that they had been fraudulently secured, and were consequently null and void.

The old colonel had in some way secured advance information of the event, and had simply mulcted King and Chase of a good round price for a large and elegant gold brick.

"Oh, yes, you can fight the decree," said the lawyer skilled in South American tangles, to whom they rushed hurriedly for counsel; "you can fight, and if you have sufficient political pull, you may eventually induce this government to take the matter up, and perhaps win out; but you will find it much cheaper and far less trouble to drop quietly down to this little two by four country, and deal with the powers at present in the saddle, on a strictly cash basis."

"And how much would that take?" questioned John.

"Oh, not much. Forty or fifty thousand dollars. Perhaps a shade less, if they happen to be a decently liberal set of fellows."

They thanked him, paid his bill, and quietly withdrew.

Forty or fifty thousand dollars! Good Heavens! he might as well have told them to take the moon down from the sky, and offer it as a present to these saddle-colored grafters.

They had reached the end of their rope, and the hopes upon which they had expected to feed were Dead Sea fruit in their mouths.

"I wouldn't care so much," Arthur murmured with a little catch in his voice, "if I hadn't coaxed Kate into the thing. I am a man and can stand it; but to think of her having to come away down in the world, simply because she was willing to do me a favor is more than I can

stand. I don't know how I shall ever be able to tell her about it."

John threw back his shoulders.

"I'll do the telling," he said. "I am the one most to blame for getting her into it, and it is I who should justly receive her reproaches. Moreover, as there is no excuse for delaying a facing of the music, I am going up to do it right now."

Yet for all his assumption of boldness, his knees were trembling as he sat in the old-fashioned parlor listening for her step upon the stairs, and when she came in at the door, he would rather have faced a regiment of soldiers than lift his eyes to meet her glance of greeting.

Still, he did not shirk the duty which was before him. Simply, straightforwardly, accepting his full meed of blame, he told the story, sparing her all he could, yet not failing to let her know just how heavily she had lost through him, and how meager, how very meager, was any hope of recovery.

She listened to him in silence, paling slightly as he proceeded, but saying nothing until he had completely finished. Then she raised her eyes clear and undimmed to his.

"But you honestly believed what you told me, did you not?" she asked, "that the thing absolutely could not fail?"

"Heaven knows I believed it!" he groaned. "Fool that I was!"

"Then why should you reproach yourself? There is some risk in all human affairs, even to putting one's money in the bank and hoarding it up. I knew there must be some such hazard when I engaged upon this project, and I took it with my eyes open. That the undertaking failed is due to no fault of yours, and I would accept your judgment just as readily if I had to do it over again tomorrow. You are not to blame; nobody is to blame. The affair is merely one of those dispensations of Providence against which it is useless to rebel."

He gazed at her in absolute wonderment. Such poise, such calmness in the face of what could not have come otherwise to her than as a terrible and crushing disappointment!

"I believe you are the bravest, the most forgiving woman in the world!" he said hoarsely.

Somehow, in the strained tension of the moment his hand met hers, and then almost before either of them knew it, she was in his arms, her face upturned to his, and he was raining kisses upon cheek and lips and brow.

"Kate! Kate!" he broke out wildly, "I had hoped to hold you thus, when I had won my fortune and could come to you on an equality; and now I win you when I have nothing to offer, when not only has the fortune I planned to gain gone glimmering, but I have also succeeded in beggaring you. Oh, I have been a fool, and worse than a fool!"

"Hush, sweetheart, hush," and she placed her hand against his lips. "I will not hear you call yourself names. And as for the fortune, that is only temporarily delayed. You will win it yet. Such hope, such energy, and such ability as yours cannot go unrewarded!"

Her complete faith in him brought back in a rush all his old buoyant optimism. He drew himself up to his full height and looked down at her with sparkling eyes.

"You are right!" he cried. "Fate cannot down me now that I know you really love me. Let men call me a rainbow-chaser, if they will. I shall win yet. I shall win for you!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED."

IT is all very well to defy Fate as King so vaingloriously had done; but that capricious dame has sometimes a nasty way of coming back at one, just when one is least expecting it.

So John, athrill with the fervor of his young love, and eager to start out and conquer the world for his "ladye faire," suddenly found himself beset with an unaccustomed lassitude. He had to flog himself to work, could not think clearly or consecutively, slept badly at nights, fell off in his appetite, and, strangest of all, became oppressed with morbid and gloomy fears.

Finally, Kate observing how pale and thin he was growing, insisted on his consulting a physician, and although he declared stoutly that he was not ill, he did so to oblige her.

The doctor thumped and stethoscoped him, tested him in all sorts of ways, and then asked him if he had not been on a prolonged nervous strain.

Yes, John admitted; he had.

"Exactly. And as a result you now have a well-advanced case of nervous prostration. Six months for you out in the country where you can get air and sunshine, and be absolutely free from any thought of business."

"Free from any thought of business? Oh, I couldn't think of that."

"You must."

"And suppose I won't?"

"If you keep on as you are going now, the madhouse in less than a year's time. In fact, unless you quit right now, to-day, and do as I tell you, I will not guarantee that a cure can be effected in your case at all. You must have immediate relaxation, complete change of scene, enlivening surroundings."

John went out of the doctor's office in a daze. He was not fit to work; he had felt that for some time. But to quit now, right when he should be making his fresh start; and for six months? It was impossible. Still—the madhouse!

In the end, he decided that he would do it. Yet where could he go? He had no money wherewith to seek some congenial spot; no friends living in the country upon whom he could bivouac for his loafing spell.

There was, in short, nothing else for him but to go back to Blairsburg.

Back to Blairsburg! Not as he had planned in the panoply of power and pride, but sick and impoverished, creeping back to the despised farm when he had lost out in his struggle with the world.

It was all he could do, though; and back he went, sick at heart, despondent, forlorn, only to find things more depressing and gone-to-seed than when he went away.

The day was gray and overcast, with a chill east wind; the hillsides were sere and yellow with the passing of autumn, the house looked more desolate and tumble-down than ever, while his father, whose greeting was interrupted by a paroxysm of hollow coughing, it was plain could never survive another bleak winter.

"The place and I will go together, I guess, John," he said as he lay back weakly on the couch, his gaunt frame little more than skin and bones. "The colonel has had some awful bad luck down in New York, they say, and he is pulling in every cent that belongs to him. He has started to foreclose on me already, and I'm to be sold out in December if I last that long."

"Enlivening surroundings!" thought John with a mirthless laugh. "I have certainly come to the right place."

As the afternoon wore on and his father fell into a doze, he felt that he could stand the gloomy and dispiriting atmosphere of the house no longer, and set off for a ramble across the fields, his way leading him through the sixty-acre patch of briers and rocks which had caused the quarrel between him and his father, and had resulted in his leaving home.

It was still the same barren and unproductive tract that it had always been, fit to grow nothing except "snakes and poison ivy," and John's rankling hatred against old Lindon broke out afresh, as he reflected that it was this that might shortly deprive his dying father of a roof to cover his head.

But just then a peculiar whistling sound caught his ear, and his curiosity aroused, he stopped to investigate.

At first he moved somewhat cautiously; for the noise he had heard might be the warning of a rattler, but presently he made out that it came from a crevice in the rock just beside his head.

So, lighting a match, he stepped forward to peer in but—Pouf! There came a blast of blue flame, and a report like the explosion of a cannon fire-cracker.

He tried the experiment again, with the same result. Then stood back with a sudden gasp which was almost awe.

Inadvertently, he had stumbled upon a find of natural gas, and that, too, he was more than certain, in paying quantities!

The despised and rejected sixty acres, instead of being only fit to raise "snakes and poison ivy," was a veritable bonanza teeming with hidden wealth.

Yes, his fortune was here; but all at once the thought obtruded itself that he would need some little money to develop it, and how was he to get that?

He himself had none. Arthur was broke. Ah — the traveling-man, and those few thousands laid away in the bank! Would he touch them, even upon so excellent a risk as this?

There was but one way to find out, and like a shot John was off toward the village and a telegraph-office. An hour later he trudged back the same road, his heart warmed by a yellow slip upon which was written: "Will be there on first train."

Then, as he reached the brow of the hill just beyond his home, the clouds in the west suddenly broke away, and the setting sun, shining across the mists of the valley, brought out a faint, delicate rainbow which, as with the one he and his father had watched, seemed to rise just out of the sixty-acre patch.

"It's funny," quoth John King with a jubilant laugh, for already renewed hope had put his nervous prostration to flight, "it's funny that I had to go so far to find it, when the pot of gold was waiting here for me all the time!"

THE END.

WHEN THE RETURNS CAME IN.

By HOWARD R. GARIS.

The story-writer who turned editor, and the possibility in the game on which he forgot to figure.

"DO you think he'll take it?" asked Mabel Rossmore, as Dick Trantwell finished a rather long description of a story he had written and sent to the editor of a big magazine.

"Take it! Of course he'll take it! He can't help it. It's the best story I ever wrote, and if he doesn't like it—well, all I say is that I'm sorry for him."

"And if he doesn't I'm sorry for you," spoke the girl, her brown eyes regarding Dick with an unmistakable glance. "It sounds perfectly lovely. How I wish I could write as you do, Dick. It's perfectly splendid."

"Thanks. But, do you know, I sometimes wish I couldn't write."

"Oh, Dick!"

"I know it; but every now and again I feel as if I'd rather be working with a pick and shovel at so much a day. I'd know then that when I got through I'd have something to show for my time and labor. As it is now I'm never sure of it."

"But you've done well, haven't you, Dick?"

"Um! That's how you look at it. I've managed to make enough to live on, by doing some specials for the Sunday papers and a few advertisements. I don't live very high, you know. As for the profits on my short stories—well, it's a good thing I'm not married."

"Oh, Dick!".

"I know it, little girl. I'm a brute to talk so, but then it cuts—sometimes." And then, just to show that he wasn't altogether heartless, Dick did what any other sensible young man would have done under the circumstances when he was within half an arm's length of a pretty girl.

"But, seriously, Mabel," he went on, "it hardly seems fair to you. I feel that I'm engaged to you under false pretenses. I know I can write good stuff, but the editors don't—or, rather, they refuse to admit it. I feel as if I should never have—"

He stopped abruptly.

"Well, what, Dick?"

"Never mind. If this story doesn't go, I'll—"

"Don't make any rash promises," the girl interrupted, and, to prevent him, she laid a dainty hand on Dick's lips.

He promptly took advantage of this by kissing the pink finger-tips, whereat Mabel swiftly drew them away, exclaiming meanwhile:

"Don't, Dick! Stop it! Suppose any one should come in!"

"I don't care who comes. Aren't we engaged?"

"Yes, of course. But you just said—"

"Never mind what I said."

But there is no use in tantalizing the reader. If you were a man you would probably do just what Dick did under the circumstances, and if you are a woman you'll probably be jealous; so, what's the use?

"Seriously," went on Dick, after a pause, "if I don't sell that story this trip, I'm going to take up a new line of work. I'll have to—or starve."

"Why don't you become an editor yourself, Dick?" suggested Mabel. "Have a magazine of your own and publish your own stories."

"I've a good notion to. It would serve 'em all right if I did."

Then Dick managed to change the conversation to a more cheerful subject.

It was about a week after this that the buzzer in Dick's modest bachelor apartment announced that some one wanted to see him. As he was going down-stairs to receive his unexpected visitor, the postman's whistle blew, sounding shrilly through the corridors.

"I hope that's a check," mused Dick, as his heart beat high with hope. "I certainly need the money. If it isn't—"

It needed but a glance at the letter-box to show that the receptacle contained, not the thin missive ever associated with checks, but a bulky package that had written all over it: "Rejected manuscript."

"Confound the luck!" cried Dick. "Here's where I challenge fate!"

Mechanically he opened the envelope. It contained the typewritten sheets of his latest story, a rather long tale, called "The Red Lion of Mercator."

"Let's see how these slips read," said Dick half to himself, as he pulled out a neatly printed notice that accompanied the manuscript.

It was to the effect that the editor of the *Wentworth Magazine* had carefully examined the enclosed manuscript, but, to his deep regret, had not found it exactly suited to his wants, and was returning it herewith, with thanks for the opportunity of having examined it, and that so many features govern the acceptance of a manuscript that the absence of specific criticism must be pardoned; and that the magazine might have on hand material similar in style or treatment, and that they were well stocked with fiction at the present time, and that he was very glad of having been privileged to examine the manuscript, etc—etc.—etc.

Ah, a good many of us have been there more or less often!

As for Dick, bitter disappointment welled up in his heart. He had counted on that story being accepted this time, for, in spite of being the author, he knew it was good.

"Oh, what's the use?" he exclaimed. "What's the use? I'd better be shoveling dirt at a dollar and a half a day! Here's where I quit trying to sell stories. I'm a failure at it."

He was about to tear up the manuscript, but something stayed his hand. It was not that he intended trying it on another magazine, for it had gone the rounds. But it seemed like a part of himself, and he hated to destroy it.

"I'm going to look for a job!" he exclaimed. "I've no place in literature."

He was about to ascend to his room, forgetting what had brought him down, when he was hailed by a cheerful voice:

"Hallo, Dick, my boy! I was just coming up to see you! How's the story business?"

"Rotten!"

"Ah! Unrecognized genius, eh? Editors down on you. Can't get a show, and all that sort of thing. Another story rejected? Never mind! Set 'em up in the other alley! Never say die! Try, try again, etc., etc."

"Shut up!"

Dick growled out the words.

"Of course," Frank Enderby agreed. Then, after a pause:

"Never mind. Come on out, and I'll take you to lunch. If the editors don't buy your stuff, why don't you turn editor yourself and break some other poor devil's heart. Turn about is fair play. Get a magazine of your own."

Dick started. Frank was the second person to suggest that he turn editor. Of course, neither he nor Mabel knew whereof they spoke. Still—

"Look at me," went on Frank. "I've just thrown up my job, but you don't find me worrying. I'm not that kind."

"You don't mean to say you've quit your place with that big importing house?"

"That's what I have. They didn't use

me right. I can sell anything, but I've got to be treated right. I'm not a baby, so I up and told 'em they could find another salesman. I'm not worrying. I've got enough to last until I get another place, and that won't be long. There's a new restaurant around the corner. The stuff is sure to be good—for a while. Come on with me. Then we'll take in the theater. I have a couple of tickets for to-night. It will lift your mind off your troubles."

"Sorry, but I can't take in the show, old man," said Dick. "I have an engagement for this evening, but I'll go to lunch with you."

"Some girl, I'll bet a cookie. Or is it an editor?" asked Frank with easy familiarity, for he and Dick had known each other since they were boys together in the little country town.

"It's a girl," admitted Dick.

"You literary fellows are the most reckless I ever heard of," the salesman went on. "Writing is the most uncertain business in the world, yet every one of you is married or wants to be. Why I can always be sure of earning a living, and yet you don't catch me making love until I'm positive I can take care of a wife. It's too risky."

Dick thought of Mabel's brown eyes, and the risk seemed not worth considering. But he said nothing.

He called on her that night. She saw at once that something had happened.

"What is it, Dick?" she asked. "That story?"

Dick nodded.

"I knew it! Oh, I'm so sorry! Never mind. Send it somewhere else."

"I've tried it on all the magazines that might take it. It's a serial. I've done the first and last pages over a dozen times to freshen the thing up after its journeys. It's no use! I'm going to give up!"

"Don't!" pleaded the girl. "Become the publisher or editor of a magazine of your own. Why not, Dick?"

"Why not? A dozen reasons. In the first place—money. It takes a lot."

"Yes," dubiously, "I suppose so. But," this triumphantly, "there's Uncle Kirkden. Maybe he'll lend you some, or invest it in a magazine for you—or do whatever they do with money in a case like that."

"They mostly keep it, if they're lucky enough to have it, little girl."

"Now, Dick, don't make fun of me!"

"I'm not. I'm serious."

"Then why don't you go and ask my uncle for the money? He'd be sure to let you have it if you told him—er—told him you were going to—marry me"—the last in a whisper.

"I'm afraid that would be just the very reason he would not. He doesn't care for me."

"I didn't know you were afraid, Dick."

"I'm not—of ordinary things. This is different."

"I'm sure you'd make a very good editor," Mabel went on. "You have such fine ideas for stories."

"But I don't seem able to make them suit other editors."

"Then the only thing to do is to get a magazine of your own."

They talked it over, the girl waxing more enthusiastic and Dick never getting beyond lukewarm. He saw too many difficulties, she too few.

"Besides, even if your millionaire uncle would consent to invest some of his thousands in a magazine, which I very much doubt, I'd have to have some one to help me manage the business end of it. I couldn't do that," objected Dick as a clincher."

"Haven't you any friend you could ask to help you?"

Dick thought of Enderby. He would be the very one, and he was at present free. A more hopeful look came into Trantwell's face. Mabel noticed it.

"I knew you would!" she cried. "I'll tell you what we'll do. I've got about fifty thousand dollars of my own, that poor papa left me. It's mine when I come of age. Uncle has it now, and I'll ask him to advance some. I'll finance the magazine. That will be splendid."

"I can't take your money!" exclaimed Dick. "Besides, your uncle wouldn't let you."

"Why not? It's my money! I'll ask him right away. He's in his study."

"No, dear. Let me do the asking. I'm not afraid, though I know he'll turn me down. I'll ask him to invest some of his own money in a magazine venture. I believe I could make it succeed."

"If he refuses you, I'll go see him," whispered Mabel.

"I must have a talk with Frank first," Dick stipulated. "He's got a good head for business, and could manage that end."

The next day Dick and Frank talked the situation over. Dick was sure he could take care of the literary end, if Frank could look after the publishing department.

"We need advertisements," said Frank. "I'll hustle for some. You look after the reading matter and the pictures. They've got things down so fine now that it's no trouble at all to get out a magazine if you have the money. The first number is a cinch. After that—well, we'll see. Is there any chance of Uncle Kirkden giving up?"

"Not much, I'm afraid. Still, I promised to try. We've got to have a name for the magazine."

"Call it the *Sure Thing,*" suggested Frank. "That's catchy, and will pique the people's curiosity. That's a good name."

"All right," agreed Dick. "The *Sure Thing* it is. Now to beard the lion in his office. It all depends on him."

Dick sought Andrew Kirkden the next day. He found him in his private room, at the rear of the big wholesale woolen house he owned.

"G-r-r-r-umph!" growled Mr. Kirkden, which might be taken for "good day." He seldom wasted his breath.

Dick rather hesitated in explaining his mission. As he went on, haltingly and stammeringly, Mr. Kirkden's eyes opened wider and wider.

"What's thot ye're askin' me?" he inquired when Dick had finished.

Dick repeated his request in briefer language, appealing for funds on behalf of the *Sure Thing*.

"Are ye a bit daffy?" asked Mr. Kirkden, lapsing into his Scotch. "Are ye a wee bittie tetched in the head?"

"I didn't come here to be insulted," retorted Dick.

"Nor did I go to insult you, laddie," said the aged man more kindly. "But you've gie me an amazin' bit of talk. Writin' a whole magazine yersel'. It's out of the question! Writin's a woman's work, anyhow. True, Rabbie Burns did a neat bit of verse now and then, but it was in no ways his business, and only a pastime for him. He never made his bread and butter at it, nor will any mon.

"It's clean foolishness! I had a bookkeeper once—a pleasant enough lad, but a bit daffy on poetry. He used to scribble verses in the back of the ledger instid of writin' the accounts. He never could strike his trial balance, and all because of the verses. A poor daffy bit of a lad, but harmless enough. No, no, Dick. I like ye well enough, an' I ken well enough why ye're around the house so much. But writin's a woman's trade; it's no for men like you an' me."

"Then you refuse to finance the magazine?"

"Refuse? Why, I'd never think of it, lad. You're a bit down on your luck, I take it. Now, if ye're a mind to go to work I could make a place for ye here," and he waved his hand over the big establishment. "It wouldn't be much, but I rather like ye, an' I've taken a notion to ye. Mabel spoke a good word for ye. Ah, there's a girl! The man as gets her will have to know how to make money. No poetry writer to starve her. She's a brave lassie!"

But Dick did not stay to hear more. He hurried out, leaving Mr. Kirkden to mutter over the daffy bookkeeper who wrote poems.

"I knew how it would be," Dick complained to Mabel that night. "He laughed at me!"

"Laughed at you!" There was an ominous note in her voice. "I'll tell him—" and she started from the room.

"Where are you going?" cried Dick.

"I'm going to see my uncle!"

"Mabel! Don't!"

But she was already on her way to Mr. Kirkden's study.

Dick hardly knew what to do. With his mind in a tumult, he followed the girl into the hall. He saw the light stream from her uncle's room. Then he heard her voice, broaching the subject of the magazine. He heard Mr. Kirkden's growl in reply.

"Then, since you don't care to invest your money in the magazine, to help Dick —and—and me," Mabel said, "I'll use some of mine! I want you to give me some of the funds papa left me!"

"Hoot! Hoot!" exclaimed her uncle in a rasping voice. "Perhaps you're not aware, miss, that I'm your guardian, and that you're not of age for two years yet."

He was speaking blandly now, for he felt master of the situation.

"I'm under bonds to keep your money safe until you're able to manage it yourself, and you'll not squander it on any whipper-snapper that wants to write stories and start a magazine!"

"Then I'll go to a lawyer and see if I can't get what's mine!"

"See a dozen lawyer-sharps!" cried the old man, and his voice showed anger. "Ye're no niece of mine to want to squander my dead brother's hard-earned money!"

"I'll not stay here!" retorted Mabel, and there were tears in her voice. "I'll go away and board! I'll go to work, and when the two years are up I'll marry Dick, and get my money, and we'll start the magazine."

"Ye'll not leave me, lassie?"

The old man was pleading now.

"Yes, I will!"

"Ye'll not leave me, lassie!" His voice was pathetic as he thought of his big, lonesome house that would be dreary indeed without the brown-eyed girl. But Mabel was firm.

"I'll go unless I can have some of my money," was the ultimatum she delivered.

"Foolish, foolish lassie!" murmured her uncle. "Have the money, then."

"Oh, Uncle Andrew!"

"Not so fast!" he cautioned, as she threw her arms about his neck. "Not one penny of your money shall you risk. I'll waste some on this foolishness."

The old man winced, for he was akin to a miser.

"I'll finance the magazine," he went on. "Now, send in your lad, for I've no doubt you have him in hiding in the house the while. Poor foolish lassie! Poor foolish lad!" he murmured. Mabel hurried to tell Dick the good news.

She found him where she had left him, for he had returned when he found he could not prevent Mabel from broaching the matter to her uncle.

"Oh, Dick, dear," she exclaimed, "it's all right! He'll advance the money."

Dick did not know the argument she had used.

"He wants to see you now, in his study. Don't lose your temper if he's cross. He doesn't mean anything."

Dick kissed her and went to meet what he believed was his fate.

"G-r-r-r-r-umph!" grunted Mr. Kirkden, between puffs on his long church-warden.

"You wanted to see me?" Dick began.

"If you want to see me."

Not a very promising start, Trantwell told himself. He watched the smoke from the long-stemmed pipe. It had only just been lighted, and presently the tobacco seemed to have a soothing influence on Mr. Kirkden, for he went on:

"My niece has been saying a good word for you."

He spoke slowly and without more than a trace of the Scotch burr.

"I'll not say what I think, but I'm willing to go into the magazine venture. I'm willing to lose some money—to a certain extent—to a certain extent," he repeated quickly.

"I do not believe you will lose a dollar!" exclaimed Dick. "If I did I would never come to you."

"G-r-r-rumph!" growled Mr. Kirkden. Clearly he did not believe Dick. "Now, how much money do you think it will take?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"What, mon?" the millionaire cried, dropping his pipe, which broke into a dozen pieces. "And ye intend goin' into the business! Are ye— But, there! I promised Mabel I'd keep my temper, though it's hard work. Have ye ony idea of business at all, lad?"

"I intend to look after the literary end. I expect to have a partner who will attend to the business side of selling the magazine and getting the advertisements."

"Is he—has he— Say, laddie, has he any experience in that line, or is he an infant like yersel'?"

"Well, I don't know that he ever published a magazine, but he's a good salesman."

"Who is he?"

"Frank Enderby."

"Did he used to sell for Tumen & Trowbridge?"

"I believe he did."

"I thought so!" And the old Scotch-

man chuckled. "Why, that young rascal made me buy ten cases of the worst shoddy I ever had! He wormed the order out of me after I'd almost kicked him from my office. But I got rid of 'em at a profit afterward, though I was afraid I'd lose on 'em.

"Frank Enderby, eh? I believe he could sell a fur suit to a New Zealander. It's no so bad as I thought if ye have Frank Enderby. It's no so bad." And Mr. Kirkden puffed thoughtfully at a new pipe he had set aglow. "But he's the one I must talk to. Do you go on writing your stories and your verse, lad. I must have a man to talk business to when I invest money. Though it's no so bad! It's no so bad!"

Dick could hardly believe his good luck. He found Mabel waiting for him in the dimly lighted hall. He groped for her hand and held it tight.

"Is it all right?" she asked.

"All right," he responded. "I think he has a rather poor opinion of me and my business abilities, but I don't care. I'm not proud of my talents in that direction if I can only write."

"Tell me all about it," ordered Mabel, and Dick detailed as much of his interview with her uncle as he thought wise.

Frank accepted Dick's news rather coolly the next day.

"I thought you'd have trouble," he said, "but I figured that Miss Mabel would find a way. I meant to go and see him myself if you had failed. So he remembered me, eh?"

When Frank called on Mr. Kirkden he had at his fingers' ends all the necessary facts. He could tell to a penny what it would cost to get out the first number of the *Sure Thing*. The total made the old Scotchman scratch his head and gasp, but he was game.

"Of course, we'll get a lot of that back," Frank explained confidently. "There's the sales of the magazine and the advertisements. Perhaps there'll not be a great deal at the start, but we're going to succeed."

"I trust so!" remarked Mr. Kirkden dubiously. "I trust so. I don't like to lose money. I'm not in the habit of it. But you sold me the shoddy— It's no so bad! It's no so bad!"

There followed several consultations between Dick and Frank, at which they went deep into the necessary business details. There followed other consultations between Dick and Mabel, which pretended to be on a business basis, but which straightway drifted into talks on very different subjects, though they all centered around the *Sure Thing*.

Dick had a number of literary and artistic friends, and to them he appealed for material for the first number. His own story of the Red Lion he decided to use under a *nom de plume*, for he could not deny himself the pleasure of seeing it in print, even if he was the editor of the magazine. The first instalment broke off in a most exciting situation, leaving the reader in delightful suspense.

To do Dick credit, the story was an engrossing one, an absorbing tale, with plenty of vim and snap to it. Afterward several editors, who came to learn that their readers had rejected "The Red Lion of Mercator," were exceedingly wroth. But manuscript readers are not infallible, and do not pretend to be. Theirs is a hard lot in any case.

While Dick was busy with his end of the magazine, Frank was hard at work hustling for advertisements. It was more difficult than he had expected, but he stuck pluckily to it.

He had a reputation to maintain. He talked the virtues and necessities of merchants being represented in the first number of the *Sure Thing*, until he almost made them believe they had lost a big line of customers by reason of the nonexistence of such a magazine heretofore.

Frank also let it be known that Mr. Kirkden was financing the venture, and this had its effect, for the name Kirkden spelled success in no small letters.

"We must have some sort of an office," said Dick one day, when he had about completed arrangements for the literary end of the magazine.

"I have just the place, all picked out," replied Frank. "We'll not need much room at first. I've got a small office on the ground floor, a few doors from Broadway, in the heart of the shopping district. Jeweler had it, but failed, and had to sublet. As it's a bad season for real estate, I got it cheap. That is, comparatively cheap, though it cost a lot.

It's small, but we'll soon enlarge, and it will do for a while."

It *was* small. Dick was rather dubious when he looked at it. There was room for two desks and a place for the typewriting machine. That was about all.

"Pretty cramped," observed Frank cheerfully, as he noted Dick's glances of dismay at the first sight of the office. "Not much room for exercise, but then, you know, the magazines will all be shipped directly from the bindery to the news company, and we don't have to be here very often, first along. We'll be out lots, and there's room for Miss Munson."

"Who's Miss Munson?"

"She's the typewriter I engaged. Nice little girl. Pretty as a picture. You ought to— But here she comes. I told her to be here to-day, and we'd open up the shop."

Dick could not deny that Miss Munson was pretty. He could see that Frank was quite impressed with her, but Dick had placed his thoughts elsewhere.

Dick never knew before what a lot of work it was to get even a small magazine ready for publication. He had trouble and disputes with the foreman of every department of the printing concern, from the one in charge of the type-setting machines to the head of the bindery. But all things have an end, and having, with the assistance of Frank, smoothed out the differences in the printing department, and seen to it that the binding was likely to be done on time, Dick took a little much-needed rest.

"It will be out next week," remarked Dick to Frank one afternoon. "Just think of it—out—published—ready to be read by the public!"

"I only hope and trust the dear public wants to read it," rejoined Frank. "I hope they are crazy to read it and will fairly fight for it. I'm afraid to think how much Uncle Andrew is out if we fail."

"If we don't make this go, I'll be afraid to face him," said Dick.

"We'll make good!" exclaimed Frank. "We've got to; that's all there is to it. He put in enough money to get out two numbers. If the first fails, maybe the second will pull us up."

"If the first fails we might as well quit," put in Dick. "Uncle Andrew doesn't care for a very long run for his money. He wants quick action."

"He'll get it if this busts up," said Frank. "I've arranged with the news distributing company to send the copies all over the city and suburbs. Once the magazines are all out, it will be a case of waiting for the returns to come in."

"The returns? Do you think this is an election?"

"Not exactly. I meant the returns of money that will tell whether we've lost or won."

The *Sure Thing* came out.

"It's not half bad!" declared Dick, when he got the first copy. "It's a beauty! That's what it is. It's sure to go, Frank."

"If looks go for anything, it ought. And there's the name!"

"It will go," declared Dick with a happy laugh.

"It's well gotten up," Frank went on. "The advertising pages look like the real thing, though I hate to think of some of the low rates I quoted."

Mabel was in raptures with the cover design.

"It's perfectly sweet!" she declared. "Too lovely for anything."

"It's no so bad," admitted Mr. Kirkden cautiously. "How many have ye sold, Dick?"

"Why, it just came out to-day!"

"Umph!"

Dick was in his element. He carried copies of the *Sure Thing* wherever he went, leaving them on benches in railroad stations and ferry-boats, as "advertisements," he explained. Several times he was trailed and informed that he had forgotten his magazine, and then he had to go back for it, much against his will.

He looked for the *Sure Thing* every time he approached a news-stand, and could pick it out from a pile of other magazines some distance away, as the cover design was a striking one.

He used to notice one particular stand on the Elevated, at which he took a train every morning. He tried to estimate the size of the pile on each succeeding day, and thought it was gradually growing smaller.

"They're selling some, at any rate,"

he told himself. "If all the stands do as well as that we'll be on Easy Street."

Dick called up the news company, but was told it was impossible to estimate sales at that early date.

"It looks good to me, but don't be too hopeful," counseled Frank, though he was as sanguine as his partner. "I see quite a few persons reading them."

Thus they hoped, becoming more confident day by day that they had made a hit with the public. They went on with their preparations for the next number.

"Why don't you wait until you see how the first one goes?" advised Mr. Kirkden. "You might be throwing good money after bad."

"We have to get the second number ready," explained Dick. "I think the first will be all sold."

He was certain in this belief when he looked for the pile at the news-stand he used as a sort of magazine barometer. The man had no more *Sure Things* left when Dick arrived one morning to take the train.

"He had quite a lot yesterday. Must have taken a sudden boom," commented Dick to himself. "That's fine! I must finish up my work on the second number this week."

He wanted to ask the newsdealer if he had heard any comments about the new magazine, but was too bashful.

"Luck is certainly with us," he reflected as he reached the little office. "I'm almost glad the editors rejected my Red Lion story."

As he opened the door of the tiny den where he and Frank had ventured their fortunes, he was surprised to see a stack of *Sure Things* that reached nearly to the ceiling.

They were in the rear of the apartment, and looked like a rampart in front of where Miss Munson's desk had stood. But that was hidden from sight now.

The stack of magazines stretched right across the little room, from partition to partition. From behind this Chinese wall of paper came a voice Dick recognized as Miss Munson's.

"Is any one there?" she called.

"I'm here!" replied Dick. "What's the matter? Where are you? What has happened?"

"I'm behind this pile of magazines!"

"Who put you there!"

"No one put me here!" with a sudden assumption of dignity. "I came down early to finish those letters Mr. Enderby dictated last evening. I was working away at my machine, not paying any attention to what was going on outside, when a big truck, loaded with the magazines, backed up in front of the office, and the men began piling the stacks of books up near my desk.

"Before I knew it, I couldn't get out. I asked them to stop and help me, but they didn't hear me, I guess. Anyway, they kept piling up the magazines until I was fenced in. I tried, but I couldn't get out. I'm behind here yet. Please help me out!" And there was a suspicion of tears in the pleading voice.

"Of course I will!" cried Dick. "But what in the world are they bringing the magazines here for? They are all first numbers, too!"

"They're returns from the news company, one of the men said," replied Miss Munson. "They gather up from the different stands every month all the magazines that don't sell. The truckman's coming with more soon."

"Red ink and proof-sheets!" ejaculated Dick. "If they bring any more we'll be swamped. There must be more unsold copies than I counted on."

"How am I to get out, Mr. Trantwell?" went on Miss Munson.

"Why, I'll push some of these magazines down, make a place where you can crawl over, and then I'll help you."

But Dick found he could not do this. The pile of books was wedged tightly from side to side of the little office. He would need an ax to break a passage.

There was a space between the top of the pile and the ceiling. Dick looked at it.

"Guess you'll have to crawl over the top," he announced to the girl. "You can let yourself down on this side and I'll catch you."

Miss Munson tried it.

"I can't reach the top," she called over.

"Then stand up on your desk. It doesn't matter if you scratch it."

Dick heard a movement, then came, plaintively:

"I can't, even by standing on top of my desk."

"Then put a chair on your desk and stand on the chair. But be careful not to fall."

This time the pretty stenographer succeeded. She was soon on top of the broad pile of magazines, and her frightened eyes peered down at Dick.

"Turn around and let yourself down," he directed. "I'll catch you."

"I'd feel safer if you'd wheel your desk under me."

Dick shoved his roll-top over until it was beneath Miss Munson. She let herself down until her toes were a few inches from the polished top, holding on by her hands to the edge of the pile of books.

"Drop!" cried Dick.

"I'm afraid."

Then Dick climbed up on the desk, and put his hands around Miss Munson's waist. It was quite small. She allowed him to ease her down to the desk, and thence he assisted her to the floor.

No sooner had this been accomplished than the door of the office opened, framing a burly truck-driver standing on the sidewalk.

"Bring 'em in!" he cried to some one beyond him, and forthwith men appeared wheeling small hand-trucks, which were loaded from big trucks standing at the curb, with bundle after bundle of *Sure Things*.

"Pile 'em right in here!" directed the truckman.

"What are they?" asked Dick.

"Returns from the news company."

"But I don't want them here. The office is too small."

"We haven't any place for 'em," replied the man. "Our orders are to bring 'em here."

By this time his associates had begun to build a rampart in front of Dick and Miss Munson.

"Here! Stop it!" cried the editor. "You'll force me out of the place."

"Can't help it! Orders are to deliver the magazines to the office of publication. That's here. Come on, boys. We're late and have to hustle!"

Miss Munson began to cry. Dick didn't know what to do. Faster and faster the men brought in the bundles of unsold magazines.

"We must get out of here," decided the unhappy editor.

"I—I left my hat and jacket behind there," said Miss Munson, pointing to her recent prison house.

Dick smothered an exclamation, climbed over the rampart of books, and secured the garments. By this time the second barricade was so high that he had to assist the girl over it.

"You had better go home," Dick advised her. "Something is wrong. Come down in the morning."

It was useless, he felt, to talk to the truckman. He and his helpers were busy unloading the magazines and stacking them in the little office.

One wagon was emptied, and the men began on the second. Before that was half unloaded the office was so stuffed that Dick found difficulty in getting a place to stand. The remainder of the truck-load filled the small sanctum completely, and Dick was forced out on the sidewalk, while the men wedged the books in.

"We've got four more truck-loads. Where you going to have 'em?" asked the boss of the movers.

"Oh, pile 'em right in here," exclaimed Dick savagely. The walls are rubber, you know. They'll expand."

"Just as you say," without a smile. The sarcasm had been lost. "I'll have 'em around in about an hour—maybe less."

Dick looked at the office, almost bulging with magazines. There was just room to step inside and close the door.

"Well, I'd like to know—" he began, when Frank came in.

"What's the matter?" he cried. "What are all these magazines for?"

"These are the returns," replied Dick grimly. "They're not all in yet, either."

"The returns? Not in yet?"

Dick explained briefly.

"We forgot to figure on 'em!" cried Frank, as the truth forced itself home. "I hadn't reckoned on that. I might have known, too. The news company took the whole edition, with the right to send back all they didn't sell."

"I don't believe they sold any," put in Dick bitterly. "This explains why the pile was gone from the news-stand I passed this morning. I thought they were sold. Instead they had been gathered up to send back to us. It's all up!"

Up the street rumbled more trucks. It needed but a glance to show that they contained magazines. Before the luckless partners could interpose, a squad of men began unloading *Sure Things* by the thousand.

As there was no more room in the office, they piled them on the sidewalk. They stacked them up against the building, until that section of the thoroughfare looked like Park Row at last-edition time.

The pavement in front of the little office was hardly passable. Still more magazines were unloaded from the trucks.

Dick and Frank did not know what to do. They looked hopelessly on. Bundle after bundle did the burly men pile up until it seemed as if there were no more magazines in the whole city.

"Did you order all these for the first number?" asked Dick.

"I suppose I did. I thought we might as well have a good big edition while we were at it. I figured that we'd sell 'em all. Guess we didn't, though."

"Well, I should say not! The few I bought at different news-stands in the city must be the only ones sold. I did it to boom sales, but I don't seem to have accomplished it. That is, not so's you could notice it. We're up against it for fair."

At last all the trucks were unloaded. The street in front of the office looked like a cotton-wharf in the height of the season.

"Are there any more?" called Dick to the truckman.

"That's all. Ain't it enough?"

Dick did not reply. He stood looking at the magazines. Passers-by began to stop and gaze in wonder at the sight. Clerks hurrying to their counters paused to make audible comments. Soon quite a crowd had gathered. There were many questions asked, of no one in particular.

"What is it?"

"Man killed, I guess," ventured several on the outskirts of the throng.

Some one is always ready with that suggestion.

"No; it's some advertising scheme," was another suggestion. "They're going to distribute the books."

"Naw! It's a fire, I guess. They had to take the papers out."

"Dispossessed for not paying rent."

"Sheriff has seized their goods. They tried to smuggle 'em, I think."

And so it went, from one wild guess to another.

Dick and Frank, who hovered about the piles of magazines like hens over a brood of chickens, looked about in vain for a solution of the problem. Not another copy could be squeezed into the office and leave room for entrance.

"We certainly are up against it good and proper!" said Frank gravely.

The crowd increased. Off to one side there was a movement, as though a large body was forcing its way in.

"I wonder if it's more magazines?" groaned Dick.

A voice, coming from the center of the disturbance, reassured them.

"Now, then, yez'll have t' git a move on," said the voice.

The crowd opened, and a policeman struggled through the living lane he had made by the free use of his club. "Move on!" he ordered.

If there was one thing lacking to cause the crowd to stay, and increase, this was it. Persons began running thither from all directions at the sight of the blue-coat.

The officer commanded and shoved, but to no purpose. The crowd now thought at least a double murder and a suicide had taken place, and each member of it was bent on seeing everything.

"Now, then, will yez move on?" implored the policeman.

No; the crowd would not. That was very evident.

"What are yez collectin' th' crowd fer?" inquired the guardian of the peace, as he saw Dick and Frank standing by the piles of literature.

"We're not collecting it; it collected itself," replied Frank. "We're not crowd collectors; we're magazine collectors."

"None of yer lip!" growled the officer. "I'll run yez in. Move on now!" This to the throng.

But it was useless, and the policeman, recognizing this fact, whistled for assistance. Soon the reserves came and had cleared a space about the pile of books.

Frank and Dick, by virtue of self-confessed ownership, were allowed to remain. Besides, the police wanted some

one in readiness on whom to fasten the blame.

"Who owns these things?" asked the sergeant of police, who had arrived in charge of the reserves.

"We do," replied Dick, indicating himself and Frank.

"Then you must get them away at once; they're collecting a crowd. Where's your office? Put the books in there."

"Willingly, if you'll tell us how," rejoined Dick as he waved his hand toward the already overflowing sanctum. "The walls won't stretch; that's the only trouble."

The sergeant scowled.

"Well, you must get them away at once. It's a misdemeanor to collect a crowd."

"We're not collecting the crowd," burst out Frank. "We don't want the crowd. The crowd has no attraction for us. We wouldn't take the crowd for a gift; that is, unless the people want to buy our magazines."

"Have you a license to peddle on the streets?" asked the sergeant.

He was on familiar ground now.

"No; we don't need any," said Dick.

"Then if you attempt to sell these books I'll arrest you."

"We're not trying to sell them. We've given up trying to sell them." This from Frank. "I don't believe any one could sell them if he gave away a dollar premium with each one. They were piled there before we could object."

"You'll have to get 'em away; that's all. I can't have this crowd here. The streets will soon be blocked." And the sergeant scowled more fiercely than before.

"What can we do?" asked Dick of his partner.

"Have to hire a truck and remove 'em, I guess. But where? That's what gets me. We'd have to have a place as big as a barn. I never supposed one edition would make such an infernal pile!"

"Let's go off and leave 'em to take care of themselves," suggested Dick. "They're no good. We've come a cropper."

He started to leave, followed by Frank.

"Where you going?" demanded the sergeant.

"What business is that of yours?"

"Lots. You can't go away and leave these books here to draw a crowd. You'll have to take 'em with you."

"The books or the crowd?" and Dick laughed.

The sergeant scowled again.

At this juncture a man came hurrying up to the two luckless magazine proprietors. The police had let him through the lines they had hastily established, for there was need of them, since the crowd now numbered many thousands and traffic was blocked.

"Who owns this stuff?" asked the newcomer.

"We do," replied Dick wearily.

"Then you'll have to remove it at once. I'm from the Bureau of Encumbrances. You'll be arrested for obstructing the street."

"We didn't put the stuff there!" cried Dick. "We don't want it there. We gave no orders to put it there."

"Can't help that," said the man from the bureau. "It's got to go. I'll give you two hours to get rid of it, or I'll have to arrest you for violating section 186,935 of the revised ordinances."

"Then I guess you'll have to take us in," rejoined Frank. "We have no place to remove 'em to, unless we dump 'em in the river," and he laughed in his turn.

"Can't do that," interposed the police sergeant quickly. "I'll arrest you if you throw any refuse into the river within the city limits."

The sergeant and the man from the Bureau of Encumbrances went to one side and conferred. They kept watchful eyes on Dick and Frank.

"What's to be done?" asked Dick helplessly.

"Let 'em arrest us," counseled Frank. "It may advertise the magazine."

Another man forced his way through the crowd. He had shown his badge of authority to the police maintaining the line.

"Who owns this stuff?" he asked.

"We do."

Dick spoke listlessly. He was thinking of writing that down on a slip of paper for exhibition to future questioners.

"Well, you'll have to get it out of the way. I'm from the Building Department. No rubbish or waste material from any

structure must be placed beyond the building line. That is section 23,645 of the building ordinances. This is refuse or waste material, I take it."

"Correct," replied Frank. "It's wasted material, right enough."

"I'll give you one hour to remove it, or I'll have to arrest you."

"The time limit is growing shorter," commented Dick.

"Come, now," growled the police sergeant, "you fellers'll have to do something, and do it quick. I can't keep my men here all day."

"We'd be glad of your advice," said Dick politely.

By this time the crowd was in a frenzy at being kept back from what it evidently considered was a terrible crime being committed. Men and boys surged forward.

The lines the police had hitherto maintained with some success were broken. The people surrounded Dick, Frank, and the officials. Several bundles of the magazines were knocked from the big piles and the strings broke. *Sure Things* were scattered over the sidewalk.

"Now, then! Are you going to take this stuff away?" demanded the sergeant of police, angry as he saw that his men were unable to hold back the throng.

"I'd like to, but I can't!" cried Dick.

"You must clear the street," ordered the man from the Bureau of Encumbrances.

"You must get all this stuff back of the building line," commanded the third official.

Dick and Frank argued their inability to comply. The officials were obdurate. The dispute waxed warm.

Dick looked about him. He saw that a number of persons had picked up the scattered magazines and were looking at them. Some were reading the stories.

"I'll give you five minutes to clear this stuff away, or I'll arrest you," threatened the sergeant.

At that moment a quiet, studious-looking gentleman, rather elderly, and wearing gold eye-glasses, advanced to where the principals in the dispute were standing. He had one of the magazines open at the first instalment of Dick's story of the Red Lion.

"Pardon me," he began, and something in his air caused the sergeant to cease his loud-voiced demand that the magazines be removed instanter. "Pardon me, but am I right in supposing these magazines are for sale?" and he looked from Frank to Dick.

"They were, but no one seemed to want them," answered Frank.

"It's the first time I have seen them," the elderly gentleman went on. "I just picked one up and began to read this story of the Red Lion. I frequently stop at book-stands and read. I am much interested in this. I would like to buy the magazine. When does the second number come out?"

"It never will, at this rate," murmured Dick.

But the elderly gentleman was holding a dime out to Frank. The advertising man was about to take it.

"Hold on!" cried the sergeant of police. "You have no license to sell books on the street."

"But I have in my office!" exclaimed Frank, quickly stepping into the little room. There was just space enough for him. "Now I'll take your dime," he said to the elderly gentleman.

The sergeant's face wore a continuous scowl now. He had been outwitted. The purchaser departed with his magazine.

Now, a crowd is the most sensitive organization in the world. It needs but to see one of its number do something than straightway every one else wants to do likewise.

Whether the members of this particular crowd thought the magazine was something forbidden by the police, or under the ban of the society for the suppression of vice, crime, and immorality, was not made manifest. At any rate, no sooner had the elderly gentleman purchased a *Sure Thing* than scores of others picked up the magazines, all anxious to buy.

Up to the office where Frank stood they crowded. He saw the opportunity and seized it.

"Now's your chance!" he cried, for he was a born salesman. "Get the magazine before all the copies are gone. This is the first edition of half a million. It will soon be out of print. Watch for the second number. Read about the Red Lion, and how he slew the green dragon!"

"Frank!" cried Dick. "There's no green dragon in it!"

"That's all right! They'll never know the difference," whispered Frank back, adding, aloud: "It's a good story! Now's your time to buy! It's only a dime! Ten cents! One dime!"

Forward surged the crowd. It was orderly enough, with all the police on hand, for more reserves had arrived. The presence of the bluecoats prevented the wholesale theft of the magazines, for they were piled in a compact mass, close to the office.

Slowly but steadily the pile of copies on the sidewalk began to diminish. Frank was taking in the money with both hands, for the people helped themselves to *Sure Things*. Hundreds were half wild with a desire to purchase the books, though not one in a thousand knew what he was getting until he had the magazine in his hands.

The police could not interfere, for Frank had a right to sell from his office, even if it was a little one, with just room enough for him to stand in. Besides, he was under orders to get rid of the magazines, and this was the most effectual way he could have selected.

The street was soon cleared of the obstructing books. Then, as the crowd was still eager to purchase, for all sorts of wild rumors had spread regarding the *Sure Thing*, Frank began to hand out those piled in the office.

It was dark before he had finished taking in the dimes. He had hastily hired a couple of young men from the throng, and thus managed to get a brief respite for dinner.

When the last of the crowd, which had been augmented from time to time, walked away, there were only a few of the magazines left.

"Well!" gasped Frank as he sat down at his desk laden with money and looked over at Dick, seated in front of his. "How's that for selling a first number and getting rid of the returns?"

"Great! Now we can get out the second," and Dick saw, as in a vision, a brown-eyed, smiling girl waiting to welcome him.

And when the second number was on the news-stands it went like the proverbial hot cakes, for the *Sure Thing* had been established with the public through that queer trick of fate, the elderly gentleman's timely purchase.

"HAMLET" AND THE BABY.

By RALPH ENGLAND.

The young husband's brilliant scheme in connection with a visit to the theater, and what put a puncture in its happy outcome.

JOHN HANLEY addressed his wife with a determined air.

"Now see here, Dolly," he said, "you are making a slave of yourself for that kid, and it really isn't at all necessary. Your maternal devotion does you credit, of course; but there's such a thing as being too unselfish.

"Since baby arrived, you haven't had a minute to yourself. You've got him so spoiled that he yells whenever you leave him alone. That's only temper on his part and he must be cured of it.

"He must be taught he can't have his own way all the time. You need recreation, now and again, old girl, and I'm going to see that you get it. I intend to put my foot down hard, in future. And, by way of a starter, I've bought two tickets for to-night's performance of 'Hamlet' at the Century.

"You and I are going to the show to-night, and afterward we're going to have a lobster supper, just as we used to do—before the little tyrant came to occupy all your time."

Mrs. Hanley smiled and glanced at the tickets wistfully; for she was very fond of the theater, and Shakespearian productions were her particular delight.

"It's very thoughtful of you, John dear," she murmured tenderly. "I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. But you were foolish to waste your money

for those tickets—for, of course, I can't dream of going. It's out of the question for me to leave baby for so long."

"It isn't out of the question at all," declared her husband emphatically. "There's no reason why you shouldn't do so. The girl is fully competent to look after him and give him his bottle when he needs it."

"But he'd cry his little eyes out if I wasn't around," protested the fond mother.

"Let him yell," retorted John fiercely. "As I told you before, he's got to be taught that he can't have his own way all the time."

Mrs. Hanley smiled.

"To hear you talk, one might suppose that you were the cruelest and sternest of fathers; but I know different. You're a great big bluffer, John. You know very well that you can't bear to hear the little darling cry."

"Of course I can't; but we won't be here to hear him; and, after all, we're doing it as much for his good as our own. We mustn't spoil the little chap. There's nothing like being strict with a child at the very start. Billings, down at the office, was telling me to-day that his wife began to spank their kid before it was four months old; and now it's a model child."

Mrs. Hanley's big brown eyes flashed indignantly.

"Billings is a brute and I've always considered his wife a perfectly hateful woman. He ought to be ashamed of himself for giving you such advice, and I do wish, John Hanley, that you wouldn't repeat such shameful talk to me, for I really don't care to hear it," she said sternly. "I'd like to see myself, or anybody else, daring to lay a hand on our darling little cherub."

"Well, of course, I don't approve of adopting any such stern measures—as yet," replied Hanley hastily. "Billings is very radical in his ideas. Still, he's right in what he says about being firm with a youngster from the very start. It makes it much easier for the parents afterward.

"Now, let's give it a fair trial to-night, Dolly. You get your glad rags on, tuck the little fellow in his bed warm and snug, give him a good-night kiss, leave the girl to look after him, and come to the theater with me."

His wife shook her head.

"I'm sorry, John, dear, I couldn't think of doing it. If anything happened to our darling while we were away I should never forgive myself. I admit that I should dearly like to go to the play, but I guess I'll have to postpone that pleasure until the boy gets bigger."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You're going to-night and I won't listen to any argument to the contrary," declared her husband firmly. "You're badly in need of a little fun, and you're going to have it before you're a day older."

"I tell you it is quite impossible!" cried Mrs. Hanley, almost fretfully. "Even if I were to go, John, I shouldn't enjoy myself at all. I'd be worrying about our little precious every minute of the time, and, by eleven o'clock I should be a nervous wreck. It's better not to go to the theater at all than to go under such conditions."

"I guess that's true," her husband was forced to admit. "You're a foolish, doting mother; but, after all, I honor and admire you for it, little woman. I don't intend, however, to waste these tickets."

"That's right, dear. I was going to suggest that if you can't think of anything else to do with them you might give them to the Smiths next door. They've been very kind to us, and—"

"No. I'm not going to give them to the Smiths," declared Hanley. "I haven't got any four dollars to throw away on next-door neighbors. I intend to use these tickets myself."

Mrs. Hanley looked her surprise; for never since their marriage had John dreamed of going to the theater without her. She found it difficult to keep back her tears; but her husband's next words reassured her.

"I'm going to the play to-night and so are you," he said. "I've just thought of a plan by which we can overcome the obstacle which exists. We're going to take the boy and the servant along with us."

"John Hanley, you must be crazy!" cried the surprised wife. "Who ever heard of anybody taking a baby in arms to a performance of 'Hamlet'? Why, as soon as the lights in the theater were

lowered he'd scream and disturb the whole show. We should all be put out."

"No we sha'n't," replied her husband confidently. "You're jumping at conclusions, my girl, without waiting to hear the details of my ingenious plan. I don't intend to take the kid inside the theater with us at all."

"You don't mean to say you think of leaving him outside with the girl?" cried Mrs. Hanley, indignantly. "Why, the little cherub would catch his death of cold."

"There you go. Jumping at conclusions again, without waiting to hear all I have to say!" cried Hanley reprovingly. "You don't suppose for a minute that I'd suggest leaving the little fellow on the street, do you? Give me credit for possessing more paternal devotion than that, my dear. The scheme I have thought out is daringly original, I believe; but it ought to work to perfection."

"What is it, John? I am all curiosity."

"Well, as you know, there are several big hotels opposite the Century Theater. My idea is to hire a room in one of them for to-night and leave the girl and the baby in the room while we're at the show. We can step across the street and visit the little fellow, between the acts, so that you'll have no cause to worry and he'll see enough of you to keep him tolerably quiet.

"You can't possibly raise any objection to that plan. Pretty ingenious idea, eh? Go up-stairs now and dress. We've got to get to the theater in good time, so that we can step into the hotel first and hire that room."

After a little demurring, Mrs. Hanley was persuaded to make the experiment. She attired herself in her most becoming clothes, dressed the baby in his daintiest coat, and instructed the servant-girl to get ready.

When the latter heard of her master's novel plan, she expressed unqualified admiration and delight.

Her name was Bridget, her hair was a vivid red, and she was a recent importation from the Emerald Isle. She never had been inside a "swell New York hotel," and she was delighted at the prospect of spending a few hours in such a grand place, while her employers were at the theater.

An hour later the merry party drew up outside the new Grant Hotel, a tall, brilliantly lighted structure, the mere exterior of which caused the unsophisticated Bridget to indulge in a gasp of mingled wonder and appreciation.

"We'd like to hire a room for the night," said Hanley to the room-clerk, as they halted in front of the desk.

"All right, sir," replied the latter, handing Hanley an inked pen and pointing to the hotel register.

Hanley was about to sign his name, when suddenly a happy idea struck him and he turned to his wife with a smile.

"It's baby's room," he said, "so it's only proper that we sign the youngster's name in the book," and he wrote across the page: "Master Charlie Hanley and nurse, of New York."

The clerk was so amazed by this entry that Hanley felt it incumbent upon him to explain matters, whereupon the hotel man smiled and declared it was the most ingenious plan he had ever heard of.

A uniformed bell-boy conducted them to their room on the fourteenth floor, and turned on the electric lights.

Mrs. Hanley laid the baby on the soft-looking bed, kissed him as tenderly as if she were taking leave of him for at least ten years, and, after giving Bridget the number of their seats and enjoining her to come over to the theater and notify her immediately if anything went wrong, followed her husband out of the room.

They entered the theater just as the curtain was going up.

"Isn't this fine?" whispered Hanley as they took their seats. "It seems an age since we were last at a show, doesn't it, girlie? Now that I've hit upon this new scheme, however, there's no reason why we shouldn't repeat it often in future. And after the play is over we can get something to eat in the dining-room of the hotel, and you can leave the table and take the elevator up-stairs as often as you please, to assure yourself that the kid is getting along all right."

"It's a splendid idea. You're a real genius, honey," whispered Mrs. Hanley, squeezing her husband's hand. "I can't tell you how glad I am to see the inside of a playhouse once again."

It cannot be said truthfully, however, that Mrs. Hanley enjoyed the first act of "Hamlet." Her mind was so much occupied in worrying over how her baby was getting along without her that she was unable to give much attention to the tribulations of the Danish prince.

When the curtain came down at the close of the act, she was so eager to get to her darling that she almost dragged her husband out of the theater; and they darted across Broadway so recklessly that they narrowly escaped being knocked down by a trolley-car.

Rushing across the corridor of the hotel, they jumped into an elevator and sped to the fourteenth floor.

Their room was No. 1408, and when they entered it, the anxious mother was relieved to find that all was well with the child.

The little fellow was lying on the bed, staring with fascinated gaze at one of the electric lights, and every now and again emitting little coos of happiness and content.

"He's been like that ever since you went away, ma'am," Bridget assured her. "He's that pleased with this swell room that he ain't even let out a whimper. I ain't even had to give him the bottle yet."

At sight of his mother and father the baby began to kick his little feet ecstatically and to display the one tooth he possessed in a broad grin.

Mrs. Hanley knelt down by the bed and covered his little face with burning kisses.

"He looks so very sweet, John, that I hardly feel like leaving him again. Really, I don't care much to see the rest of the show," she said.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed her husband. "You're going to see all of that play, Dolly. Don't be foolish. Now that you see the kid's all right, you ought to be perfectly satisfied to leave him until the next act is over. Come on, we've got no time to lose. The curtain will go up again in a minute."

With a sigh Mrs. Hanley kissed the baby once more and obediently followed her lord and master out of the room, cautioning Bridget to be sure to take good care of the little darling and not to fail to come over to the theater for her if anything went wrong.

Mrs. Hanley was so reassured by this hurried visit to her offspring that, during the second act of "Hamlet" she was able to dismiss all anxious fears from her mind and to devote her attention to the play.

As the curtain once more came down at the end of the act, however, she and her husband lost no time in darting across the street to the hotel, again rushing across Broadway so recklessly that once more it was only by a miracle they escaped being knocked down by the cars and hurrying automobiles.

When they reached their room on the fourteenth floor and knocked on the door, which they had instructed Bridget to keep locked for safety's sake, the latter met them with her finger on her lips.

"Hush!" she whispered. "The little darlint is asleep, ma'am. He dozed off a few minutes after you left."

"Asleep!" gasped the surprised mother. "That is good news indeed. Isn't it wonderful, John? I usually have to rock him for an hour before I can get him to close his eyes. I really think the little angel must realize that you are taking me to the theater to-night and he has unselfishly made up his mind to be good in order not to spoil his mother's pleasure—bless his dear little heart."

She smiled fondly at the wee form lying on the bed, the fat little legs drawn up, the tiny fists tightly closed, a smile of heavenly peace upon the rosebud mouth. So pretty was the picture that she could have stood there looking at it for hours, but her husband forcibly pulled her away.

"Come, Dolly," he said, "we've no time to waste. We don't want to lose any of the third act. Let's get back to the theater. You see you've no cause to worry about the kid."

"I must give him one kiss before I go," exclaimed the fond mother. "Doesn't he look too sweet for anything, John?"

"He surely does. But don't kiss him," pleaded her husband. "You may wake him up if you do, and spoil everything. Save your kisses until after the show is over. Come on, let's get down-stairs quickly."

Mrs. Hanley was able to enjoy the third act of "Hamlet" even more than

the second, and she was so carried away by the fine playing of the star that at times she forgot about her baby altogether.

As the curtain came down for the third time, however, and they left their seats and reached the center aisle, she suddenly turned deathly pale and would have fallen if her husband had not hastily caught her.

"Why, what's the matter, little woman?" he exclaimed anxiously.

"Oh, John—the baby!" she gasped. "I feel that something has happened to him. Let us hurry to the hotel at once. A strange sensation of uneasiness has suddenly come over me and I feel positive that something is wrong."

"Nonsense!" replied Hanley reassuringly. "There's no reason why you should suppose any such thing. The kid was all right when we left him, and he's safe and sound asleep now. You're allowing your imagination to get the best of you, my girl."

"I feel sure that it isn't imagination—it's intuition. I just know that something is wrong with baby. Please hurry, John, dear."

"Sure we'll hurry. And when we get to our room in the hotel you'll find that the little fellow is still fast asleep. I'll bet you a half dozen pairs of gloves to a string tie that everything is all right."

But when they stepped off the hotel elevator he himself became a trifle uneasy as he observed that the door of their room was wide open, despite the fact that Bridget had received strict orders to keep it closed.

And when they had entered and found that the place was absolutely empty—that the baby and the servant had mysteriously vanished—he was unable to stifle an exclamation of alarm.

"Good Heaven!" gasped his terrified wife. "My precious child! Bridget! Where are they? What has become of them? Something terrible has happened!"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed her husband regaining his composure. "It's very simple. There's no cause for alarm, my dear. We've come into the wrong room by mistake."

But when he glanced at the number over the door, he realized that he had not hit upon the right solution of the mystery. This was the right room, and why the baby and the servant girl were not in it was more than he could imagine.

Now thoroughly alarmed, he sprang over to the telephone on the wall and put himself into communication with the office on the main floor.

"This is Mr. Hanley, in room No. 1408!" he yelled into the transmitter. "What has become of our baby and maid? They are not in the room."

"Not in the room, eh?" repeated the clerk with irritating calmness. "I didn't see anything of them down here; but, of course, they might have gone out without my noticing them. Hold the wire a minute and I'll inquire if anybody has seen them."

After a long wait he returned to the telephone again.

"No, Mr. Hanley," he reported, "none of the employees on the main floor have seen anything of a woman carrying a baby within the past hour. Do you think anything is wrong? Shall I send our house detective up to see you?"

"Yes, send him up right away!" cried Hanley, very much excited. "Send your manager, too. That child has got to be found immediately!"

A few minutes later the house detective entered the room accompanied by the suave hotel manager.

"Don't be alarmed," declared the former, after they had listened to the excited Hanley's story. "We'll find your baby all right, madam. The servant-girl has probably taken him out for a walk. They'll be back soon, no doubt."

"But we gave her express orders not to leave this room!" cried Hanley angrily.

"And I am sure Bridget is too good a girl to disobey," added the terrified mother. "Something awful must have happened to both of them."

"How long has that girl been in your employ?" inquired the detective of Hanley in an undertone.

"Only a short time," replied the latter in a whisper. "You don't mean to say that you suspect her of kidnaping the boy?"

"Well, there's no use saying anything to alarm your wife as yet; but, of course, there's a slight possibility that the girl

has run off with the child. Such things have happened before. If they don't show up pretty soon we must go around to the precinct station-house and notify the police."

"If that girl has dared—" began Hanley with a growl of anger; but his explosion was suppressed by the sudden entry of Bridget herself.

A startled look came to the girl's face as she saw her employers and the two strange men standing in the room; but a still more startled expression appeared on the faces of both Hanley and his wife as they noted, at a glance, that the child was not in her arms.

"The baby!" gasped Mrs. Hanley, half-fainting. "Speak quick, Bridget. What has happened my darling?"

"What have you done with the boy?" cried Hanley advancing menacingly toward the shrinking girl.

"Isn't—isn't he here?" gasped the maid, surveying the unoccupied bed with great surprise. "I left him sound asleep on that bed, when I went out—honest I did."

"Why did you go out and where did you go to, young woman?" inquired the house detective suspiciously.

The girl burst into tears.

"I know it was wrong, ma'am," she sobbed, turning appealingly to her mistress. "And I hope you'll forgive me. I surely wouldn't have gone if I had dreamed any harm could have come to the darling, sweet, precious baby. But he was tight asleep, and I thought there could be no harm if I went down-stairs and looked around a bit. I've never been in a big, swell hotel before, and I wanted to see all I could. I meant to return here before you came back; but I must have misjudged my time. And now you tell me that the little precious has gone. *Wirra, wirra,* what can have become of him? The likes of him is too small to have walked out with his own legs."

"Did you leave this door open when you went out?" inquired the detective.

"Yes, sir, I did," admitted the sobbing maid.

"Then somebody must have come in here, after this young woman left, and carried off that baby," announced the house detective sagely.

At this awful suggestion Mrs. Hanley promptly went off in a dead faint, the unhappy Bridget expressed her anxiety and contrition by a mournful wail, while Hanley turned excitedly to the house detective.

"The police must be notified at once," he cried. "Let us go to the station-house immediately. A search must be made for that kidnaper before he has had time to get far away. And as for you, sir," he added, fiercely addressing the hotel manager, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself for harboring kidnapers in this hotel!"

Mrs. Hanley speedily recovered from her fainting spell and insisted on accompanying her husband to the station-house.

The police captain was a very gruff man, but the anxious mother's very evident distress touched his heart, and in his rough way he did his best to calm her fears.

"Don't be alarmed, madam," he said. "We'll do our best to catch that confounded kidnaper. I'll notify headquarters to send out a general alarm right away. Have no fear, my dear lady. We'll get your baby for you—alive or dead."

This soothing assurance caused Mrs. Hanley to utter a piercing scream of horror, and her husband turned deathly pale.

"Alive or dead!" gasped Hanley. "Good Heavens, man, you don't mean to say you think there's any chance of the latter?"

"No, no. Of course not!" replied the captain, perceiving the distracting effect of his words upon the frantic mother. "It was a slip of the tongue, ma'am. It's an expression we always use in the police business."

But the dreadful possibility he had suggested so shocked Mrs. Hanley that she immediately became hysterical.

All efforts of the police and her husband to comfort her and calm her fears were in vain. She felt positive now that she never again would see her precious darling alive. She was sure that the wretch who had stolen her sweet little cherub had brutally put him to death.

Her grief was so heartrending that the grim police captain was compelled to

blow his nose vigorously several times in rapid succession, while the wretched Hanley agitatedly paced up and down the floor of the captain's office and bitterly reproached himself for causing all this trouble by conceiving the scheme which he had previously considered so ingenious, but which, he now told himself, was the most criminally idiotic idea ever invented.

"If only we can get that kid back safe and sound," he muttered, "we'll never go to the theater again, and we'll never let him out of our sight for a single moment until he grows to manhood."

He had just delivered himself of this extravagant resolution when the police telephone bell rang and the captain, after receiving the message, told them that they were wanted at the Grant Hotel at once—that the hotel management was now in a position to give them some tidings of their missing baby.

When they reached the hotel, the house detective met them in the lobby.

"We've found your child!" he exclaimed. "After you had gone we heard a baby's yells coming from somewhere in the room, and at once made a thorough search. We found him under the bed. The little fellow must have fallen off, after the girl left him, rolled under the bed, and gone fast asleep again. Our house physician has examined him and declares positively that the fall hasn't injured him at all."

"Thank God for that!" cried Hanley joyously.

"Thank God that he is still alive!" murmured his wife.

And they were so happy that they forgot to fire Bridget.

BEHIND THE COLORED LIGHTS.

By GEORGE M. A. CAIN.

The awful night of a drug-clerk after he had discovered a slip in the matter of labels.

THE lamps that shone through the huge red-and-green bottles in the front of Simmons's drug-store were about the only illumination that appeared on the quiet street in that quiet, left-behind, ancient settlement in the big, noisy, up-to-date city; that rather dingy cluster of two-story houses that still keeps and deserves the name of Greenwich Village.

Of course, one might have applied the term illumination to the feeble glow of the gas-lights on the corners, but one was not apt to think of them in that way.

It was twelve o'clock, and the "Village" had gone to sleep, as all good villages should by that time. Simmons himself had gone to his house three blocks away long ago.

Jones, the clerk, was about to put out the lamps and retire to his little room behind the prescription office, or whatever that mysteriously screened-off portion of an apothecary's shop is called. He had only been waiting for Thompson, the man who always came in for a late seltzer and a chat about the weather.

He had just given Thompson up for the night, and had switched on the electric-bell that would call him in case somebody's baby needed paregoric, when Thompson hurried in.

"Sorry to bother you so late," he began, as Jones turned on the seltzer. "I was on jury duty all day, and I thought we were going to make a night of it."

Thompson was always ready with a new excuse. That was one reason why Jones waited for him. The novelty was interesting.

"What was the case?" asked the clerk, while Thompson sipped the bubbling beverage.

"Why," exclaimed Thompson, stopping in the middle of a swallow, "I should have thought you would have heard of it. It was that case of the drug-store man up-town who sold somebody poison by mistake. Pretty hard luck, and I stuck out for an easy sentence; but we had to give him three years."

"Well," said Jones, "I followed the evidence of that in the papers. If it was

as they reported it, I guess he got what he deserved. A man has no business making a blunder of that kind. I suppose it is hard to make all drug men feel serious about their job all the time, but they ought to."

He gave Thompson five cents change for the dime that the drinker of seltzer had tossed onto the marble counter.

"I'm kind o' glad to hear you say that," remarked the ex-juryman. "I was feeling a little bad at having to do what I did. It looked pretty careless to me; but then, I said to myself, I don't know much about the business, and what might look bad to me might be almost impossible to avoid. Well, good night; I'll sleep a lot easier for what you say."

Jones put up the shutters and closed the front door. Then he turned out the lights. The while, he mused upon the fate of the other dispenser of nostrums.

"Three years up the river is a pretty good while," he muttered; "but a fellow who made a blunder like that ought to have it."

Going through the office, he turned out the gas there, striking a match to guide him into the back room. It was just as his hand touched the valve that the night-bell beside him rang so vigorously that the match fell from his fingers.

He felt his way back to the office before striking another light. Turning on a single jet, he cautiously opened the door.

Even in Greenwich Village, one sometimes sees a face that is not familiar. Jones did not know the man who hurried in. But it was easy to size him up for a respectable craftsman, and Jones took the prescription without any fuss.

"Can you give me that in a hurry?" asked the strange customer as he handed over a used bottle.

Jones glanced at the slip of paper and assured the man that a moment would be sufficient. The prescription called for a simple tincture that was always in stock.

Jones looked at the bottle, and seeing that it had contained some harmless medicine to be given by the tablespoonful, only troubled to cleanse it by rinsing under the hot-water spigot. Hurriedly he filled the vial, seized one of a large bundle of labels, on which he wrote a number and the dose, pasted the label over the old one, wrapped a piece of green paper outside the whole, and handed it over to the impatient customer.

"It's good for bad spells, ain't it?" asked the man, as Jones gave him a dime out of a quarter.

"Why, yes, it would be," replied Jones, "though it's usually given more as a slow tonic. Still, the regular dose will brace the heart any time."

"That's what I thought," said the man as he hurried away.

Jones grinned as he thought of the robust specimen needing a tonic.

"I suppose it must be his wife or mother-in-law," he reflected, as, for the second time, he locked the door and turned to put out the lights.

Suddenly he stopped and picked up a small square of paper with rounded corners. He read his own handwriting on the label: "Tint. Nux. Vom. Dose, 15-20 drops. three times per day."

"Good Lord," he exclaimed, "it didn't stick! and the label under it ordered a tablespoon dose!"

He rushed to the door to follow the man who had just gone. Opening it, he looked up and down the deserted street. Then he ran to the corner and looked both ways.

Next he raced back to the other corner and looked again. No sign of the retreating figure was to be seen.

By the time he had got back to the office he was perspiring at every pore. He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror behind the soda fountain, and saw that he was white as a ghost.

With trembling hands, he grasped the file of prescriptions and seized the top one. It was his clue to find the address of the patient in the directory.

"M. J. Gummidge" was the name across the top of the prescription.

Jones hurried through the list of G—U's in the directory. No Gummidge appeared. There was Gullison, Gulliver, Gumbach, Gunson, Gunn. The Gummidge tribe did not seem to flourish in these parts.

Then he thought of the less hopeful expedient of finding the physician and getting the address of his patient. There was about one chance in ten of the doctor remembering the name.

As for the prescription, it was one that came in a dozen times a day.

Whatever hope he had was reduced to a minimum by the discovery that the doctor's residence was in Rochester. He spent some minutes trying to think of some other possible method of finding the victim of his blunder before it might be too late. But. at last, he put a two-dollar bill into the till and called for the long-distance wire on the phone.

"Is this Dr. McBunner?" he asked eagerly, when he finally heard a male voice angrily halloing.

"Yes," came back with an impatient snap. "What is it?"

"Have you prescribed tincture of nux vomica for a patient by the name of M. J. Gummidge?" Jones cried into the receiver.

"I don't know," was the answer that snapped still more.

"Well, can you find out?" Jones urged desperately.

"What the devil is the matter, anyhow?" snarled the man at the other end.

"I'm a drug man, and I've made a mistake in the label on the bottle. The patient will be poisoned if I can't find him in a hurry," confessed the clerk.

"I'll look in my books and see; hold the wire," said the doctor, a little less angrily.

Jones watched the clock on the wall while the big hand passed two of the minute-marks on the dial. It had just crept up to the third when he heard the doctor's voice again.

"Hallo! Yes, I prescribed for Mrs. M. J. Gummidge last week. She lives at No. 30 Roscoe Street, but she said she was going to New York to live. I thought she had gone."

"This is New York," shouted Jones. "Where did she say she was going to live here?"

"Didn't say—I'm awfully sor—"

Jones did not wait for the end. He already owed sixty cents out of his last dollar for overtime. The receiver jingled as he hung it on its hook.

Then he went back to the directory. Possibly he could find another Gummidge, a relative of the Rochester lady.

But he had already searched in vain for Gummidges. It occurred to his mind that there might be a mistake somewhere in the name. He looked for something like it.

Down through the long pages of G's his eyes raced. The letters looked red to him by the time he reached G—L and found Glummage.

For a wonder, there was one Glummage living in the immediate neighborhood. Without a hat, Jones started for the address.

He rang one wrong bell before he made out the number on the door of a rather disreputable looking house on a corner beside the Elevated Railroad. He saw that he had alarmed some one by the time he climbed the stoop of the next house, which was of the real Greenwich Village type.

He had to ring this bell four times before he disturbed any inmate of the very respectable dwelling. Meanwhile, half a dozen heads were thrust from the rear windows of the corner tenement.

At last a head of gray hairs in curl-papers appeared at the second-story window of the respectable dwelling. An unmelodious contralto yelled: "What's the matter? Is the house afire? Is there a burglar inside? John, *John,* JOHN!"

Jones raised his voice to drown the cries.

"Is there a Mrs. Gummidge here?" he managed to make her hear.

"I'm Mrs. Glummage," responded the lady in less piercing tones. "What do you want?"

"Did you or any one in your house get a prescription filled at Simmons's drug-store an hour ago?"

"No," snapped the voice; "I'm a Christian Scientist. I don't use medicines nor need them. I know there ain't any such thing as pain and sickness. It's all stuff that doctors and such drug-store men as—"

Jones beat a hasty retreat. As soon as his weary legs could carry his throbbing brain and the rest of him back to the store he went again at the directory.

There were no more Glummages. He felt some relief at that. Nor did he find any other name that could possibly be a mistake for Gummidge, until he had worked his way through all the G's to G—R.

There were four Grummidges. One lived in One Hundred and Thirty-

Fourth Street. Another dwelt at Avenue C and Ninth Street. The third was at a number in Ninety-Seventh West.

It was the fourth that held out the one possible hope. He was a laborer, fifteen blocks up Hudson Street. Jones summoned his last ounce of energy to sprint the three-quarters of a mile. Perhaps there was still a chance of warning the victim of the deadly poison in time to get her to a hospital and save her with powerful antidotes.

The pale gray of dawn was just beginning to make the lights on Hudson Street look yellow.

If there is one time in all the twenty-four hours when New York looks discouraging, it is at the first peep of day. Last night's dinginess is still upon everything. The air in summer seems laden with the dank breath of millions. The pavements are dulled with the night's damp. Over all hangs a sort of pall that makes one feel that the big town is not a healthy place to live in.

Jones could not help but wish he might hear the birds awakening on the old home farm where he had roamed in a healthier freedom than that of the great, free city; and this freedom might be taken from him in a few hours. He saw a policeman swinging round a corner, and almost involuntarily sprinted faster the final block.

Just as he reached the last corner, a small automobile came dashing up, and before it had come to a full stop in front of a cheap apartment-house, a man got out with a small, square case.

Jones knew that almost the worst had come. It was a doctor called in haste to do what he could to save the poisoned woman.

Well, he would not hurt his case by showing that he had tried his best to rectify his awful error. He followed the doctor's hurried steps up four flights of stairs.

"How is she?" asked the physician, as a door opened into a rear suite of rooms.

Jones could feel his hair turning gray under his hat in the fraction of a second between the question and the answer.

"The baby's born already," answered a feminine voice.

Jones stole noiselessly and limply back down the four flights. He had a huge lump in his throat, and he could feel his heart beating in feeble flutters.

In spite of the drops of perspiration that rolled from his face, he was on the verge of shivering. He caught sight of the gilt number on the glass door as he went out. It was 1446. The directory gave the address of the Grummidges as 1448.

He did not know whether to feel relieved or more frightened that, so far, he had no evidence of a doctor being called for the victim of his mistake. He did not regard it as funny that he had followed the physician without looking at the number.

As he still sought the name on the mail-boxes in the doorway of 1448, he remembered vaguely that nux vomica was capable of poisoning without giving great pain. The poor woman might, even now, be breathing her last in unconsciousness, while the man who had purchased the poison was sleeping at her side.

Jones tried the hall door without ringing the bell. It was locked, so he turned back and struck another match to find the name of Grummidge again. Just as he did so, two blue-coated officers pounced upon him.

"That's him, Jerry," said one. "I seen him racing up here a minute ago. Then I looks and he was gone. What you doin' here, anyhow?"

The question was addressed to the frightened drug-clerk.

Hastily, he gave the outline of his story.

"And she's up-stairs there now, dying, I suppose," he finished angrily, "while you blockheads hold me up here."

"Pretty good story, youngster," sneered the one who had been addressed as Jerry. "Good enough so's we'll take you up to see if the Grummidge people know you."

Noisily the three went up to the top floor of the flat-house. They banged at a door, and inquired whether Grummidge lived there.

"In the front," came out a scared, piping voice.

At the other door they produced more noise than one would care to risk in a

cemetery, unless he wanted to see a ghost. At last a gruff voice snarled from within, "What in Hades do you want?"

"Open, in the name of the law!" cried one of the officers pompously.

The door opened a little and a man's face peered out. It was too dark for Jones to see whether it was the purchaser of the poison.

"Is your wife dying?" he asked before the police could speak again.

"I ain't got no wife," growled the face.

"Well, your mother, or whoever it is—Mrs. Grummidge?"

The man came out of the door. He was a physical giant.

"Say," he exclaimed, "have you cops got a blankety-blanked lunatic there?"

Then the officers of the law explained their mission.

"Take the cuss along," said Mr. Grummidge; "I don't know nobody in my house gettin' no medicine in six months."

He went inside and slammed the door as if to prevent any other occupant gaining any of the sleep of which he had been deprived.

"Now, mebbe you'll come along an' explain your little bluff to the sergeant," snapped Jerry.

And Jones walked meekly between the policemen, down the stairs, out on the street, and over to the station-house. Painfully he looked at the green lamps outside and thought of the lights in front of Simmons's store. He wished he had never seen a colored light in his life.

Yes, he was going to prison. The charge on which he had been arrested would vanish easily. But it had already led him to a confession of the charge that would not down.

Somewhere—somewhere in this town, a woman was, in all probability, lying cold in death. In the next few hours all the city would know that another drug-clerk had sacrificed a human life to his carelessness. And his name would be the one called.

He would be brought before twelve jurors. His own words to the police would be brought against him. The fatal bottle would be shown, still half full of poison, and left with a label that directed a tablespoon dose.

He would be convicted—he, the cautious, conscientious apothecary who, a little while ago, had condemned his fellow apothecary for similar carelessness.

And, worst of all, he would be responsible, he would deserve it. For he, by his absence of mind, had sent a soul to its account.

While these thoughts were revolving in his brain, the officers had stated to the sergeant the suspicious circumstances surrounding his capture. Mechanically, he had given his name, occupation, and address.

Then he became aware that he was being asked if he could furnish bond. With heart-broken indifference, he said that he would call up Simmons when the druggist had reached the office. There was no chance for further effort to save his victim. He did not care what else happened.

They led him to a cell. Several drunks and one or two crooks sat on a long bench in the barred room in the rear of the station. Jones took a vacant seat among them.

Silent, dejected, he sat and listened to the noises of New York's awakening. It was only the faint rumble of the milk-wagons that came to his ears.

Other mornings, he had felt anger at the sound. This morning, it seemed to him that he would give all the world to stand beside one of those wagons and hear its racket at close range.

Every sound reminded him of the other times he had heard it. Then he was free. Yes, yesterday, at this hour, he was slumbering peacefully in the room back of the drug-store. All day yesterday he had doled out pills and powders and filled bottles, while he stood behind a counter in a space no larger than this room.

But he had been free. He could have gone out if he would. Last evening he had stayed in the store as usual. He had had no thought of leaving. He had felt that he must stay.

But he could have left. He might have gone to the corner for a paper, to the saloon for a drink, to the theater, or a dance or on a visit—even to the home of a certain girl who would not speak to him now.

Now, he could not pass out that door.

He might be ready to throw up any position, to give up health, wealth, all other happiness, and it would not enable him to walk by the big officer who stood guarding the entrance.

To be sure, in an hour or two, Simmons would be here to bail him out. Probably by that time there would have been a call for a coroner, and they would know that he was not a burglar. The charge of stealing would be changed to one of criminal neglect.

And he would have to come back here—to go through the trial, to hear the sentence, and then he would be taken away to a worse prison than this, to stay for years.

Suddenly he became conscious of a great commotion in the outer room. Some one was vigorously protesting his innocence. Jones thought he caught another voice shouting the name of Simmons.

Yet the voice of protest was not that of his employer, though it seemed a little familiar. While he strained his ears to listen, the door was thrust open, and an officer called his own name.

Jones arose weakly and walked toward liberty as represented by the door of the "pen." As he glanced into the space before the desk where he had been halted on his way in, he recognized the person who stood between two more bluecoats.

"That's the man!" he cried irrelevantly. At the same instant the man appeared to recognize him. "That's the very feller!" he exclaimed.

He raised one hand, in which he still tightly clutched a small bottle. Jones wished that he might go back into the rear room and stay there.

"What did you mean," shouted the prisoner, "by selling me this medicine without nothing on it to show how much a body was to take? Here, I've been down at your poison-shop for an hour, trying to get holt of you, an' they've arrested me now 'cause they thought I was after robbing the place."

"Did you give your wife a dose of the medicine?" inquired the clerk, anxious to know the worst.

"Give it to her? No. How could I, when there wasn't no directions? Look at that bottle, will you?"

Jones looked. On the side which was turned for his inspection gleamed a brand-new label from Simmons's drug-store. The space on which should have been written the name of the contents, with directions, was absolutely blank.

And then he knew what had happened. In his hurry to serve the customer, he had picked up two labels instead of one.

On the outer, he had written the directions. The inner label had stuck to the bottle, and hid the directions for using its former contents.

Meanwhile, the man kept up his railing account of the affair.

"When I got home the old woman was asleep, so I didn't disturb her. About half past two she woke up, an' says she guessed she better take some of the medicine, anyhow. So I up an' unwrapped the bottle. Then I seen there wasn't no directions. I had to dress an' start for the store agin.

"It was unlocked an' I went in. But I couldn't find no one about. I started back behind the partition to see if you was in there, after I'd been waitin' Lord knows how long. An' then the polis grabbed me an' fetched me here. I don't know how you got here, but you're lucky you ain't where I kin get at you."

Jones explained briefly the manner of his arrival at the station-house. Then he asked the man to come with him and have the label fixed up, throwing in an offer of a box of the best cigars.

"I'd oughter lick you," said the Up-Stater as they walked out together, "but I guess you've had about as bad a time as was comin' to you."

He looked over his shoulders as they came to the first curb.

"Say, young man," he said in a lower tone, "I don't smoke, an' I don't want this bottle fixed up particular."

Jones looked at him suspiciously, and he lowered his tone to a half whisper.

"The fact is, there's four cats has been raisin' Ned on the roof back of our flat ever since we moved in. My wife told me that prescription of the doctor's was about the same as strychnin. Of course, I don't want no trouble with the neighbors. So I fetched the prescription. But the dinged stuff won't work. The cats ain't et a bite of the meat we soaked in it, an' we've been up all night as usual.

"I went back to your place fur real strychnin this time. When the polis grabbed me, I thought about the blank label, an' told them that yarn. But, say, if you'll gimme some of the real poison an' promise not to say nothin' about it to no one, I'll keep my mouth shut about that there label."

It was an hour and a half later that Mr. Simmons walked into his drug emporium. He kept his counsel as to the worn-out appearance of his assistant; but he asked the clerk what he was doing.

Jones finished snipping off another square of oiled paper. "I'm putting paraffin paper between these labels," he said meekly. "They seem to have got stuck together more or less."

THE GREAT JURY-FIXER.

By LEE BERTRAND.

The brilliant scheme of a pettifogging lawyer, entered upon with great reluctance and crowned with a big surprise.

ON the glass door of an office on the twenty-fifth floor of the Toronto Building, one might read the sign:

PETER GRIFFEN,

ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR AT LAW.

Behind this closed door, his daintily shod feet resting on the flat of his roll-top desk, a fragrant Havana clutched between his teeth, sat Mr. Peter Griffen, puffing heavy rings of smoke toward the ceiling as he perused an important looking legal document.

Mr. Griffen was a bright, clever young lawyer, and would have been an ornament to the bar if it had not been for the fact that he was inclined to be unscrupulous in his methods and practises.

This tendency was so pronounced that it caused the better-class of lawyers to hold aloof from him, and therefore he experienced quite a shock when the telephone on his desk tinkled and a voice at the other end of the wire invited him to pay an immediate visit to Mr. Marvin Morton, at the latter's office, on a matter of important business.

For in legal circles the name of Mr. Marvin Morton was one with which to conjure. He was a senior partner of the firm of Morton & Sudbury, one of the biggest law firms in the city; and the fact that the head of this firm should request an interview with such a lowly member of the profession as Mr. Griffen, puzzled the latter gentleman greatly.

What could it mean? What business could the great Mr. Morton desire to transact with him?

It flashed through his mind that perhaps this invitation might be spurious; that he might be the victim of some practical joker; but so greatly were his hopes and curiosity aroused that he decided to run the risk of walking into a snare.

Snatching up his hat, he banged his office-door behind him and hurried to the offices of Morton & Sudbury on Wall Street.

Greatly to his surprise, on handing his card to the boy, he was immediately ushered into the private office of Mr. Marvin Morton, a tall, bearded man, who arose eagerly to receive him.

"Ha! Mr. Griffen! I am glad to see you. Sit down, I beg. I have a little piece of business I want to talk over with you. Something in your line, I think."

Griffen bowed his appreciation.

"I am much obliged to you, sir, for thus favoring me. I promise you that whatever the case may be I shall devote my best efforts to it. Let me assure you, sir, that you will be making no mistake in retaining me in this or any other cases.

"I know there are a good many 'knockers' in our profession, Mr. Morton," he went on, "who look down upon me and call me a pettifogger, and even a crook. Yes—ha! ha! ha!—even a crook. But I want to assure you, my dear sir, that they do me a sad injustice. I may be a little more modern and radi-

calthan they are, but there is really nothing illegal or wrong about my methods.

"I wouldn't wilfully undertake a questionable transaction for any consideration. Understand that once and for all, please. I care not what others say about me so long as my conscience is quite clean."

Having delivered himself of these remarks, Mr. Peter Griffen struck a virtuous pose and waited for an expression of approval from the lips of Mr. Morton.

But instead of breaking into hearty applause, the latter's face turned pale, and he looked at his visitor disappointedly.

"Mr. Griffen," he said softly, "it is refreshing to discover that you hold such lofty views. I am afraid, however, that, such being the case, we shall not be able to do any business with you to-day!

"You see, my dear sir, one of our clients has a certain delicate matter to be adjusted, and you were recommended to us as a man with plenty of experience in such cases. I now fear, though, that you will not care to handle it."

"Something in the divorce line, I suppose, eh?" exclaimed Griffen eagerly. "I make a specialty of divorce and breach-of-promise suits, you know."

Morton shook his head.

"No. It isn't a divorce case. Something much more delicate than that. I don't mind confessing that it is a—er—a transaction not quite regular. As a matter of fact, it's a case of fixing a jury. We've got to get somebody who can accomplish it, and were told that you were the best man for the job. That's why I sent for you."

Peter Griffen threw back his head proudly and assumed a very surprised and shocked air.

"Mr. Morton!" he cried, "what you have just said is an insult to me, sir. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for making such a proposition. I am a reputable lawyer and a respectable, law-abiding citizen, and I am not the kind of fellow to offer a bribe to a jury. No, sir, you have made a bad blunder. You have picked out the wrong man.

"I am surprised at you, sir. I am shocked. I am deeply pained and hurt, Mr. Morton. Probably you do not realize how deeply you have wounded me. By the way, sir, you have not as yet informed me how much money I would receive if I did consent to carry out this extremely dangerous and highly improper proceeding."

He looked at Morton intently and a smile of understanding hovered around the other's lips.

"I believe I did forget to mention that," he said. "Well, I think, Mr. Griffen, I can promise you that if you succeed, my client will be willing to pay you a thousand dollars."

Griffen shook his head disdainfully.

"I'm too honest a man and too reputable a lawyer to try to bribe a jury," he declared emphatically. "I couldn't do a rascally act like that—at least not for a measly thousand-dollar bill."

"Well, perhaps you are right," rejoined Morton. "I suppose the job ought to be worth more than a thousand dollars. Suppose we double the sum and make it just two thousand. I feel confident our client will be willing to pay that. It's a pretty generous offer, I think."

"I don't agree with you," retorted the other with a frown. "Tampering with a jury is a pretty ticklish proposition. If I get caught at it, I'll go to prison and be disbarred besides. Do you think I'd be fool enough to take all that risk for two thousand dollars. Not me!"

"Well, what *is* your price?" demanded Morton abruptly.

"Twenty thousand dollars if I succeed, and nothing if I fail," was the cool reply.

"Twenty thousand!" gasped the amazed Morton. "My dear sir, that is absolutely ridiculous. It's out of all reason."

"I don't consider it so. Your client's life and liberty ought to be worth that to himself and his friends. On the other hand think of the great risk I'm taking. I really ought to charge double."

Morton sat lost in thought for a full half-minute.

"Very well," he said at length, "we'll accept your offer, Mr. Griffen. Twenty thousand dollars if you succeed and nothing if you fail. Sit down, please, and I'll tell you about the case. The jury which we want you to—ahem—fix, is the jury in the Bamford case."

It was Griffen's turn to gasp.

"The great Bamford murder case, d'yer mean?" he cried.

"Yes. You know, of course, that our firm is conducting the defense of the unfortunate John Bamford, charged with murder in the first degree. I don't mind confessing to you, my dear sir, that we are not at all sanguine as to the outcome of the case. We realize that all the facts are apparently dead against our client. I have been studying the jury closely, and I feel sure that they are already deeply prejudiced against the prisoner at the bar.

"All of our important evidence is now in, and our only hope lies in the summing-up speech which my partner will make. As doubtless you are aware, my partner is a powerful orator and *may* be able to win over the jury with his eloquence. But we are not at all confident of his success," Mr. Morton added with a sigh.

"And so fearing the jury cannot be influenced by oratory, the great and honorable firm of Morton & Sudbury, noted for its integrity and respectability, intends to try to influence that jury by some other less honorable means," sneered Griffen, ending his sentence with a contemptuous laugh.

Morton flushed crimson.

"Let me assure you," he stammered, "that we are absolutely positive that our client is innocent. We know that he did not commit that murder, but we know just as surely that the circumstantial evidence is so strongly against him that he cannot escape the death-sentence. Under the circumstances we feel justified in availing ourselves of any means within our power to save an innocent man from the electric-chair. It will be the first time our firm has ever been concerned, even indirectly, in an attempt to bring undue influence to bear upon a jury; but we feel that it is in a good cause."

"Then why don't you yourself try to get next to this jury instead of asking somebody else to wash your dirty linen for you?" Griffen wanted to know.

"A firm of our standing and reputation couldn't afford to take such a risk," replied Morton, shuddering at the very idea.

"And still you expect me to take it?" sneered Griffen.

"Yes. We are informed that you have had plenty of experience at jury-fixing, if you will pardon my referring to it. This ought to be a comparatively easy job for you, Mr. Griffen. And you must admit that we are offering you a very generous recompense. Twenty thousand dollars is not to be sneezed at."

"Well, I'll do it," declared Griffen after a long pause, "but let me assure you that it isn't for the money. It's only because you assure me that your client is really innocent of that murder. I'm a tender-hearted man, and I really cannot stand by and see an innocent man sent to the death-chair."

"Of course you can't," responded Morton. "I hope that you will lose no time in getting to work, Mr. Griffen. I should advise you to start your campaign at once. The trial won't last more than a day or two longer, so if you expect to reach that jury before it arrives at its verdict you will have to hurry up."

"Sure," answered Griffen. "By the way, there's one point I forgot to mention. We'd better have an understanding about it, right now. In order to earn this twenty thousand dollars I don't have to fix each and every member of that jury, do I? That, of course, would be well-nigh impossible. I take it that all you expect me to do is to fix one of the twelve men, and thus bring about a disagreement. Am I correct?"

Morton nodded.

"Yes. That's the most we can expect, of course. Bring about a disagreement and we shall be satisfied; for if we can get a new trial, before a new jury, we may have a chance of finding some new evidence and winning the day.

"But," he added eagerly, "if you should happen to find an opportunity to get next to each and every one of those twelve men, don't fail to grasp it. If you can influence that entire jury to bring in a verdict of not guilty, our client will be willing to pay you fifty thousand dollars instead of twenty thousand, and, in addition, will be grateful to you for the rest of his life."

"Very good, sir," replied Griffen. "And how much bribe money are you going to allow me? You can't expect me to bribe those jurors out of my own pocket."

"No. Of course not. Can't you go ahead and lay out whatever money you find necessary and then send your complete bill to us? You need not be afraid that you won't get your money, my dear sir. You can safely trust us to play fair with you. The reputation of our firm speaks for itself."

"Oh, I'm not afraid I won't be paid," Griffen assured him. "I'm perfectly confident I'll get my money when my job is done, for there's honor among thieves, you know, and, besides, we can't afford to break faith with each other. The fact is, though, I'm a little short of ready money just now, and for that reason am liable to be badly handicapped in my work. Let me have a small sum—say ten thousand dollars on account, to be used for working expenses."

Morton hesitated for quite some time. He was too shrewd a lawyer not to perceive that to give this man this money, without any security, was a very rash proceeding. On the other hand, however, he realized that he was at Griffen's mercy.

The fellow had been recommended to the firm as the most successful jury-fixer in the city, and as they were in dire need of his services, they must agree to his terms and take the chance of being robbed.

So Mr. Morton walked with reluctant steps toward a big safe, and, kneeling before it, turned the combination and drew out twenty five-hundred-dollar bills which he placed in Griffen's outstretched palms.

"Here's the money," he said. "Take good care of it and don't spend more than you have to."

"I won't," replied the other warmly. "You can rely upon me. I'm going to start work on that jury right away."

"Good-by and good luck to you," Mr. Morton responded. "I need not impress upon your mind the importance of keeping this matter a close secret. For your own sake you will not dare to reveal it to anybody."

"Don't worry about that, sir," replied the other. "All those who have done business with me can testify that I am thoroughly to be trusted. You are perfectly safe, as far as I am concerned."

"Oh, I realize that," replied Morton with a brave show of self-confidence. "You are powerless to bring my partner or myself into this affair. We have taken every precaution to insure our own safety. Nobody except yourself knows that we are mixed up in it, and our word would be believed against yours. You are the only one in danger. Therefore, it will be well for you not to do any talking."

"I never do any talking," retorted Griffen. "In cases of this sort I'm as silent as the Sphinx," and as he walked out of the law office and stepped into the elevator he said to himself, with a contemptuous laugh: "And so this is the way your highly respectable lawyers do their business—bask in the limelight as paragons and saints, and then hire sinners like myself to do their dirty work. Pah! What a hypocritical world this is!"

Half an hour later, as he was walking up Broadway, his attention was attracted by a good-sized crowd in front of the Acropolis Hotel, a block ahead.

In the center of the crowd, twelve men, flanked by policemen in uniform, were marching solemnly into the hotel, while the crowds gathered on the sidewalk cheered enthusiastically.

At first Griffen was puzzled as to the meaning of this scene; but he suddenly recollected reading in the newspapers that the jury in the Bamford murder case was lodged at the Acropolis, at the expense of the State, and he hurried toward the crowd, guessing that the men who had just entered the hotel, under police guard, were the jurors on their way from court.

When he reached the entrance the jurors had disappeared within. Griffen was anxious to get a close glimpse of them, so he pushed his way through the curious crowds at the door and entered the lobby.

But he was again too late. The jurors had already entered an elevator devoted exclusively to their use, and were on their way up to their rooms.

Griffen walked over to the hotel clerk, and leaning indolently against the desk, remarked in a casual tone: "Beg pardon, can you tell me who were those men who came in here just now? I noticed their arrival caused quite a crowd to collect outside."

"Sure. That's the Bamford jury—the great Bamford murder trial, you know. They're living here. They've just come from court. They march down Broadway from the court to the hotel nearly every evening—prefer walking to riding, because it gives them a chance to stretch their legs a bit and get some fresh air," explained the polite clerk.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Griffen. "Do you mean to say that those men are allowed to march through the streets every evening from the courthouse here?"

"Yes, sir."

"I should think the authorities would be afraid that somebody might get near enough to be able to offer one of them a bribe," Griffen remarked carelessly.

The clerk laughed. "There isn't much danger of that. That jury is better guarded than any other jury that's ever sat in this town. There isn't a second of the day that they are not watched. It is no exaggeration to say that they are more closely guarded than the prisoner himself. Even while they sleep there's a fellow standing over each of them. They ain't allowed to read their letters unless the head of the court squad has first read them. They ain't even allowed to read books until one of the guards has gone through each page in search of hidden communications.

"Even while the jurors are absent from their rooms, and the chambermaids are making their beds and fixing up their apartments, a watchful court officer is on the job to see that nothing having any bearing on the case is smuggled in. You see, therefore, there isn't any chance of anybody getting to these fellows."

"It certainly looks that way," agreed Griffen. "If what this clerk says is true," he added to himself as he walked off, "I can see that I am going to have my work cut out here."

He had secured a complete list of the names and addresses of the jurymen, and he determined to pay a visit to the wives of such as had these appendages before trying to do anything with the men themselves.

He sagely concluded that the best way to convince a married man was, first of all, to convince his wife. He gave woman credit for being able to get anywhere despite the strictest of prohibitions, and, therefore, he told himself, that if he could win over the wife of one of these jurymen, she could almost safely be relied upon to get into communication with her husband, somehow or other, and work him around to the side of the defense.

He looked at his list and found that one of the jurors, a Mr. Flaxner, lived in the vicinity, so he visited his house first.

A large, blond, buxom woman responded to his ring and asked him what he wished in a tone by no means genial.

She was a very businesslike person, too, for when Griffen had answered suavely that he had come there for the express and benign purpose of showing her how she could make a whole lot of money, she replied tartly, and with a disdainful tilt of her nose that she wasn't interested in any real-estate schemes.

"I'm not talking about any real-estate scheme," Griffen assured her very earnestly. "This is something quite different."

"Insurance, then, perhaps? Or a set of encyclopedias, or a new patent clothes-wringer, or a hair-restorer, or ten packages of pins to sell for five cents per package and get a real solid mahogany grand piano? Well, anyway, whatever you've got to sell—I don't want it, so you might as well go, for you're only wasting your time by standing here talking."

"But I'm not trying to sell anything," protested Griffen. "I haven't got anything to sell. I am here to give away money. Tell me, first of all, please, what is your name?"

"Mrs. John Flaxner," she answered.

"Very good. Well, Mrs. Flaxner, to prove that I am here for the purpose I state, kindly accept this, with my compliments."

The "this" which he handed the juror's wife was a brand new, crinkly ten-dollar bill.

"Is it a counterfeit?" gasped the woman, with the natural suspicion of her sex.

"If you think so, just go across the street to one of those stores and see how quickly they'll take it from you."

"Then why do you give it to me?"

demanded the perplexed Mrs. Flaxner. "You don't know me. We haven't even as much as seen each other before. Why should you give me money?"

"That's all right," replied Griffen with a lofty wave of his hand. "Take it—put it in your pocket and say nothing."

"But who are you, and why do you give money away to strangers so lavishly?"

"Hush! That is a secret for the present," said Griffen, his fingers to his lips. "Let me ask you a question instead of giving you an answer to yours. You are the wife of one of the members of the jury in the great Bamford case, are you not?"

"Yes, sir, I am. My husband is juror No. 5."

"And do you think that the prisoner is guilty of the murder as charged?" inquired Griffen.

"No, sir, I do not," replied the woman vehemently. "I feel sure that poor Mr. Bamford is not guilty of that brutal murder."

"Ha! And does your husband feel the same way about it?"

"I don't know whether he does or not," she answered, eying him suspiciously. "I suppose it's safe enough to assume that my husband believes him guilty, for he and I never hold the same opinion about anything—at the start, although we generally both think *my* way in the end. I've never had a chance to find out, though, in this case, for the guards are watching the jurymen all the time closer than a cat watches a mouse."

"Well, if you did get a chance to talk to him about it, don't you think you could persuade him to hold out for a verdict of not guilty?" went on Griffen, whispering in her ear.

Mrs. Flaxner's mouth set grimly.

"Yes," she said, "if I could get a chance to converse with John for a short time, I think I could bring him around to my way of thinking. I'd like to see him refuse to come around. I'd just like to see it, that's all."

"Very well," continued Griffen, still in a whisper, "you persuade him to hold out for a verdict of acquittal and I'll give you two thousand dollars in cash."

"A bribe!" gasped the woman, turning pale.

"Let's not call it by so harsh a name," retorted Griffen gently. "Let's say rather a slight token from Mr. Bamford to express his appreciation of Mrs. John Flaxner's loyalty to him in his hour of trouble. Doesn't that sound much nicer than the way you put it? And it's the truth, too, my dear madam. Besides, it's your duty to do anything in your power to save the unfortunate Mr. Bamford from execution, for you admit that you believe him to be innocent.

"Just think, my dear madam, for doing your duty, you will get two thousand dollars! A big, fat sum is two thousand dollars. And all you have to do to earn it is to go to your husband and ask him to refrain from staining his hands with the blood of an innocent man."

Mrs. Flaxner shuddered visibly and turned pale at this vivid figure of speech.

"I would like to do it," she said; "I really would. Not for the two thousand dollars; but because I would like to help poor Mr. Bamford. But I really can't see how I am to get to John and mention the matter to him without being pounced upon by one of those sharp-eyed, hard-faced guards and probably thrown into prison.

"Only yesterday afternoon I went down to the Acropolis Hotel to take my husband some clean socks and—some other things. One of those horrid guards actually insisted on turning each one of those socks and—other things inside out before he would let my husband take them from me. And he sat beside us, quite uninvited, all the while we were talking, and when I asked my husband when he thought he'd be back home again, that guard immediately interfered, said we were breaking a rule by talking about the trial, and ordered me away. Why, I understand that the jurors aren't allowed to talk about the trial even to one another."

"Running things as close as that, are they?" remarked Griffen with a sigh. "Well, do the best you can, Mrs. Flaxner, and you may succeed after all. Don't be scared about their throwing you into jail. They won't do that. I'll be back here again after the trial is over, to give you that two thousand dollars—if you manage to persuade your husband to hang out for an acquittal."

Griffen went from Mrs. Flaxner to the wife of the second juror on his list.

This woman's name was McClaren. She was a Scotchwoman by birth, but full of enthusiastic admiration for her adopted country and institutions. It took her quite some time to understand what her visitor was driving at, but when she at length realized that he was trying to bribe her and her husband to sully the purity of the jury system, she drove him fiercely forth, threatening to call a policeman and have him arrested for his villainy if he wasn't out of sight by the time she counted ten.

With all of the other wives he visited, Griffen fared little better.

One juror's helpmeet slapped his face and told him he ought to be ashamed of himself; another wife, who was in the middle of baking a pie when he rang the bell, came to the door with a rolling-pin in her hand, and gave him a substantial whack on the head with it when he mentioned his errand. Two other wives were pleasant enough to him, but frankly confessed that they stood too much in fear and dread of their lords and masters to presume to advise them how to vote, even for two thousand dollars.

When he was at the very end of his list Griffen had to confess that the first part of his campaign had been more or less of a failure.

The only wife with whom he had had any success was the wife of Juror Flaxner, and in her case the chance was very remote.

Griffen determined to try some other method of getting to that jury. There must be some way of communicating with at least one of those twelve men, he told himself. A man of his intelligence and originality, he argued, ought to be able to get the best of those dozen thick-skulled guards.

He entered a restaurant, and over his supper cudgeled his brains in search of a plan. A small boy appeared with the latest evening papers.

Griffen bought one, confident that he would find columns about the great Bamford murder trial, which was the main news feature of the day, and hoping that he might read something concerning the jury which would offer him a valuable suggestion.

On the third page he found a column special article describing how the jury was being guarded while under the roof of the Acropolis Hotel.

Griffen read this item with great interest, and then carefully reread it. It gave him some really important information.

He learned that the jurors were isolated on the seventh floor, and were confined to twelve adjoining bedrooms and a parlor.

The rooms all opened on a corridor, and this corridor was shut off at either end by two burly guards, armed with revolvers and orders to use the latter, if necessary.

He read also that the district attorney had drawn up a strict set of rules which the jurors were compelled to observe. They were not even allowed, for instance, to glance out of the windows of their rooms, lest somebody should attempt to signal to them from the outside.

"Phew!" exclaimed Griffen, as he laid the paper down. "The newspaper certainly doesn't exaggerate when it says that this is the most closely guarded jury ever known in the history of criminal trials in town. If I succeed in reaching them, I shall certainly be earning my money."

Over his after-dinner cigar he leaned back in his chair and thought hard. He was not easily daunted, and he still felt that there must be some way of getting at least to one of these twelve men, despite all obstacles.

The thought entered his mind that some of the guards might prove susceptible to bribery. Perhaps the tender of two thousand dollars might induce one of them to deliver a message to one or more of the jurors—a message to the effect that Bamford's friends were willing to pay ten thousand dollars to a juror who would bring about a disagreement of the jury.

There was great danger, of course, in trying to bribe one of the guards. The fellow must be approached very delicately, and even then there was a thrilling chance of his turning on Griffen in great indignation and placing him under arrest.

Still, the latter determined to try this course, if no better and safer plan occurred to him.

Then, suddenly, as his wandering gaze fell upon a waiter bearing off a tray of empty dishes, a sudden idea struck him and caused him to gasp with excitement.

"It might work," he muttered. "The chances against my being able to do it are just about even. It's worth trying, anyway. I'll go to the hotel right away."

He arose hastily, settled for his check, and boarded a down-town Broadway car, alighting at the Acropolis.

He went into the hotel restaurant first, and sitting down at a table in a secluded corner, beckoned to a waiter, from whom he ordered a club sandwich and a cup of coffee.

"Pretty busy here to-night, aren't you?" he remarked to the waiter, indicating the well-filled restaurant with a wave of his hand.

"Oh, no, sir," replied the man. "We're no busier than ordinary. We're always as crowded as this at night. Anything else I can bring you, sir?"

"No. I think not. By the way, the Bamford jurymen are in this hotel, are they not?"

The waiter nodded.

"How very interesting, to be sure. And do they eat their meals in the restaurant here?"

"Oh, no, sir. They dine in their own private dining-room up-stairs on the seventh floor. It wouldn't do to have them eat down here in public, you know."

"Of course not. How very stupid of me not to have thought of that. Are they under guard while they eat?"

"Yes, sir."

"But when do the guards themselves eat? Do they eat with the jurors?"

"Not exactly," replied the polite waiter. "For some reason the guards and the jurors ain't allowed to eat together. The food of the jurors is sent up first, and then, when they are through, some food is sent up for the watchers, and they eat in two divisions, one division watching the jurors while the other eats."

"How very interesting!" remarked Griffen. "And how do you know all this, my man? Pardon my asking; but I was under the impression that the movements of those fellows were kept a close secret."

"So they are," replied the waiter, sinking his voice to a whisper. "A friend of mine who takes the meals up to the seventh floor, tells me all about it."

Griffen handed the waiter a two-dollar bill for a tip and leisurely left the place. As soon as he stepped upon the sidewalk his features lost their impassiveness, and a grin spread across his face and he chuckled immoderately.

"I think it will work," he muttered. "There's no reason why it shouldn't. Things seem to be turning out much better than I expected. It's fifty times as easy as I had supposed."

He walked several blocks east until he came to a certain small drug-store, with the proprietor of which he was intimately acquainted.

"I want a sleeping-powder," he whispered to this man. "No knockout-drops, or anything of that sort. Something which can be put in food and which will put a man to sleep for a few hours without doing him any harm. Got anything that will answer the bill?"

"Sure," replied the druggist, and he handed Griffen a little vial. "Drop a little of this in a plate of food—just a finger pinch of it will be enough, and the patient will drop into a gentle sleep soon after partaking of the food. It's thoroughly tasteless, too."

"Much obliged," said the lawyer, and went back to the Acropolis to try to find out when the jurors and their guards were to receive their next meal.

As his good luck would have it, on entering the lobby of the hotel and walking down toward the elevator-shaft, he espied his friend, the restaurant waiter, at the end elevator carrying a tray on which were thirteen cups of coffee.

The lawyer waited until the waiter had boarded the car; then he, too, stepped in and stood behind him.

"Who's drinking all the coffee? He must be a thirsty fellow to be able to consume so many cups," he remarked jocularly.

"'Tisn't for one gent, sir," laughed the waiter. "It's for them gents in the jury-room, up-stairs."

"The jurors?"

"No. Not the jurors. The gents that watches the jurors. They always has a cup of coffee about this time to

help brace them up for their tedious night watch."

"Well, I hope they enjoy it," said Griffen. "It must be hard, tiresome work staying up on watch all night. I sincerely hope they'll enjoy their coffee."

He stood between the waiter and the operator, and as he spoke he held the little vial in the palm of his hand and sprinkled a bit of its contents in each cup of coffee. Just as he had completed this task the elevator stopped at the seventh floor and the waiter got out.

The lawyer kept on in the car to the twentieth floor, got out there, took a turn through the hall, and descended to the ground floor again. For half an hour he sat in the lobby in a comfortable arm-chair, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the "psychological moment."

When he decided that the proper time had come he boarded the elevator again and ascended to the seventh floor, feeling quite nervous inwardly, but outwardly maintaining a bold front.

As soon as he reached the seventh floor and stepped from the elevator, his hopes rose high.

There seemed to be little reason to doubt that the powder had done its work; for not a single court officer was on hand to intercept him, or to ask his business and demand that he explain what he was doing on that forbidden ground.

"They must be all asleep—thanks to my friend, the druggist. Wonderful sleeping-powder," he chuckled. "Now for those jurors. I'm going to succeed this time as sure as my name is what it is."

He walked almost boldly down the corridor until he came to a bedroom, the door of which stood ajar. Inside the room he heard many voices; and a bespectacled man approached him.

"Beg your pardon," he said to Griffen, "but might I ask your business here, sir. I believe you are intruding. This suite of rooms is reserved for our especial use, you know."

"Ha!" cried Griffen exultantly. "I presume I am addressing one of the members of the Bamford jury. Will you kindly step out into the corridor with me, sir. I have something to say to you in private?"

The bespectacled man complied. The men within the room suddenly stopped their talking and assumed a listening attitude.

"Tell me, before I start in," began Griffen, "is it absolutely safe to talk? Are those guards sound asleep—each and every one of them?"

"Sure. They're all right," said the man in spectacles.

"Then I will ask my second question: How do you fellows stand in this trial? Are you going to acquit Bamford or send him to the chair?"

"We haven't made up our minds yet. The case isn't finished, you know."

"Well, would you be insulted if somebody were to offer you a bribe to vote for an acquittal?" asked Griffen softly.

"That would depend upon the size of the bribe," replied the other, with encouraging promptitude.

Griffen, much pleased, took a big roll of bills from his pocket and handed the man a thousand dollars. The other eagerly snatched the money.

"All right," he said. "I'll accept that offer and I'll hold out for an acquittal like grim death. You can trust me."

"Say," he added in a whisper, "why don't you make the same offer to the rest of the fellows. I think they'll all vote your way for a thousand dollars."

"Do you really think so?" gasped the excited Griffen. "I'll willingly give them a thousand dollars apiece if you'll all agree to vote for acquittal. If you are sure that they will agree to the proposition, call them out here."

"I will. Let me have a few minutes to talk it over with them."

The man in spectacles reentered the room and was closeted with his brethren for a short while. When he finally emerged, eleven men accompanied him.

"A thousand dollars each, gentlemen, in exchange for your unanimous vote for an acquittal. Is it a bargain?" asked Griffen, his voice actually trembling with eagerness.

Each man expressed his acceptance of the offer, and the lawyer handed out eleven one thousand-dollar bills.

"Now you'd better hurry up and leave us," suggested the man in spectacles. "You can't tell who may come up here any minute, and if you were discovered

here you, as well as ourselves, would get into all sorts of trouble."

Griffen saw the wisdom of this advice, and hurried down-stairs, using the stairway instead of the elevator.

"Success!" he chuckled as he gained the ground floor. "A great big sizzling success! Better than we ever dared to hope for. We shall have an acquittal instead of a disagreement. I guess I'm the greatest jury-fixer that ever happened."

The next day the great Bamford murder trial came to an end. The jury retired to consider its verdict.

Griffen anxiously awaited the announcement of the foreman.

As the twelve men filed into the jury-box, he eagerly scanned the faces of the jurymen. All of a sudden a shock passed through his system, for he suddenly realized that these men were not the men he had bribed to vote for acquittal.

"We find the prisoner guilty of murder in the first degree," announced the foreman.

Griffen gasped in horror and surprise.

As he staggered out of the court-room he met the man with the spectacles whom he had encountered on the seventh floor of the Acropolis Hotel.

"Hallo, sport!" hailed the bespectacled man. "What do you think of the verdict? Guess you're disappointed. You didn't get your money's worth."

"What does it all mean?" demanded Griffen. "I thought you and your fellows were those jurors. Who are you, anyway?"

"I and my eleven friends are delegates to the Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias. We are from Pottsville, and we are visiting New York to attend the convention. We are stopping at the Hotel Acropolis, and the manager has assigned us a suite of rooms on the seventh floor, where the Bamford jury were quartered.

"When you stepped off of the elevator you turned to the left and walked toward our apartments, instead of turning to the right and walking toward the jury."

"And you swindled me out of my money," growled Griffen. "You and your friends will get into trouble for that thieving trick."

The man in the spectacles laughed defiantly.

"Pooh! I am not afraid of that," he said. "You cannot afford to have us arrested; for if you do you will reveal your own crookedness. You are stung, and, perhaps, this will teach you not to try to fix a jury."

"What Have You Done With Brockway?"

By LLOYD THACHER.

The obstacles placed in the path of a man who had made up his mind to put out of his life every false thing.

I WAS not an old man, and the world had been very good to me; but every joy of my life was marred by the daily deception my appearance practised.

Ever since attaining my majority, some twenty years since, I had worn a wig of luxuriant brown hair. The fact that it was so beautiful a one and matched my heavy brown beard with such perfection that no stranger had ever suspected the truth, only added to my sense of guilt.

As I sat, this glorious evening, on the broad veranda of the Adirondack hotel whither the doctors of my distant home had sent me, the truth and beauty of the everlasting mountains round about overwhelmed me. The honest eyes of the hotel dog, my stanch friend, looking into mine, seemed to say "away with imposition."

Suddenly a firm determination formed itself in my mind.

I rose hastily and went to my room. When I had locked the door I stood gazing at my absolutely bald head reflected in the mirror, unadorned by the graceful brown locks. The incongruity

of the heavy growth of hair on my face, surmounted by the shiny crown above, made the picture ludicrous and not pathetic, as it actually was.

Again I donned my now repulsive wig. It was all or nothing! If I discarded the wig, the beard must go also!

I descended to the hotel barber-shop, only to find it closed for the day. So set had I become upon carrying out my plan of putting aside all trace of my years of false appearance that I was in a ridiculously dejected attitude as I sat on the veranda, when the voice of the genial landlord aroused me.

"Evening, Mr. Brockway," he said. "How's the cough?"

"Much better," I replied gloomily, in the husky voice which had been the indication of my illness, but which was gradually assuming something of its natural tone. "There are worse sorrows than hoarseness, though," I added.

"Right you are," he replied. "Keeping servants contented in a country hotel, for instance."

There was a moment's silence, and I felt that he was observing my unwonted dejection intently.

"Rheumatism's better, too, ain't it?" he went on. "You couldn't write your name on the register when you came. Bet you could now."

I did not reply to his sally, for the sudden recollection had come to me that the village barber-shop was apt to be open even at this hour, and perhaps I would be able to accomplish my purpose that night, after all.

The proprietor, shaking his gray head in doubt as to the cause of my apparent absorption, started to reenter the hotel. Anxious not to appear uncivil and wishing to prepare him somewhat for the change in my appearance the morning sun would disclose, I called after him:

"Oh, Mr. Jenkins, your air here has done wonders for me—I think I'm a lot better—and—and don't be alarmed if anything very strange happens to me before to-morrow morning."

He went behind his desk, apparently wondering, but slightly appeased.

The village barber-shop was open, but deserted save for the sleepy young man who finally succeeded in removing the last trace of my beard. Half my metamorphosis was accomplished, and I had already determined upon the scene for completing the change.

Very near the hotel was a beautiful little lake, and to-night as I unfastened a boat and paddled out upon it, the moonlight, the water, and the silence presented fitting surroundings for the fulfilling of my honest desire henceforth to be seen as nature intended I should.

It takes considerable courage, however, to alter one's appearance for the worse, after one has become pardonably attached to it, and I glided about the lake for a long time before finally deciding to take the fatal plunge. At last, not far from the shore I removed my hat; then for the second time that evening the wig of brown left its accustomed position. Placing within the latter a stone I had carried with me for this purpose, I rose in my unsteady craft, a changed man.

Casting into the rippling water the wig, weighted to sink, I cried out with a sudden wonderful complete return of my natural voice:

"So may I always dispose of any false thing."

The hills echoed my words, and with the sudden movement came a shaking of the boat, and I was pitched headlong after the disappearing hair.

To swim to shore with the light canoe half full of water presented visions of returning rheumatism, and to force my way through the weeds and mud of the landing suggested very realistic visions of other disagreeable results from the mishap. Yet I had to do both; and at length, however, I stood on the shore, the water running from my hatless and hairless head down my beardless face, and amalgamating with the mud which covered my clothes.

I must have been a disreputable looking object as I entered the quiet hotel at an early hour of the morning and sneaked up the stairs to my room. Quietly I fitted my key into the lock of the door; but evidently I had forgotten to fasten it on leaving, for it opened at my pressure, and a sight met my eyes which filled me with indignation.

I stopped on the threshold and met the amazed look of two pairs of eyes. Jenkins, the proprietor, stood in the

center of the room, arms outstretched as though my entrance had interrupted him in the midst of a violent harangue, and beyond him swayed back and forth a pompous, very much excited old gentleman. I myself probably presented as strange a picture to them as they did to me.

At any rate, no one spoke until I had mastered my wrath and moved to a spot where I thought that the water dripping from my clothing would do the least harm.

"May I ask for what purposes you have broken into my room during my absence?" I inquired in a cold voice, showing no trace of its late huskiness.

"Your room!" mocked Jenkins. "This ain't your room, and I'd like to know what business you've got in here, anyway—with Mr. Brockway's key in your hand, too?"

I then remembered my altered appearance.

"Don't you know me, Jenkins? Does my beard and—and hair—"

"I never set eyes on you," he broke in, "and—"

"Why, I'm Brockway!"

"*You* Brockway!" he sneered. "That's nerve for you."

He thought intently a moment, and then, with a start, he turned to the old gentleman.

"Say, Mr. Pardee," he said hurriedly, "keep your eye on him; watch the windows," and he darted past me to the door, locked it, and leaned back as though to give added security to the solid wood.

At the same time he pressed long on the electric-bell in the wainscoting.

My annoyance at his stupidity overcame my wonder at his actions.

"I am very wet," I said, "and would like extremely to get off these clothes. Jenkins, you will of course recognize me when I explain to you that my changed appearance is caused by the fact that you have always seen me wearing a wig and full beard. To-night I have shaved off the one and discarded the other. Now, if this gentleman desires to see me, I will beg him to wait until the morning."

"Say," replied Jenkins, who had evidently been more intent upon his own thoughts than on my remarks, "that's a good story, and I must say that you act up to the part, but it don't fool me. You ain't no more like Brockway, nor as much, as I be."

At that moment there came a knock on the door, and the proprietor, still keeping his eye on me, opened it and whispered a few words to the bell-boy, who had appeared in response to his ring.

"This is all so ridiculous," I laughed when he had finished. "I've got on the same clothes you saw me in this evening—am the same person—have the same features—eyes—nose—mouth—voice—"

"Voice, eh?" Jenkins interjected quickly. "That's all you know about it. Brockway was so hoarse he could hardly speak aloud."

"My voice came back to me suddenly to-night," I explained.

"So I see."

"But no matter," I continued; "I can easily convince you in the morning; get the barber who shaved me if necessary. Meanwhile, will you please leave me? I am getting a very bad cold. And, Jenkins, will you please have a hot whisky sent up to me?"

The proprietor sniffed.

"Brockway didn't drink," he said.

Another rap at the door was heard. Jenkins called out, "All right; wait a moment," and then, turning to me, he spoke in a very different tone.

"See here, Mr. Whatever-your-name is, and," with a contemptuous glance from my mud-covered shoes to my shiny head, "I guess it can't be a very high-toned one. Mr. Pardee here came to me to-night from New York, looking for his son who disappeared from there about the time Mr. Brockway showed up here. Mr. Pardee's son was sickly and worried, and has been traced to this neighborhood. He had a brown beard and curly hair, and," impressively, "a considerable sum of money. I told Mr. Pardee about Mr. Brockway and about noticing this very evening that he seemed despondent, and that he told me not to be surprised if something happened to him before morning.

"Brockway's description seemed to fit this gentleman's son, so we came up here to this room, found it locked, and got no answer to our knocks. When we gets a key and opens the door—no one here—

though Brockway always went to bed early. Then along *you* comes, sneaking up in his clothes, looking as though you'd had a fight. Ain't the evidence pretty strong that you've changed clothes with Brockway before disposing of him and come back here to find the money that he didn't have with him? Do you think we'll let you go?"

Jenkins then opened the door, and a bell-boy, accompanied by two husky hired men, entered.

"Here," continued the proprietor, "are two fellers who will take care of you to-night. You can sleep in this room, and they'll watch to see that you don't get away—and they'll be here to help Brockway if he should get back. In the morning you can tell the police justice *what you've done with Brockway*. Am I right, Mr. Pardee?"

The ridiculous complications certainly looked bad for me, but for my confidence that the appearance of the barber and his evidence of having shaved me would straighten matters out. I therefore restrained my inclinations to tell Jenkins what I thought of him in my desire to have the interview closed, and listened to the remarks Mr. Pardee had to contribute.

"Of course," said the old gentleman, "I am not certain that this Mr. Brockway was my son at all. Let us hope not," devoutly, "if any harm has befallen him. At any rate, if you were he, it seems impossible that Mr. Jenkins would fail to know you—even without your beard—and—er—your head adornment. So, on the whole, I think it just as well to investigate."

"Very well," I replied, looking forward to their apologies in the morning, but above all at that moment desiring to get my body between dry blankets. "I can assure you that I am Brockway, and that Brockway is *not* Mr. Pardee's son. Now, however, good night—or morning. Thank you, Jenkins, for letting me have the privilege of sleeping in my own room."

They retired from the scene, and I hastily removed my drenched garments and got into bed. What my two jailers did with themselves during the remaining hours of darkness I did not know or care.

In the morning the thoughtful proprietor sent up a scanty breakfast for his prisoner, and my guards took turns in descending for theirs. As I dressed for the day I could not entirely blame Jenkins for failing to believe my story. My appearance was so altered that my first look at myself in the mirror gave me a decided shock.

My toilet and breakfast was just about finished when the summons came from Jenkins to repair to the police court, where an examination was to be held while a search for the missing Brockway was being conducted.

The curious stares which greeted me in the hotel corridor savored a great deal of the repulsion for an accused abductor, and not one of the many guests with whom I was on good terms seemed to recognize me.

As the party, consisting of Jenkins, Mr. Pardee, my two jailers, and about half the guests of the hotel, reached the veranda, I stopped and addressed Jenkins.

"This thing need go no further if you have any sense at all," I said. "Send for the barber, and if he identifies me as the person he shaved last night, and if he noticed that I wore a wig, which he could scarcely have failed to do while removing by beard, surely it will be unnecessary for me to appear before your magistrate?"

"Y—yes," replied Jenkins doubtfully; and then with a return of the determination customary in a man who intends to stick by the position he has taken, "but what's the use? The barber can't identify some one he has never seen."

"Send for him," I said firmly, seating myself in my favorite chair, while about me stood an ever-increasing audience.

By the time Jenkins's messenger returned, the veranda held the largest crowd of its history—guests, employees, and native inhabitants of the town—all eager to see the criminal.

"Why didn't you bring the barber back with you?" I asked impatiently.

"He—he's gone on the morning train with the New York excursion," replied the youth.

Not a sound was to be heard. Each face was turned toward me—the culprit—to see how I took this blow.

And then — as from far away — a sound did come. Around the corner of the building and into his favorite place in my lap, where every one about the hotel had seen him many times, dashed my one true friend—the little dog. He did not lick my face, as was his wont in greeting, for his mouth was busy holding something.

In a moment I placed in its position—wet, muddy, and scraggly as it was—my discarded wig, saved from the waters of the lake.

"I guess," said Jenkins, the proprietor, "that your board bill's paid for as long as you want to stay, Mr. Brockway. Don't you think—?"

He turned to where Mr. Pardee had been standing, but that gentleman's arms were about the neck of a frail-looking man, who had evidently just emerged from the station omnibus, which stood before the hotel. The newcomer had a full brown beard and curly hair.

Then my little four-footed friend licked my face.

A SUMMONS AT DAWN.

By J. F. VALENTINE.

An early call for the doctor which demanded more than a knowledge of drugs or surgery to bring to a successful issue.

IN a dull, sleep-deadened way, Powell realized that the telephone-bell was ringing wildly. Raising himself on one elbow, he murmured sleepily: "Now, who the deuce—"

Suddenly shaking off the slumber fetters that had held him so firmly, he sprang from his bed and, by the aid of the first gray streak of dawn that sifted through the partially drawn blinds, stumbled toward the instrument.

"Well—well!" he exclaimed impatiently, as the ringing continued even after he had taken the receiver from the hook.

The insistent jingling finally stopped, and a strange voice inquired: "Is this Dr. Powell?"

"It is," the now fully awakened physician replied.

"Well, doctor, my name is Hopkins," the voice at the other end informed him. "Perhaps you do not recall me, but I met you at the hotel night before last."

"I cannot say that I remember the name," Powell ventured in a very much annoyed tone.

"That is immaterial," the voice continued. "When I met you I could not inform you of my business here in town; but now I can. I am an expert accountant, called here by the president of the bank, Mr. Smithers, to go over the books of the cashier, Mr. Wilson."

"I fail to see why your business here in town should necessitate your calling me from my bed at this hour, to give me an account of it. I assure you, I am not the least interested."

Powell's anger was most apparent.

"Permit me to finish, and you will then understand." The voice was icily cool. "I have been examining Mr. Wilson's books, and—you see, I had to work at night to keep the cashier from knowing what was going on."

"Look here! I do not know you, or care who you are," Powell broke in, angry through and through. "If this is supposed to be a joke, I fail to see it."

"Just a moment. During the night my investigation has shown that Wilson has robbed the bank of thousands of dollars. Mr. Smithers, who had been waiting all night for my report, hurried out to the cashier's home as soon as he learned the truth, taking with him an officer, to place Wilson under arrest. He just phoned me, saying that Wilson shot himself as soon as confronted with the facts, and now lies dangerously wounded."

"The deuce you say!" the doctor ejaculated.

"Yes; and, as Mr. Smithers wants me at Wilson's house immediately, he phoned me the sad news, and asked me to get you to come right out there in your machine, and to pick me up on your way."

"I'll be dressed and started in ten minutes," the physician quickly answered. "Shall I pick you up at the bank?"

"No, because some one might be stirring at this time, and the news would excite suspicion. Mr. Smithers wants to keep the unfortunate affair as quiet as possible. His instructions to me are to meet you away from the bank."

"Wilson lives about three miles out of town, on the main street," Powell explained. "If you are ready to leave now, do so, and walk north. I'll overtake you in a few moments."

"That's the thing to do," the voice replied. "Hurry as quickly as possible. Perhaps the unfortunate man is not hurt as much as Mr. Smithers thinks, and you may be able to pull him through. But mention it to no one—that is the president's wish. Good-by!"

A click, and the doctor realized that the other party had rung off.

As Powell turned from the phone, and proceeded to dress with all possible speed, his wife, who had been roused from her slumber, queried: "What is it, Jim? A call?"

"Yes," he replied absently.

"Who is ill?"

"Wilson," was the brief reply.

"What Wilson?" Mrs. Powell persisted. "Not Dan Wilson?"

"Yes, Dan Wilson. Poor fellow! Why, we were kids at school together."

"Why is he 'poor fellow,' Jim?"

"Because — because —" stammered Powell; "because he has met with an accident."

The doctor was pulling at his tie, in an endeavor to adjust it.

"I am mighty glad I have an automobile," he added, attempting to change the subject. "It is certainly easier to hop right in, and let her go, than to hitch up a horse. But I must hurry."

He leaned over and kissed his wife hastily.

"I'll be back—well, as soon as I can." Without another word he passed from the room.

Hurrying down the stairs, he rushed out of the front door, and toward the barn. He realized now why Smithers was so anxious to keep the awful truth from circulating.

West Montville was a small mining town, three-fourths of the population of which were foreigners who toiled many feet below the surface of the earth. But, as a class, they were a prudent lot, and the bank held the savings of them all, the miners looking forward to the time when their little pile would be sufficient to take them back to the country that gave them birth, and where they would be able to end their days in rest and comparative comfort.

Powell now realized that should anything happen that would wipe out these hard-earned savings, these same hard-working, plodding people would become wild, irrational beings, who would take the law in their own hands, and a slight shiver passed over him, as he felt certain of the riot and disturbance—yes, even loss of life—that would follow.

In his nervous apprehension his fingers fumbled clumsily with the lock that secured the stable-door, but at length he had it unfastened, and, throwing it open, sprang into the steel steed he had purchased only a few weeks previous, and of which he was justly proud.

"Poor Dan Wilson," Powell mused, when he was under way. "To think of his going wrong. Why, I'd have trusted him with every cent I had!"

The machine was rushing along the main street of the town, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake. But not a person was to be seen—the entire population was still lost in the land of nod. Suddenly, a slight turn in the road disclosed to the doctor's view a man some distance ahead, who had turned and halted at the sound of the rapidly approaching car.

It was only the matter of a few seconds to cover the intervening space, and Powell drew up beside the stranger.

"Well, doctor, you did that in pretty quick time," was the cheerful greeting, as the man walked around the rear of the machine and stepped lightly into the seat on the doctor's left.

Gazing straight into Powell's face, he queried, with a half smile: "Don't you remember me now?"

"Yes, I do," was the thoughtful response. "You must pardon me for not recalling your name, but your face is very familiar. I recollect seeing you about town the last few days, and think I met you once at the hotel."

As Powell concluded, he again threw on the power, and the car sprang forward, resuming its duty of annihilating space.

The doctor increased the speed, notch by notch, until they literally flew over the dusty road, leaving the sleeping town behind them, and rapidly drawing nearer the home of the bank cashier, which was located about two miles out.

Powell's eyes were fixed upon the road before them.

"Did Smithers say how badly Wilson is hurt?" he queried, without looking up.

"No, he did not." A peculiar, harsh laugh broke from the lips of the stranger. "I guess we can ease up a bit now; I want to learn how to run this thing."

For an instant the doctor raised his eyes from the road, and, as he did so, saw a pistol held in the other's hand, and pointed at his head, in the most business-like manner.

Powell threw off the power, allowing the car to run under the momentum it had gathered, and stared at the man by his side, upon whose face he saw a determined look, which he realized presaged no good.

"Why—why—what does this mean?" he stammered.

"Mean? Mean?" the stranger repeated in a shrill voice. "It means that I want to get away from this town!"

The car had come to a slow halt in the middle of the road, and Powell released his grip on the steering wheel. The physician's first thought was that he had a crazy man for a companion, and his idea was to humor him until help of some description could be obtained.

"Where would you like to go?" Powell queried, with forced calmness.

"To the next town," the stranger replied. "I know where it is—fifteen miles away. Take me there as quickly as possible. I want to get away from here!"

"Of course you shall get there," the doctor assured him; "and we'll get there quickly, too. I'll just show you how fast this car can go."

"Yes, let her out to the limit," the other ordered, with a harsh laugh; then he added quickly: "No; show me how to run it. You're from the town. Even the sight of you recalls the tragedy. I'll learn, and then you get out. Go ahead, I say!" he shouted, making a lunge at the doctor's throat, his fingers outstretched as if to choke the breath from his body.

Realizing that events had taken a more serious turn than he had anticipated, Powell felt that some quick action must be taken.

A reassuring smile spread over his face.

"Why, of course, my friend, you are at liberty to use my car. When you arrive at Grant's Station leave it there, and I will send over for it."

Pressing a lever, he continued: "You see, you press this, and then this"—the car slowly gliding ahead—"and the speed you regulate by this little lever. Really, quite simple, isn't it?"

The stranger was following the physician's every move. The wild look in his eyes had disappeared, and his mind seemed centered upon the working of the machinery.

Powell did not betray any nervousness now, although the stranger still clutched tightly in his right hand the revolver. But this was not necessary to force the doctor to obey orders, as his companion was a large-framed, muscular man, who would be more than a match for him if it came to a struggle.

Already the physician was revolving in his mind a plan to turn the tables, and his set jaw accentuated the determination of his purpose.

"This lever here regulates the speed," he repeated casually. "I'll throw it ahead a little."

The machine was now covering the ground at a good pace.

"Let it go faster for a few miles," the stranger ordered. "Then slow up, and I'll request you to get out and leave the car to me!"

The doctor started a trifle at this command. He had watched the man from the corner of his eye, and recognized the fact that he now seemed rational again.

The set expression returned to Powell's face.

"Very well, as you say. But first let me explain one more thing. If you want to stop suddenly, see that little foot-lever there in front of you—down on the floor, close by the dashboard?"

"This one?" the stranger queried, leaning forward a trifle.

"No, not the large one—I mean the small one, to the right of that one. Can't you see it?"

The man leaned farther forward, looking steadily at the spot indicated.

"I can't—"

At that instant there was a grating of machinery, and the car came to such an abrupt stop that it shivered and trembled, and as it did so the body of the stranger shot over the dashboard—the position Powell had gotten him into had been just the one he wanted—and landed on the edge of the road, about ten feet ahead.

At the exact second the physician had braced himself for the coup he had planned, and although thrown against the steering gear, with a force that caused him to emit a groan, he retained his seat; and, as the other landed in a heap, he threw on the power to the limit, and the machine gave a leap and tore by the prostrate figure before it had shown any signs of life.

The car was some feet beyond the stranger when the doctor heard, in quick succession, three revolver shots, and a bullet whizzed through the air, dangerously close to his head. But he raced on, unheeding, now realizing that his life had been in grave danger.

Just ahead he could see the turn of the road that led up to Wilson's place, and knowing he was now far out of pistol range, the doctor slowed down.

Drawing out his watch, after an apprehensive glance over his shoulder, he exclaimed to himself: "Only quarter of six! I thought it much later. A very busy hour for me," he added, with a poor attempt at a laugh. "The news of Wilson's attempted suicide—perhaps successful—his robbery of the bank, a struggle with a madman, and then being made a target for revolver practise."

He headed the machine into Wilson's driveway, and as he approached the house the barking of a dog brought a servant to the front door.

Springing from the car, Powell informed the woman: "I am the doctor, and I presume you are waiting for me."

"Who do you wish to see, sir?" was the maid's blank inquiry.

"Mr. Wilson, of course!" The physician was annoyed at the woman's stupidity.

"Shure, sir, he's asleep yit."

"Asleep!" exclaimed the astonished Powell. Then it occurred to him that undoubtedly the servants did not know of the tragedy. "Then tell Mr. Smithers I am here, if you please," he added severely.

"Mr. Smithers!" she repeated. "Shure, he's not here, sir."

The doctor gazed around helplessly, his mind unable fully to grasp the information he had just received. Could he be dreaming, was the thought that flashed through his brain, or had the strain of the early hour's incidents been too much for him?

"Why, Mr. Smithers—"

"Is that you, Powell?" a voice that he recognized as Wilson's called from above.

Glancing up, he saw the cashier's face framed in the second-story window.

"Then you're not hurt!" the doctor exclaimed, with a relieved sigh. "For Heaven's sake, come down here and let me tell you something—or explain something to me."

Suddenly a great light of understanding spread over his face.

"Quickly! I think I understand it now!"

"Understand what?" demanded the cashier.

"Come down! Not a moment is to be lost."

Wilson, alarmed at the physician's speech and actions, quickly left the window and, throwing on a dressing-gown, was soon on the porch.

A few words told the doctor's story, and the cashier agreed with the physician—there was something wrong somewhere, and haste was imperative.

"It'll take me about two minutes to dress," the now thoroughly excited Wilson declared. "While I am doing that, you get Smithers on the phone, and have him meet us at the bank in fifteen minutes. Come inside—the phone is there in the library."

After some delay in getting the president on the other end of the wire, Powell imparted his fears of trouble, and requested him to meet them at the bank.

As he finished, Wilson came down the stairs, two at a time, and they sprang into the automobile, taking a different road from the one on which the doctor had come out; as Wilson explained, there was no use in giving this fellow a chance to use any more cartridges upon them. In quick time they were back in town, and drew up before the bank.

Smithers had not arrived, but Wilson unlocked the doors, and the two men entered the building. There was nothing wrong in the front offices—a hasty glance assured the cashier of this—but a groan of horror and amazement escaped him as he hurried toward the rear, for the massive doors of the vault stood wide open!

For a brief second Wilson remained rooted to the spot. Then he made a dash for the yawning doors and, with feverish haste, looked through the drawers within.

Powell stood back respectfully, and at length the other turned and faced him, his face pale and drawn.

"We're robbed!" he groaned. "All the currency and available securities stolen!"

A slammed door drew the attention of the two men to the front of the office, and they turned, to see Smithers hurrying toward them.

A few words told him the news, and for a moment he, too, seemed stunned at the awful tidings.

"Well, hadn't we better get the authorities on the case?" Powell queried. "We may nab the fellow yet."

This speech had the effect of bringing the other two men to the realization of the fact that every moment aided the escape of the criminal.

A hasty consultation decided that Wilson would stay to guard the broken vault, while Smithers and Powell would arouse the police and rush to where the stranger had been outwitted by the doctor.

Fifteen minutes later the available police force of the town—five men—together with Smithers and Powell, started out to hunt the burglar.

The exact spot of the stranger's sudden propulsion into space was easily located, and a widely beaten trail, that led through the meadow at the left, caused the chief of police to exclaim: "If I'm not mistaken, he is hurt, and has dragged himself off through the grass."

Turning to his four men, he ordered: "Spread out and follow that path. But, look sharp; he's got a gun, and may pot one of us before we get him!"

The policemen stretched out and, with keen eyes scanning the ground in front of them, started through the field, Smithers and Powell watching intently from the road.

The men advanced cautiously. They had already covered half the distance to the woods on the far side, when Smithers said: "If he has secreted himself in the woods, they'll—"

The sharp report of a revolver cut short his words, and they saw the officers rush toward the spot from which the flash had come.

A few seconds brief wait, that seemed endless to the men at the roadside, then the chief stood up and waved his hand to them.

Understanding the signal as one of success, the two men bounded across the field to where the policemen were gathered in a group, in the center of which lay the stranger. As the men separated to allow Powell to identify him, their eyes met for a second, then the other glanced away, grinding his teeth in rage.

"His bullet nearly caught me," one of the men remarked. "I heard it sing by my ear."

"Yes, and I would have got you, too, if it hadn't been for this game leg of mine. The pain of it killed my nerve, I guess. It's busted!"

Powell leaned over him; then suddenly rose again.

"Which one is hurt?" he questioned.

"Right one," the man replied grimly.

"All right. One of you men hold his left. I don't want a kick from it."

The doctor bent over cautiously, and felt tenderly of the injured member.

"That over-the-dashboard trip you gave me did the work," the man explained, a groan escaping him as the doctor concluded his examination.

"Bad compound fracture," Powell observed, rising again. "One of you men had better hurry back to town and send the ambulance out for him."

As an officer hastened off to execute the doctor's orders, Smithers proceeded to question the man regarding the missing money and securities, but he turned

a deaf ear to all inquiries; and when some time later the ambulance arrived, they were as much in the dark as ever regarding the booty. The prisoner was driven off to the hospital, his secret safely stored away in his brain.

As Smithers and Powell watched the ambulance slowly make its way toward town again, the president queried: "Are you sure none of his bullets hit your machine?"

"I'm certain one didn't," the doctor exclaimed. "It nearly hit my head, though. I'll just look, anyway."

Leading the way toward the rear of the car, he burst out in an exclamation of dismay as he saw a ragged hole in the polished surface of the body.

"Confound him!" he muttered angrily. "Just look at that!"

"That's too bad, Powell," Smithers sympathized. "It's lucky, though, the bullet didn't strike you on the leg."

"Yes, but—"

The physician had already lifted the hinged cover of the body, disclosing the compartment where he always carried his bag of surgical instruments.

"Why, what's this?" he burst out.

The bank president leaped to his side, wondering what the new disclosure could be. One glance, and he stood as if riveted to the spot! There, before his astonished eyes, beside the doctor's satchel, rested a large grip, and evidently a strange one to Powell!

"Can it be—" Smithers did not finish the sentence; he feared to hope it.

But the other understood, and, with feverish anxiety, attempted to open the bag. But his efforts were of no avail.

Neither spoke a word, as the doctor plunged his hand into his instrument-case and, drawing from within a razor-edged surgeon's knife, deftly cut open the strange bag. As he did so, Smithers thrust his hand into the opening, fumbled within, then gave vent to a loud cry of joy. It held the stolen property!

"I know now when he put it there!" the doctor exclaimed. "When I overtook him on the road he was standing on the right side. Then he went around the back of the car, to get to the left, and must have dropped it in here then. I did not see it at all. He undoubtedly held it behind him all the time."

The ride back to town was a happy one for both the men, Powell in his excitement forgetting entirely his scarred car.

After delivering the contents of the satchel to the anxiously waiting Wilson, the two men proceeded to the hospital.

When they told the prisoner of the recovery of the securities the man broke down and confessed all.

He had been in town a week, carefully laying his plans. Knowing there was no train out of West Montville till eight-fifteen in the morning—too late for a safe getaway—he had learned there was one that left Grant's Station, a town fifteen miles distant, at six-thirty. So he had carefully arranged to catch this one, and to use the ruse in connection with the doctor's motor.

"A cleverly laid plan," Smithers mused, as the two men left the prisoner's bedside. "Still, the best-laid plans of mice and men—"

"But I'm sorry I was singled out to do the transportation act," Powell remarked grimly. "A perforated car is certainly not a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

The bank president looked up quickly.

"Oh, yes, Powell, I nearly forgot about that. You send your bank-book around later in the day. When it is balanced you'll find you have enough to repair the body of your machine, and a nice sum besides, I can assure you. I must hurry back to the bank now. Bring the book down yourself, as I want to give it back to you personally, together with thanks from the directors of the Bank of West Montville."

RETRIBUTION.

Such punishment as human skill
May compass for our sin
Is infinitesimal to that
Of our own fashioning.

Frank H. Sweet.

THAT OTHER GIRL'S PICTURE.

By GARRET SMITH.

Trouble galore over a photograph that was pretty in itself, but ugly indeed in the incidents to which it gave rise.

ERNEST HARPER had just sent his photograph to Eugenia. He had expected to make a hit. He hadn't. It all came about through a stupid, puzzling mistake.

Becoming engaged to Eugenia Glover had been difficult. There were times, however, when Ernest Harper found being engaged to that charming young lady still more difficult.

Not that he didn't really love her. He never doubted that for a moment. As for Eugenia, her little bursts of jealous fury were generally followed by periods of affection more than ever manifest.

Again, to-day, there were signs of storm. He had called to bask in the warmth of Eugenia's praise for the pictured likeness of his own by no means uncomely self.

No sooner had the butler ushered him into her presence, however, than it was clear there was nothing going on in the basking line. His immediately subsequent actions were more on the order of the crouch and shiver.

"Hallo, girlie!" was his enthusiastic greeting.

"Good afternoon," came back coolly from the girl in the straight-back chair by the window.

Eugenia always sat in a straight-back chair when she was unpleasant.

Ernest bent over to bestow his usual welcoming kiss, and received only a most unsatisfactory peck from a pair of dainty but stern lips.

His appealing glance at the sofa was ignored, so he sank disconsolately into a solitary rocking-chair—and crouched.

It came!

"Who's that other girl, Ernest Harper?" was the form it took.

This caught Ernest all unawares. His blank amazement was ignored. His hesitating silence condemned him.

"I thought that would startle you a bit," she snapped. "Unfortunately for you, Ernest, I know all your girl acquaintances and relatives who have given you photographs. This is a brand-new one. Of course you've missed the picture. It must be precious to be wrapped up so carefully with your own. Oh, it was an unlucky mistake—for you! I'm glad it happened."

Incipient tears evident!

"What on earth do you mean?" gasped Ernest.

"Mean? How dare you ask such an impudent question? Oh, of course you are surprised. I'll show you. Wait a minute."'

She flounced into the hall and up-stairs. In a moment she returned with a photograph, which she thrust into the face of her bewildered fiancé.

It was the likeness of a very pretty girl, though of a style quite different from that of Miss Glover.

"Beautiful, isn't she?" snapped Eugenia sarcastically. "I believe you admire a big mouth and a long nose, though. If I could only make my hair resemble a cedar-bush, I might have held your admiration a little more exclusively."

"But, my dear, what do you mean? Where did you get this? I never saw it before," insisted Ernest, perhaps looking a little too admiringly at the offending picture.

"Do you mean to tell me, Ernest Harper, that that photograph could have been carefully placed behind yours in the same folder and wrapped up with it without your knowing it? I suppose your mother or sister came in while you were admiring your new acquisition, and you slipped it into the folder with your photograph to hide it. Or, perhaps putting it with your own picture was just a pretty sentiment. Then you sent the combination to me by mistake. What

company is she in, Ernest? I suppose she's ravishing in—in—ah—stage costume."

Eugenia had snatched the photograph away and stood glaring at her victim.

"Let me see it again!" demanded Ernest, struggling for a clue to the situation.

"No, you don't!" said the girl. "Go see the original."

With that she tossed the offending cardboard into the grate, and in a minute it was reduced to ashes.

"See here, Eugenia," cried Ernest, picking up his hat; "either you yourself are playing a shabby trick, just to see me storm, or some of my fool friends have perpetrated a hugely funny practical joke. I'll find out. Meanwhile I'll leave you to repent or get a little more reasonable."

Ernest retired swiftly, emphazing his exit by slamming two doors.

Eugenia curled up helplessly on the sofa and wept real tears.

II.

ERNEST'S progress down Fifth Avenue was marked by a rapid succession of verbal outbursts which it would not be wise to quote. At Fifty-Ninth Street he saw a light.

He had taken one of his photographs, he remembered, to the club for inspection the day they arrived. It had been passed around freely among a group of close friends. Said close friends were fond of jokes.

It would have been easy for one of them to slip one of the club's collection of stage photographs behind his in the cardboard folder. It might easily have escaped his attention.

Ernest hurried to the club, recalling on the way the names of the men who had been present the day he exhibited the photograph.

The rest of the day he spent laying for the members of that gay crew one by one, and darkly hinting at the photograph as a feeler to discover, if possible, traces of guilt. He found none. Instead, he aroused suspicion in the breasts of two ingenious brethren, who managed to dine with him that night and cross-examine him.

Little by little, in growing anger, Ernest betrayed what had happened; and by the time the men had gathered around the grate, after dinner, to smoke, he was in a towering rage. He delivered accusations right and left, to the infinite delight of his fellow members.

He went home that night with a feeling of personal enmity toward every man in the club, and leaving behind him another nine days' topic for gossip. He had learned nothing, however.

The next morning, acting on a new idea, he visited Tracy's photograph galleries, where his pictures had been made, hoping to find that it was simply a case of error.

No, there was no error, as far as was known there, in the delivery of photographs, so he was told by the polite young man at the desk. When Ernest insisted, a careful search of their records revealed nothing.

At last Ernest, in desperation, said: "See here; you look as though you might be willing to help a fellow out. I sent my photograph to the young lady to whom I am engaged, and in some diabolical way a photograph of another girl was wrapped up with it. I never saw the girl, but my fiancée thinks I have and is a little unpleasant about it, you know.

"Can't you write a note to me on the firm's paper telling me a mistake has been discovered? I can use that as evidence to clear myself. I'll gladly pay you anything you ask."

The clerk laughed immoderately at this tale of wo, but refused absolutely to be bribed.

"My job looks too good to me," he said, "to run any risk of losing it."

So Ernest departed in despair.

III.

IN the meantime, Eugenia was experiencing a reaction. It verged on repentance. With time to think more calmly, the idea persistently haunted her that a mistake was the most likely solution, and that in a burst of insane jealousy she had jumped to conclusions that now appeared very absurd.

But before her pride would let her send for Ernest, she decided to prove this

theory. Looking up the name of the photographer on Ernest's picture, she started at once for Tracy's studio.

She regretted that she had burned the other girl's picture, as that would have told her at once whether the two photographs came from the same gallery.

This point was soon settled, however. As she turned in at the street entrance of the studio, a man was rearranging the display-case. Her eye was caught by a new photograph he was just putting up.

It was that of the other girl.

Eugenia ascended the elevator exultantly. The mistake theory seemed about to be demonstrated. She decided at once to purchase Ernest a new silk tie as a peace-offering. First, however, she must find out who the girl was and have a little fun with "the dear boy."

At the desk she was confronted by the clerk who had repulsed Ernest's offer of a bribe the day before.

"I want to find out," she began sweetly, "the name of a girl whose photograph I noticed in your case down-stairs. She looks like some one I knew as a little girl and have lost track of," she added with mendacious inspiration, seeing a look of denial on the clerk's face.

"I'm sorry, miss," he said firmly, "but it's against the rules to give the names of our patrons without their express permission. If you will tell me which photo you refer to, perhaps I can communicate with the lady, giving your name, and saying you wish to communicate with her. Here is a duplicate of the case down-stairs."

Eugenia, not enthusiastic over this turn of affairs, especially as she did not care to have her name known, turned to the case to gain time and pointed out the beautiful stranger.

A look of suspicion and amazement came over the young man's face.

"You must have made a mistake," he said hurriedly. "I am sure you do not care to see this lady."

His attitude surprised Eugenia.

"I suppose I am making an unusual request," she faltered, "but—"

"Pardon me; not at all unusual," the clerk interrupted. "We have this sort of thing almost every day. I could tell some strange tales," he went on hurriedly, as though he wished to steer his caller from her original purpose. "Why, only yesterday, a young man tried to bribe me to write a note to him claiming we had made a mistake we never had made. It seems he'd sent a photo of himself to his girl, and by mistake got a picture of another girl mixed in with it. There was trouble, of course, and he thought he could hire us to take the blame. He—"

Here the surprised young man found himself without a listener. Eugenia, suddenly white and furious, had fled.

"It's true, after all!" she moaned as she left the elevator. "Oh, I could forgive him if he hadn't lied to me! And he tried to bribe another man to help him lie! Liar! Briber! Oh, how I hate him!"

Miss Glover was very unhappy.

That evening her fury was fanned still farther. Jack Pendleton, one of Ernest's fellow club members, called, and, not realizing the seriousness of the situation, remarked in the course of conversation:

"I understand Ernest sent you a photo of one of his friends the other day."

Eugenia, amazed that her little private tragedy was club gossip, only looked blankly at him.

Jack, misled into thinking the incident might have been exaggerated and that his hostess did not even recall it, made things worse by adding: "Oh, Erny told us all about how you caught him with the goods. I'm glad he's forgiven."

"Please say no more about it," said the unhappy Eugenia in a voice so strained that Mr. Pendleton at once perceived he had placed his foot in the middle of a situation.

Conversation died, and he soon departed.

Again the sofa and more tears from Eugenia.

"Oh! oh! How heartless a man can be!" she sobbed. "Told those horrid fellows at the club all about our quarrel, and thought it was a good joke. I'm glad I found him out."

Just to prove to herself how glad she was, Miss Glover went to bed and cried some more.

IV.

THE next morning a worn and haggard Eugenia arose after an almost sleepless night. She resolved first to write to

Ernest, tell him it was all over between them, and send back his ring. After that, she didn't care what happened.

Pleading a headache, she canceled all engagements for the day and denied herself to callers. As she sat listlessly at the window of her boudoir, gazing across the park, her eye fell on the occupant of a carriage, at that moment turning into the park entrance from the avenue.

It was that other girl!

Eugenia acted on impulse. Ringing feverishly for her carriage and her maid, in fifteen minutes she was dressed for the street and at the door.

She ordered the coachman to drive rapidly through the park, and sat straining her eyes at every carriage, far and near, in the forlorn hope that she might, by some chance, run across her rival. What she would do if she found her she had no idea.

For an hour the bewildered coachman, obeying erratic orders, drove about the roadways. At length, Eugenia gave it up and chided herself for such foolishness.

Just as they turned to go back, however, they almost ran into the much-sought vehicle. Pursuer and pursued looked into each other's eyes, one with jealous curiosity, the other all unconscious.

Eugenia ordered the coachman to turn, and, no longer trying to conceal her purposes, directed the man to follow the carriage they had just met. She wished merely to learn where the other girl lived and find out her name, if possible.

The unknown was evidently enjoying the scenery in that section of the park, for twice her coachman turned and drove slowly back over the long winding road. Each time as she turned she looked into the eyes of the pursuing Eugenia.

At the third encounter, recognition and surprise were evident in her expression. The strange lady spoke hurriedly to her coachman, who whipped up his horses and left the park at the nearest exit.

Miss Glover followed.

The stranger looked back and noted that fact. She was now manifestly indignant.

In a few minutes the carriage ahead stopped at the St. Regis. The lady alighted. So did Eugenia.

Now Miss Glover had not the slightest idea of precipitately demanding an interview. She had intended simply to follow the other girl into the hotel, learn her name, and write to her. But the next move of the unknown took her unawares.

Eugenia, in her eagerness, had followed too closely. The other had turned to confront her, after speaking hurriedly to the doorman, and Eugenia stepped from her carriage; face to face with the stranger.

"Please follow me no farther," said the latter in a voice remarkable for its sweetness and culture. "Haven't you made a mistake?"

"May I have a moment to speak with you?" asked Eugenia, not knowing what else to say.

At this moment an attendant, called by the doorman, stepped between them. One or two passers-by stopped and looked on curiously.

The stranger saw that a scene was imminent, and, asking the attendant to step back but to keep them in sight, said to Eugenia: "Please come into the hotel, where we can talk."

Eugenia followed into one of the parlors. Two attendants sauntered up, as if by accident, and stood in the doorway.

It was a much-wilted Eugenia who now faced the inquiring gaze of her unwilling hostess.

"Well," said the latter, "what can I do for you?"

Nervous fear was very apparent in the girl's manner.

Eugenia gulped hard and plunged right into the middle of her subject in the most unguarded and undiplomatic manner possible.

"I want to know," she declared, "why you are accepting the attentions of Ernest Harper, my fiancé; that is, he was. Maybe you didn't know, but I want to warn you. I saw your picture, you know. He tried to keep it from me, but I saw it by accident. I don't know who you are, but can't you see you are breaking another girl's heart?"

Eugenia knew she was going to cry, and turned to the window to hide that fact.

The other girl, who had been eying the door anxiously, now looked intensely relieved.

The house detective and a uniformed policeman were approaching them.

The other girl rushed over to the men and whispered: "She is crazy, just as I feared. I thought at first she might possibly be another of those newspaper women who have pestered me to death ever since I landed. Please get her out as quietly as possible, and don't make it necessary for me to appear. The poor girl seems to be a lady. Learn her name, and take her home, if you can. I'll be in my apartments if you need me."

They bowed with great deference, and the woman left the room.

Eugenia had overheard a little, however, and understood. She was to be arrested as an insane person

Half fainting, she dropped into a chair. The detective approached her quietly, and said: "Miss, I'm sorry to disturb you, but you seem to be unwell. Won't you let me see you to your carriage and have you taken home?"

"It's all a mistake," cried Eugenia hysterically. "I'm no more crazy than you are."

This statement and the manner of its expression only further convinced the astute officers.

"Just give me your name and address, miss," interposed he of the uniform. "I'll see that you get home all right."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Eugenia. "I'll go to the police station first before I'll have my people mixed up in this."

The men looked helpless for a moment. Then the uniformed man, being the more callous of the two, said:

"Just come with me, then. Put your veil down, if you wish, in case anybody knows you around here."

Mechanically, Eugenia obeyed. Her one earnest desire now was to avoid publicity.

At the entrance she refused to call her carriage, so the house detective considerately called a public conveyance, the policeman mounted the box with the driver, and Eugenia, fortunately heavily veiled, started off on her first experience as a prisoner, the center of many curious gazes and speculations.

At the station she persistently refused to give the matron her name, so she was finally sent to Bellevue, to be examined as to her sanity. And by this time she had grave doubts of it herself.

There, late that evening, her father found her. The coachman, after waiting three hours for her, inquired in the hotel. Not learning of her whereabouts, he decided that his mistress had gone away, perhaps with one of her friends, and forgot to tell him. So he went home.

When Eugenia did not return in the evening, he was cross-examined by her parents. They called up the St. Regis, and the clerk at once suspected that he had a clue to the identity of the insane girl. He told the anxious father the circumstances, refusing, of course, the name of the other lady in question, and assuring him that the affair had been kept from the papers.

V.

So, at midnight, Eugenia rode home, weeping on her father's shoulder. The family doctor assured them that she was not insane, but merely on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and warned them that the cause must be removed as soon as possible.

Eugenia's mother gently drew from her the cause of the trouble, and the next day a conference with Ernest followed.

The father and mother were more puzzled than ever, the mother inclined to blame Ernest, and the father convinced that his daughter was "a jealous little fool!"

Eugenia refused to see her lover. And there things stood for three days.

Toward noon of the fourth day Mr. Glover and Ernest appeared at the house together, glee and amusement apparent on both their faces. Ernest waited in the library while Mr. Glover found his wife.

"Read that and show it to Eugenia, please," he said, handing her a clipping from one of the yellow morning papers.

The mother read it through in profound surprise while her husband watched her triumphantly.

"Ernest is down-stairs and wants to see Eugenia as soon as she reads it," he said, and went back to his office apparently content.

Mrs. Glover found her daughter again by the window of the boudoir. She gave her the clipping without comment, and left her to read it alone.

This was the head that caught Eugenia's eye:

YOUNG DUCHESS
SUES PHOTOGRAPHER

The opening paragraph ran:

The beautiful young Duchess of Manxbury, who is in this city with the duke on their wedding-tour, has brought suit against Tracy, the Fifth Avenue photographer, alleging that either by mistake or intentionally he allowed one photograph of her, from a lot she had made there recently, to get into the hands of a stranger, thereby causing her much annoyance. Early this week the duchess was attacked at the St. Regis, where she is stopping, by an insane girl, whose name is not given, but who is said to be well known in society. She was under the delusion that the duchess was trying to alienate the affections of a young man, also well known in society, who is engaged to the unfortunate girl. The girl declared to the duchess that one of the latter's photographs was in the young man's possession. The duchess, investigating the next day an unopened package of photographs from the Tracy galleries, found the package one short of the right number. Tracy admits that a mistake must have been made, but cannot trace the missing picture. All efforts to learn the names of the other persons concerned have failed.

The article went on to describe the girl duchess and her romantic marriage. Eugenia read every word of it with growing interest, then unfolded the clipping. On the other half of it was the picture of that other girl.

A few minutes later Eugenia looked up from the protecting shoulder of the happy Ernest, and, twinkling humorously through her tears, whispered:

"Isn't it lucky, Erny, they didn't send your picture to the duke?"

THE GREEN SUN.

By CHARLES CAREY.

The herculean task one man set himself, inspired by love and the astounding outcome of success.

SCHLUSKY KATZ rose to his feet, carefully dusting the knees of his trousers and rearranging his tie, which had slipped its moorings under the fervor of his pleading.

"As I understand it, then, Genevieve," he said hoarsely, "you refuse me merely on account of my unfortunate name. My wealth, my abilities, my stainless character, even the love which you profess to bear me, cannot overcome that single handicap?"

"Yes," she answered sadly, "it is the truth. I recognize the force of all you urge, and, as you say, I am very fond of you; but I cannot accept such a name.

"Mrs. Schlusky Katz!" she repeated with a shudder. "No, no; it is too much to ask of any woman. Why, just think," with a delicate blush, "if we should have any children, they would be known as the *Kittens!* Can you not," eagerly, "oh, my darling, will you not change it for my sake?"

Schlusky Katz bowed his head in his hands and trembled under stress of the terrible temptation; but his fortitude emerged unscathed.

"Impossible!" he groaned, striding up and down the floor in his agitation. "Impossible, Genevieve! I gave an oath to my father upon his death-bed that nothing — no hope nor fear, no favor or reward—would ever induce me to alter by a single letter the ancient patronymic of our race. I cannot forswear myself upon that solemn vow even to win you."

"Then," she said low but firmly, "all is over between us. You would better go now, and perhaps it were well that we did not see each other again."

"No, no," he protested. "I cannot give you up. You are all the world to me, the center and circumference of all my hopes and dreams—of my very life itself! Better, indeed, to die than to drag on a weary existence without you.

Is there no hope, Genevieve? May it not be possible that you will change your mind?"

She shook her head, and although her expression was regretful, he could see that her decision was as unalterable as his own.

For a moment he faltered before the evident inflexibility of her resolve, and half turned to go; then with the tenacity of a lover returned to the charge.

"There must be some way," he insisted; "some way of surmounting this absurd barrier between us. Let me think."

He thrust his fingers through his raven hair, and scowled at the carpet in the frenzied effort to evolve a solution to their problem; but none came. At last Genevieve, growing weary of his continued abstraction, covered a yawn with her pretty fingers and gently intimated that he might as well give over the hopeless task.

But Schlusky Katz had just then received his inspiration, and sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing with excitement.

"Ha!" he cried. "Suppose, my Genevieve, I should do some great thing, some mighty undertaking which would give me undying fame, and lead all men to pay homage to the name you so cordially detest. Would you then decline to accept it?"

"No," she admitted hesitatingly, after a moment's thought. "Tshaikowsky and Tolstoy both of them sound like sneezes, and Roosevelt, so far as that goes, is no very pretty name; yet no woman would refuse to bear them. I suppose even Katz might be so gilded by achievement as to be endured.

"But how will you accomplish such renown?" and a note of deprecation stole into her voice. "You are no poet, artist, or musician, Schlusky, with a message from heaven to mankind; you are no actor or preacher; no inventor or scientist even; there is no war wherein you might win glory by land or sea. How, then, do you expect to enroll the name of Katz among the stars?"

Her skeptic attitude, however, was not able to dash his enthusiasm.

"How?" he repeated scornfully. "That is a mere detail to which I have not yet given thought. Sufficient for me to know that the doing of it will give me you. Do you think I can fail when such a prize as that awaits the success of my endeavors?"

He spoke with such genuine rapture and such positive assurance that she was quite carried away, and almost told him that she was ready to abjure her determination and take him now, so that they might climb together to the dizzy heights of his aspiration.

Then she happened to think that perhaps he might need the stimulus of striving for a certain goal in order to call forth his best efforts, and she remained discreetly silent.

She could not help, however, showing her admiration, and even permitted him the unusual favor of kissing her hand.

"Oh, my knight!" she cried glowingly. "My gallant champion! I, too, feel that you cannot fail. See"—she took a knot of emerald ribbon from her shoulder and pinned it to his lapel—"I give you my colors. This will be to you a sure guerdon of success!

"I think, though," she added prudently, "it might be wise for us not to see each other again until your purpose is attained, dear Schlusky. You will need singleness of aim and unflagging perseverance to gain your victory, and to be with me would only disturb and unsettle your thoughts.

"Besides," with coy confession, "I dare not trust myself. I might in an unguarded moment yield to your persuasion and marry you, only later on to regret my weakness. No, my love, go forth and fight the battle alone, unhampered by a woman's timid fears, feeling only that the best of me—my hopes and prayers—go with you."

She again gave him her hand to kiss, and Schlusky, although at first inclined to look a little dubious, was so uplifted by this mark of confidence that in the end he agreed to her stipulation. It would only be a month or so, anyway, he told himself, before he should have the right to her continual society; for surely that was ample allowance, considering his incentive.

"'One day with heart and soul,'"—he quoted Emerson—"'is more than time enough to find a world;'" and walked home upon air, seeing himself already the husband of Genevieve,

and the name of Katz written high among those of the immortals.

But when he had reached his chamber, and had sat himself down deliberately to plan out the nature of his campaign for fame, the first flush of his elation faded, and he began to feel that it might not be so easy a business, after all.

He did not want to wait until he was ninety and toothless before he should lead Genevieve to the altar.

Then he thought of some of the "Young Napoleons of Finance" of whom he had heard; but he had never had any "head for figures," leaving all the details of the business bequeathed to him by his father to managers and agents, and, anyhow, the careers of the "Young Napoleons" aforesaid did not especially appeal to him.

Similarly, a life of crime, although affording undeniable opportunities for *éclat,* was firmly put aside. The contingencies were too unpleasant for sober consideration.

Apparently, this left only a military or naval rôle, or an essay into statecraft as remaining avenues to distinction, and it was undoubtedly true that many a neophyte had gained meteoric success in those fields; but one could hardly achieve prestige in arms, as Genevieve had pointed out, when there was no war or likelihood of war, and as for politics, Schlusky, on the strength of his money, had once been nominated for Assemblyman, only to be disgracefully beaten at the polls.

The very thought of that experience with the associations it had imposed upon him, and the derision which his unfortunate name had aroused, was sufficient to sicken him from any fresh attempt along that line.

No, he decided, his ascent to the heights must be with a single leap and solely by his own efforts, not by relying on the rotten prop of popular favor, which might at any moment give way and send him tumbling headlong.

"If I could only make some great discovery," he told himself, "like Archimedes in the bath-tub, or Newton with his apple, the job would be done. And why shouldn't I, too? Those ideas come to one like a flash."

Indeed, it seemed to him that the ingenuity which had found a way to overcome Genevieve's stubborn prejudice must certainly be competent to unlock any of the sealed riddles of the universe; and hope, therefore, once more gladdened his soul.

With radium and the X-rays done for, the list of possibilities was about exhausted; and he really grew quite angry at the Curies and that German chemist—he never could remember that name—who had so inconsiderately forestalled him.

He decided that he would give over any further consideration of his problem for the present and go to bed.

Before he retired, though, he unpinned the bow of emerald ribbon which Genevieve had fastened to his lapel, and carefully placed it beside his head upon the pillow, so that it should be the first thing to greet his waking glance, and thus inspire him with renewed zeal for the coming day.

When Schlusky again opened his eyes, therefore, the ribbon intervened between him and the light; and the sun, which by this time had risen high in the heavens, appeared through it like a great blazing emerald.

"That's funny," commented the observer drowsily, "the sun looks green."

Then, as a recollection of his predicament surged back upon him, he murmured: "Jove, if it only was so! That would be a discovery worth while, to show the people of the world that their sun was really green when all these years they have been calling it red and yellow."

He lay there a moment, amusedly pondering the odd conceit; then, struck by a sudden idea, scrambled out of bed and stood upon one leg like an excited stork in pajamas.

"Why might I not do it?" He repeated the question which had suggested itself to him. "Pshaw, because it isn't so. It only looks that way to me when I peer at it through the ribbon, and I can't go around tying up everybody's head in a green veil.

"Still"—some fragments of his studies in psychology at college returning to him—"if I could only delude them into the belief that it was so, their own eyes

would serve as green veils, and the result would be the same. I would be hailed as the discoverer of a great natural phenomenon.

"By the great horn-spoon," exclaimed Schlusky Katz, "I am going to try it!"

He sat down at once and wrote a note to Genevieve, telling her that fame's tail-feathers were within his grasp, and that he would probably be around the following Wednesday night to claim his reward; then he dressed himself and started out to make a tour of the newspaper offices and haunts of the publicity promoters.

That night every evening journal in New York bore across the top of its front page a single line:

"THE SUN IS GREEN!"

The next day all the morning papers followed suit, and before a week was out the press of the entire world—dailies, weeklies, semiweeklies, monthlies, and occasionals — was carrying the same striking declaration.

From Paris to Peoria, and from Hong-Kong to Wadi-Halfa, it was blazoned forth in every language and in every sort of type which the ingenuity of man has been able to fashion.

Not only that, but by a hundred other methods of announcement was the statement disseminated.

Broadway flared with garish-green electric signs proclaiming it; banners supported by kites spread it across the face of the sky; every outgoing or incoming steamship and every railroad train or trolley-car heralded it; and wherever one went, he was sure to meet either on fence-post, or mountain rock, or barn roof, or city pavement, the striking legend.

At first it was supposed to be some novel advertising scheme, and those who were not directly benefited financially let it severely alone; but when it was discovered that the wealthy Schlusky Katz was doing it not to extol the merits of some new soap or *risqué* piece of fiction, but merely to affirm a profound conviction, it was joyously seized upon and exploited.

The cartoonists and humorists, as one of them comprehensively expressed it, made hay while the green sun shone; no vaudeville performance or musical comedy failed to give it frequent reference; and in every parlor in the country phonographs vibrated to the airy strains of that catchy melody, "The Olive in the Sky."

Nor was that the worst phase of his propaganda to its unhappy apostle; for by this time Schlusky had begun to learn the woes of those who set themselves against humanity's accepted traditions. After the humorists, came the cranks and the moralists to make his life a burden.

Anonymous letters arrived, threatening him with all sorts of dire penalties, scented letters besieging him with offers of marriage, typewritten letters from advertising bureaus and managers of museums, letters from his friends appealing to him to drop his silly doctrine, grave letters of reproof from people he had never heard of before.

Then the heavy-weights took a turn at him. He was promoted from the news and humorous columns to the editorial page, and was discussed in grave leaders as one of the astounding developments of the American craze for notoriety.

The pulpit thundered against him, and the dry-as-dust reviews questioned learnedly, as to just what sort of a fakir he was.

Finally, his relatives, dropping their attitude held hitherto that this was only the eccentricity of a rich young man, had him dragged into court to inquire concerning his sanity, and a bitter legal battle ensued which served even more effectually than the signs and banners and broadsheets to advertise Schlusky's contention that the sun was green.

In the end, it was held that although the greenness of the sun was manifestly a delusion, it was not one which lay within the scope of a lunacy inquest, else, as the learned counsel for the defense had pointed out, every color-blind person in the country might be confined in an asylum; and the evening papers, publishing this decision under the head-lines, "Court Declares That Schlusky Katz Is Not Insane In Calling the Sun Green," many people were led thereby to believe that Schlusky's contention had been judicially upheld.

Hither and thither was the proposition tossed about on the throes of a world-

wide controversy. Friends of a lifetime fought bitterly upon opposing sides, households were divided against themselves, and brother was turned against brother.

The scientific men, however, still held rigidly aloof, and although admitting that there might be a slight greenish tinge to the sunlight owing to an excess of chlorin in the atmosphere, still, there could be no question but that the sun itself, both in hue and composition, remained unchanged.

Yet, one by one, there were defections in the ranks even here.

A professor from some little fresh-water college in Iowa, lost his position for too boldly espousing the Katzian claim, and a Harvard chemist published several articles in the magazines to prove that there was no valid reason why the sun should not be green as well as any other color.

The great bulk of their confrères, though, called these "lewd fellows of the baser sort," and continued to scoff at the popular belief.

That is, they scoffed until one day Sir Theodore Fake, President of the Royal Society, convulsed the world by conclusively demonstrating that the sun was not only green now, but always had been so, and then, with almost ridiculous haste, the cohorts of science crowded into the band-wagon.

Rabidly as they had previously protested that the sun was not green and never could become so, these men of telescope and test-tube now insisted that the best scientific opinion had always leaned toward a verdant luminary, and that modern methods of observation had only served to confirm a theory which had been cherished by the elect from the time of Copernicus down.

In short, Schlusky's contention had passed through the three stages which John Stuart Mill says every great movement must experience: ridicule, discussion, adoption.

Humanity, when confronted by a novel proposition, says of it, first, that none but a fool could believe such rot; second, that there may possibly be something in it; third, that it is so and they have always known it.

The greenness of the sun was now as generally accepted as the law of gravitation or the rule of three. About the only man left beneath its rays to doubt the proposition, even in his inmost heart, was Schlusky Katz himself. He had carried out his purpose, and by the force of reiterated suggestion green-veiled a world.

But it had been no holiday undertaking. He smiled now when he thought how light-heartedly he had written to Genevieve that he would probably come around to claim his reward on the following Wednesday evening.

Ten years and more had passed away since that morning when he had first gained his inspiration by peeping at old Sol through the colors she had given him. The bow of emerald ribbon was faded now to an almost indistinguishable hue—as faded as Schlusky's eyes and the thin hair about his temples.

Nor were these the only results accruing to him from the long struggle. The millions which had come down to him from the Katz device for buttoning waists in the back were all gone, dissipated in the protracted campaign for publicity and in the effort to keep himself out of a padded cell.

He himself was prematurely old, broken in health, a cynic and a misanthrope. Indeed, the only healthy or wholesome impulse left to him was his love for Genevieve, and that blossomed fresh as ever in his heart like some sturdy plant in the midst of an arid desert.

Yes, he was still loyally constant to her, although, true to his promise, he had not seen her for a decade, and although the correspondence between them had languished until it was now quite three years since a letter had been exchanged.

What would she care that he had lost his wealth, his digestion, and his hair? He could give her immortality.

Accordingly, when the day came at last that he felt justified in going to her, he furbished up his shabby clothes as best he might, and set forth with quite an old-time thrill at his withered heart.

Genevieve came down to meet him, and he thought, with a little pang, that the years had dealt more kindly with her than with him. She was as fresh and as blooming as when he had seen her last.

But she came forward with a slightly puzzled air.

"This is Mr.—er—?" she inquired.

"Katz," stammered Schlusky. "Your old suitor. Do you mean to say I have changed so much that you fail to recognize me, Genevieve?"

"Oh, Mr. Katz?" more graciously. "How stupid of me. Sit down, won't you? It has indeed been a long time since we met. And what have you been doing all this while?"

Schlusky could only stare at her.

"I have been achieving immortality," he managed to get out at last.

She smiled in a superior way.

"Ah, that is always interesting. And in what line, may I ask?"

Had she lost her senses or had he? He clawed at the air a moment.

"In what line?" wildly. "In what line? Why, Genevieve, don't you know that I am the man who proved that the sun is green?"

She looked a good deal startled, and half reached out to touch the bell close at her hand; but evidently deciding on a second glance at him that he was not dangerous, refrained.

"Ah, yes," she said soothingly, "I was reading an article about that in a magazine only to-day. But, tell me, Mr. Katz, what is the necessity of proving the fact? One has only to glance at the sky to see that it is so."

"But I am the man who made people see it," he insisted, "who turned it into a demonstrable fact."

"Oh, no, I think you are mistaken there," she contended politely, "this article—it is by Professor Riddleshanks, of Yale, and is, of course, authentic—says that, although the greenish tinge to the sun has always been perceptible, it was never understood until so lucidly explained by Weisenase, of Göttingen, last year."

She carelessly turned over the leaves.

"Oh, I see," she broke out impulsively, "you are the shallow American referred to here, who some years ago tried to achieve notoriety by spreading broadcast the assertion 'The Sun is Green,' and who, as it says here, might as well have declared that 'Fire Burns,' or 'Ice is Cold.'—Oh, forgive me," she checked herself contritely. "I did not think what I was reading."

"But it is a lie, Genevieve!" he burst forth hoarsely. "A wicked, malicious lie! I am the man who turned the sun green, and these Riddleshankses and Weisenases are trying to steal the credit from me. Have no fear, though, my darling; I can prove my claim, and you shall not be cheated of the immortality which will justly be yours as the wife of Katz."

"The wife of Katz!" She sprang to her feet and drew back from him in alarm. "What do you mean, man? I have no intention of becoming your wife."

"What!" He threw himself to the floor and groveled at her feet. "Genevieve, Genevieve, do not tell me that you, too, are false to me? Did you not promise that you would wait for me, and when I had achieved fame, would give me my reward? Did you not pin your colors on me and bid me go forth to the fight? Is my great achievement, my years of loyalty and devotion, to count for nothing?"

She drew her skirts gently out of his grasp, and a pained expression flitted across her face.

"Now that you speak of it, Mr. Katz," she said pityingly, "I do remember that there was some boy and girl affair between us; but I never dreamed that you had regarded me as pledged or had yourself been serving like a second Jacob for his Rachel."

"I have! I have!" he pleaded. "Oh, Genevieve, tell me that the old love is not dead; that we may still be happy?"

"Impossible," she said firmly.

She hesitated a moment, then confessed shyly: "To tell you the truth, Mr. Katz, I am to be married next week."

"To be married?" he gasped. "Who is the man?"

"Mr. Dink Dubbs, the butcher," she answered without a quiver. "I can't say that I really loved him at first; but he has such a masterful way that I really couldn't resist him."

Schlusky Katz was unable to speak. He could only grab his hat and tear from the house.

And as he came out into the light of day, the houses, and the street, and the hansom cabs and the automobiles, and the people, and all the world looked green to his jaundiced eye; and so did the sun riding high in the heavens.

At last, he was himself convinced.

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Edward Howard made the *first American watch*—changed the methods and revolutionized the watch industry of the world. Foreign watches are made today with *American tools*, invented by Howard in 1842.

Years ago, it was the thing for each fashionable jeweler to recommend a special watch of his own (*usually made for him in Switzerland*). To-day when a jeweler talks his own "special watch" you suspect a special reason for his doing so.

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C8

ROSY CHEEKS not Rouge-y Cheeks

There are three kinds of "beauty." There is the prettiness of the young girl—which is like that of the wildflower. There is the beauty of the matron—which is like that of the cultivated rose. And there is the sham "beauty" of the made-up woman, which is like the artificial flower on her hat.

The first is purely natural, spontaneous beauty, which is bestowed—and taken away—as nature may fancy. It is fleeting at the best.

The second is natural beauty, too, but it is natural beauty retained and maintained by aid and care. This is the beauty that lasts.

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C 16

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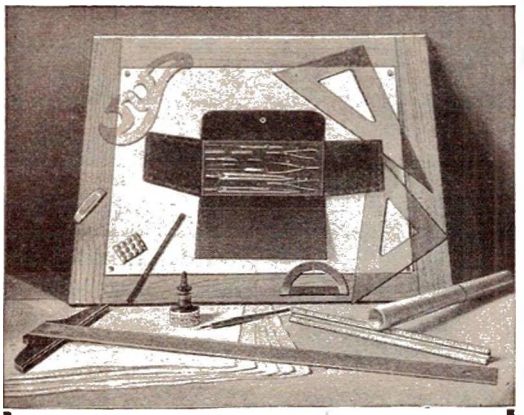
G12

214

C15

318

C1



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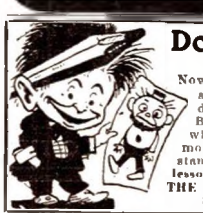

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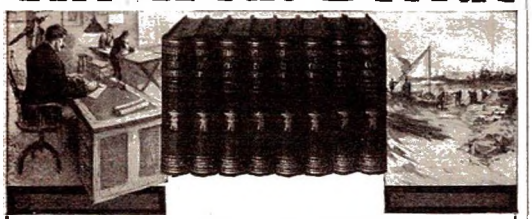

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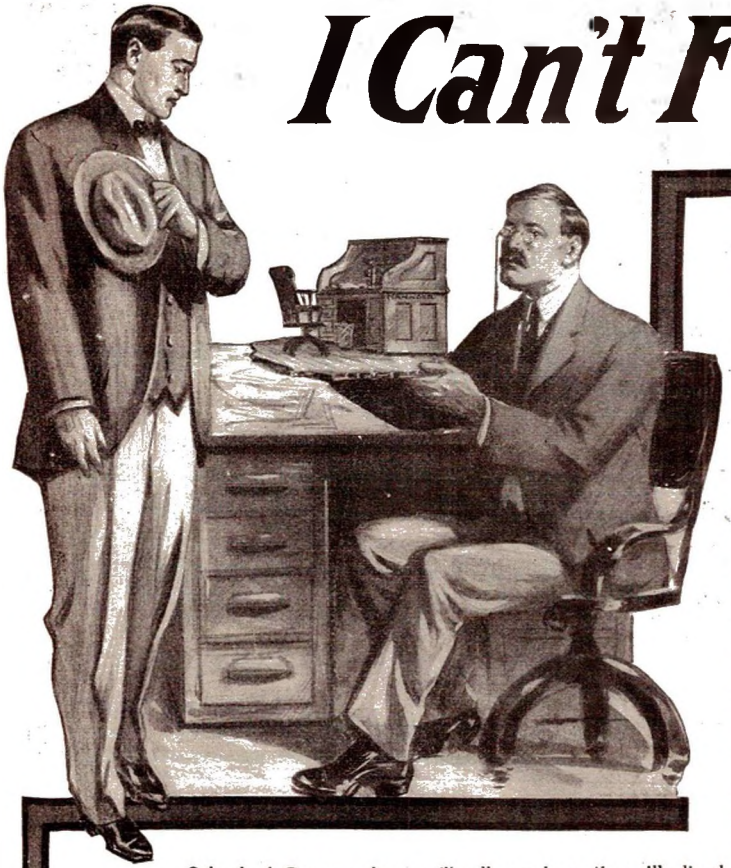
No Letter Necessary Coupon will do

C21.

C22

I Can't Fill It



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Name _____

Address _____

Occupation _____

C26

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Consequently every bottle of this renowned tonic represents in a highly concentrated form the vital swelling forces of nature hidden in the living heart of barley. It intensifies all the creative mental powers, prevents the onset of disease and brings happiness, health and new vigor to all those who are weak, worn or melancholic. Physicians urge it as the best reconstructive known for nursing mothers. Order of your Druggist or Grocer this very day.

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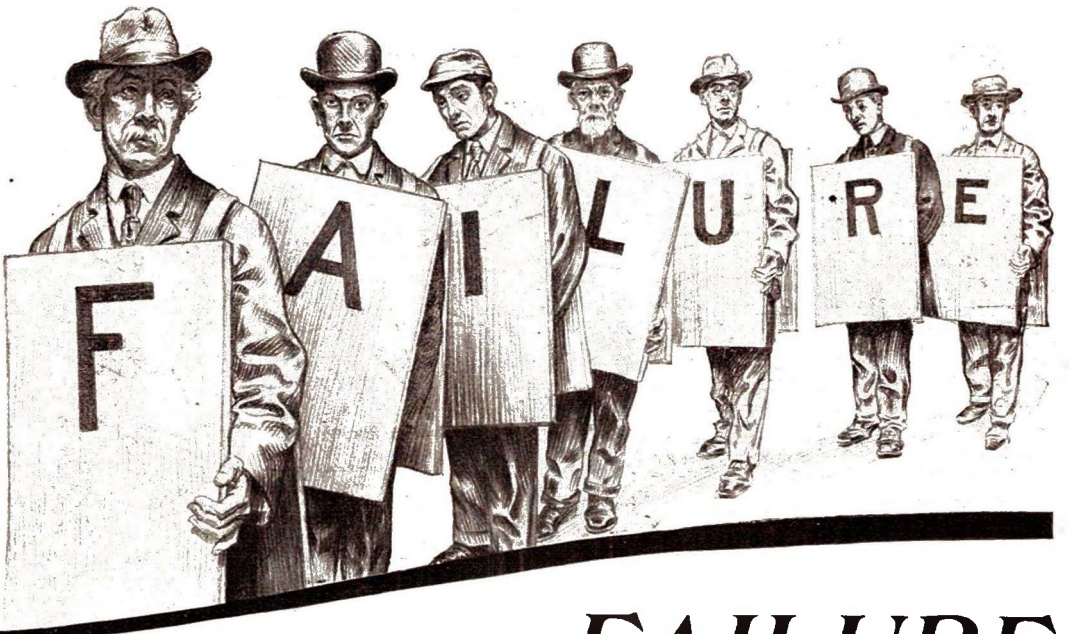

FAILURE

See them—the ***FAILURES*** and the ***SUCCESSES***—the ***untrained*** and the ***trained*** men—the "couldn't-do-it" and the "***can***-do-it" men. Be a Success. It's easier than being a Failure. It's all a matter of ***training***—of being a specialist in your chosen line of work. To learn how you can secure the training that will make you successful, mark the attached coupon and mail it to the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton. Finding out costs you only a two cent stamp, and places you under no obligation. Mark the coupon.

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M. W. Darby, Cherry Cotton Mills, Florence, Ala.

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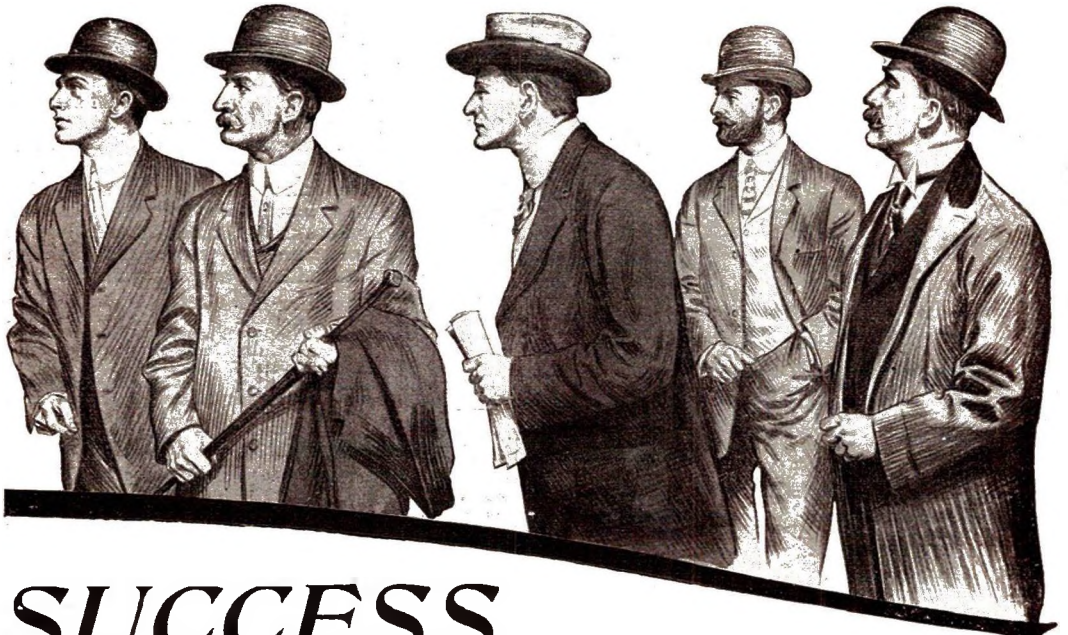
Alfred Thomas, 255 Sunset Ave., Utica, N. Y.

When working as a cash boy in a dry goods store I enrolled for an I. C. S. Course. I heartily recommend your system of instruction. From my own personal experience I can say that it will be of great advantage to any young man who wishes to rise in his profession. I am now a Bridge Draftsman in the office of the State Engineer and my income has been increased 150 per cent. since enrolling.
Edw. G. Semon, 478 Elk St., Albany, N. Y.

When employed as a clerk in a railroad office at a salary of $65 per month, I took out my I. C. S. Course. I advanced to a position as Manager of the Portland Retail Lumber Company and my

Mark the

C28



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WON SUCCESS

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As a result of my I. C. S. Course I have changed from the work of a farmer to a position as Draftsman at double my former salary. Before I enrolled I knew practically nothing about Mechanical Drawing, but I have now undertaken and successfully completed some very difficult work in this line to the perfect satisfaction of my employer. Albert S. Cole, 14 S. Maple Ave., East Orange, N. J.

When I enrolled with the I. C. S. I was working as a helper in a machine shop at $1.50 per day. I am now Superintendent of the Municipal Lighting Plant in the city of Marquette and have, of course, very greatly increased my earnings. I consider that I owe nearly all my success to the information I have received from your Schools.
Chas. Retallic, Marquette, Mich.

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Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
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Name_____

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C29

30

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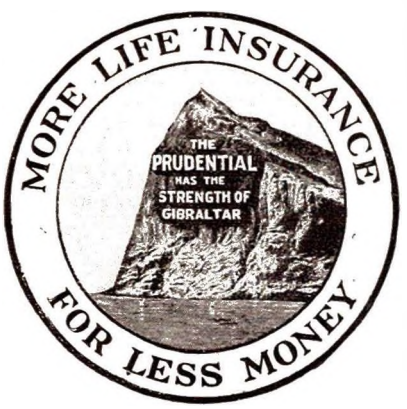

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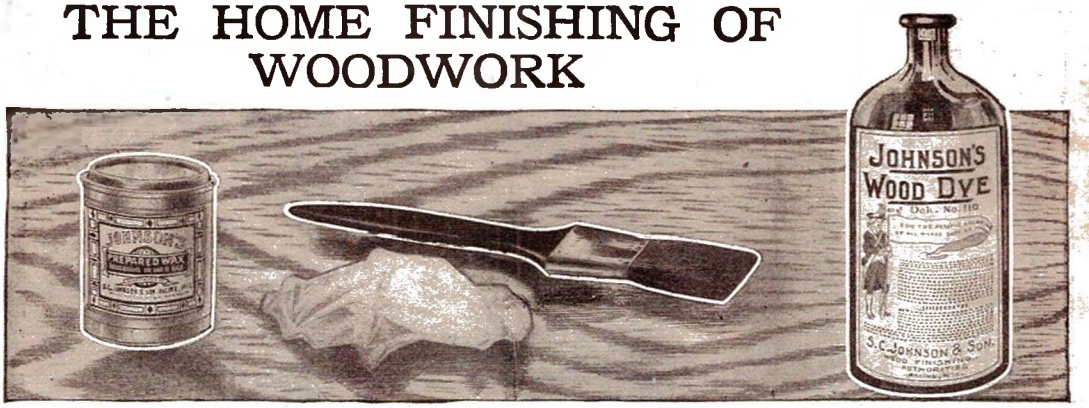

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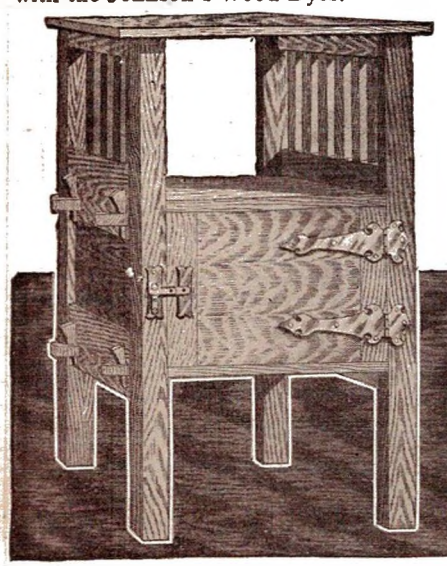

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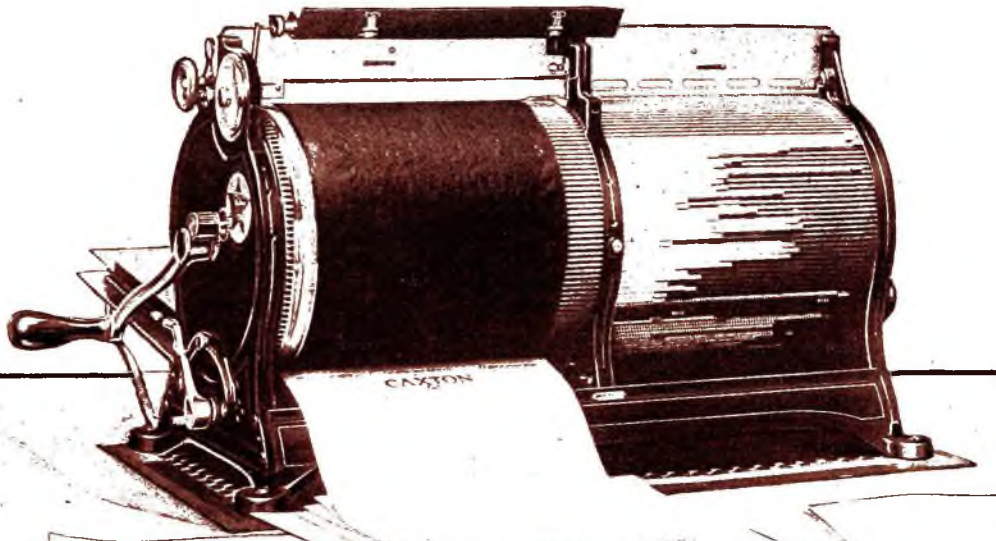

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