PRICE 15 CENTS

FEBRUARY 1917

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Always the Best Writers

"Bills Payable" by Gilbert Parker

"Ransom" by the author of "LOOT"

A New Story Of "Tarzan of the Apes"

"Jill o' the Moon" a book-length novel by HARRY IRVING GREENE

14 Other Features

$100.00 EARNED BY YOUNG ARTIST IN 2 DAYS

Conscientious,
careful training by members
of our Faculty made this possible.

Earn $25, $35, $50, $75 a Week and More

A well-executed drawing of strong appeal in a magazine or catalogue often sells thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise. That's why the business and publishing world **pays big prices for good designs and forceful illustrations.** That's also why artists with trained ability such as Franklin Booth, Coles Phillips, Leyendecker, James Montgomery Flagg, Fanny Steadman, and others **earn extraordinary incomes.**

Federal Course Nine-Tenths Experience, One-Tenth Theory

Our copyrighted method of home instruction is a proven result-getter. It is fascinating, easy to learn and easy to apply. **It fits you to earn money.** It is the concentrated experience of well-known, successful commercial artists and advertising experts.

Federal Training Pays!

Walter M. Stickney says: "Before completing my Federal Course I secured my present position on the staff of artists with the Chicago Tribune. **I am positive I secured same through what the School has done for me.**"

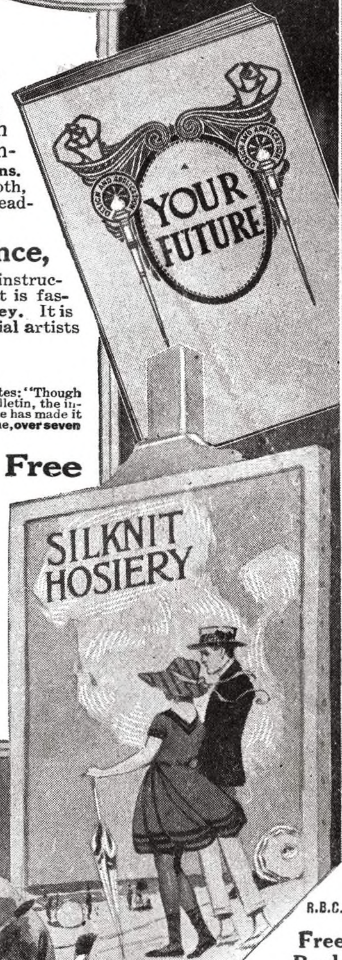
Minot J. Baldwin, Abingdon, Ill., writes: "Though I have completed only the Third Bulletin, the instruction and help you have given me has made it possible for me to earn up to this time, **over seven times the cost of the course.**"

Write Today for "Your Future" Free

This book explains the wonderful opportunities those with training can grasp; tells of the splendid successes Federal Students everywhere are making. It shows how easily you can devote spare time you may now be wasting, to develop a high-salaried ability.

Every young man and woman should read it before deciding on their life work. Parents should read it with the future of their children in mind. **Are you living toward a future—or just living?** Start today toward a brighter future—a more successful life. Send for this book. Mail the coupon NOW.

Federal School of Commercial Designing, Inc.
710 Warner Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.



R.B.C.

Free Book Coupon

Federal School of
Commercial Designing, Inc.
710 Warner Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

Please send me free book "Your Future," also your portfolio of Commercial Illustrations.

Name...................................
(Write your address in margin)

THE BLUE BOOK

RAY LONG, Editor.

Copyrighted, 1917, by The Story-Press Corporation.
Copyrighted, 1917, by The Story-Press Corporation, in Great Britain and the Colonies.

COVER DESIGN: Painted by B. LICHTMAN

Thirteen Stories You Will Like

Bills Payable. By Gilbert Parker 721

A masterpiece of keenly dramatic short-story writing, by the famous author of "The Right of Way," "The Seats of the Mighty" and "The World for Sale."

The Sporting Chance at Shannon. By Kennett Harris 732

Pinkie, the irrepressible salesman of the Pomona products, gets involved in a love-affair, a poker-game, a business crisis and sundry other excitements.

The New Stories of Tarzan. By Edgar Rice Burroughs 744

"The Witch-Doctor Seeks Vengeance" is the title of this vivid narrative of tumultuous life in the dark African jungle.

Special at Twenty-Two Fifty. By Royal Brown 754

The love-story of a down-and-out and a salesgirl; you'll find their emotions and encounters not less exciting than those of Milord and Milady.

The Luck of the *Lucy Lermond*. By Newell O. Morse 780

Ships and the sea, the men who traffic on the waters, and a woman who ventured among them at a critical time—these go to make up a most thrilling story.

Reel Graft. By Ellis Parker Butler 793

That genial old scoundrel *Jabez Bunker* uses a photoplay film to engineer a delicate and characteristic little piece of villainy.

Home to the Hills. By Hapsburg Liebe 802

The men and women of the Southern mountains people this striking story with most human and individual characters.

His Own Man. By Winona Godfrey 811

His employer "had his goat;" then along came the woman who taught him to call his soul his own and to win his own way.

THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION, Publisher, North American Bldg., CHICAGO
LOUIS ECKSTEIN, President CHARLES M. RICHTER, Business Manager

RALPH K. STRASSMAN, Advertising Manager, 1172 Fifth Avenue Bldg., New York
R. M. PURVES, New England Representative, 201 Devonshire St., Boston LONDON OFFICES, 5 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C.
Entered as second-class matter July 24, 1906, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1917

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor.

HEADINGS: Drawn by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

A Little Touch of Pride. By Charles Wesley Sanders 845

Old John Barleycorn got him for a while, but he had the pride and stamina to fight back against a difficult enemy and win.

The Fatal Hour. By Michael White 858

An American runs into an exciting situation in India: one of Michael White's most unusual and interesting stories.

A Verdict for the Plaintiff. By John Barton Oxford 868

The old man tries to buy off his son's latest lady-entanglement, but when he finds she's a real woman, he changes his mind.

Old King Coal. By Robert J. Casey 873

A business war, a mysterious coal-briquet factory and—a surprising dénouement: Mr. Casey has done excellent work in this engrossing story.

Free Lances in Diplomacy. By Clarence Herbert New 885

"The Last Laugh" describes a colossal plot to blow up English munitions-factories and the fashion in which it was frustrated by *Lady Nan.*

Two Remarkable Serials

Ransom! By Arthur Somers Roche 762

In the third installment, this alluring mystery-story by the author of "Loot" comes to some of its most exciting episodes.

Vagabonds of Chance. By George Washington Ogden 818

This second of the four generous installments into which we have divided this epic of the Oklahoma land-rush contains chapters memorable indeed.

A Complete Novel

Jill-o'-the-Moon. By Harry Irving Greene 898

The absorbing life- and love-story of a man born with the bar-sinister—a story told with exceptional power, grace and sympathy.

TERMS: $1.50 a year in advance; 15 cents a number. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publishers. Remittances must be made by Post-Office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter, or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check or draft, because of the exchange charges against the latter. Foreign postage $1.00 additional. Canadian postage 50 cents.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe to THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through agents unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date, and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands, or on railway trains, a notification to the Publishers will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.

Bessie R. Hoover

Who Wrote "The Joy-Garden"

HEADLINERS FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE

"For the Sake of the Children" **By Peter B. Kyne**

One of the inimitable Peter B. Kyne's most fascinating stories—and it's about one of the most attractive heroes the author of "A Man's Man" and the *Cappy Ricks* stories ever created: *Tib Tinker.*

"The Fixing Kid" **By Walter Jones**

The versatile Walter Jones has opened up another bonanza vein. This is a darky story, and we think you'll agree that it's one of the funniest ever.

A "New Story of Tarzan" **By Edgar Rice Burroughs**

Mr. Burroughs' unique character moves through some especially thrilling jungle-adventures in this latest story. You will find a half-hour with Tarzan most refreshing.

"The Joy-Garden" **By Bessie R. Hoover**

A complete book-length novel by the author of "Pa Flickinger's Folks" and those delightful BLUE BOOK stories of the *Peebles* family which were so popular.

"Ransom!" **By Arthur Somers Roche**

The most vital episodes of this remarkable mystery-novel by the author of the famous "Loot" will be described in this installment: be sure to read it.

And—

"Vagabonds of Chance," by George Washington Ogden, a new *Jabez Bunker* story by Ellis Parker Butler, and a new *Free Lance* story by Clarence Herbert New, and other striking stories by such writers as James Francis Dwyer, Charles Wesley Sanders, Robert J. Casey, and the like.

The Most and Best Fiction Always Appears in

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The March issue will be on sale at all news-stands February 1st.

February 1917

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XXIV No. 4

A masterpiece of story-writing: Gilbert Parker's short stories appear only in THE BLUE BOOK this year.

BILLS PAYABLE

by GILBERT PARKER

ASKATOON was in a ferment. Ten miles away from it a man, Michele Bordinot, had been brought home with an ugly wound, got in a quarrel on the river many miles north, and he had at last died under the care of the Young Doctor—who, though forty-seven years of age, was still called by the name given him when he first went to town twenty years before. The Young Doctor had no hope of the case from the first day, and frankly said so; but he gave all his skill and care as faithfully as though the man had every chance to live. At first he even went so far as to hide the stern truth from Bordinot's daughter Julie; then he gradually prepared her for the bad news.

After this first visit, in which he was more concerned for the man's well-being than for the incident which had brought him where he was, he said to Patsy Kernaghan, who was a kind of maid-of-all-work at Askatoon:

"A bad business, Patsy—a scurvy, dirty business; I hope they get the man that did it."

"Do you know how it happened, Doctor dear?" asked Patsy, "—the whole story from A to Z?"

"No, I don't—do you?"

"I h'ard it from the police while you was gone to Bordinot's. It's a nasty story, Y'r Anner—as nasty as the West has ever had to deal with in anny winter or summer since the Injuns left it to us white men. Ye see, it was like this: There was quarreling all the way from Bashton's Boom down the Rirock River where Bordinot was done in; anny quarreling on the river is bad, but

when it's betune English and French, it's ten times worse.

"Well, Bordinot's French, and he'd been nursing his hatred, not making a fuss from first to last. But Wybert Grieve, who done the thing, was on the bust as hard as man could be. It might ha' been Kilkenny! He shoved up ag'in' Bordinot; and when Bordinot got mad, Grieve whipped out his knife and give him no show—just laid in for all he was worth. Bordinot hadn't no chance at all. He wasn't quick enough with his own knife, and that's what done for him—for otherwise he'd have wiped the floor with two Wybert Grieves, and not done anything unusual. Then the English lot broke away southeast, and Bordinot's friends brought him home, and you was sent for."

"That's the story, is it?" said the Young Doctor. "Well, it has some nasty sides to it. What do the police say about catching Grieve? Have they got track of him?"

"No. He took to the woods soon after the killing, and they aint got wind of him, I'm told. But they'll get him—get him all right, Doctor dear. I'm sure o' that—sure as if I had his hiding-place in me mind's eye. It does a lot o' harm, these bad things done by the British. . . . . There's Bordinot's daughter—a fine girl—I know her. It'll have hit her plumb in the eye—hasn't it, then?"

"Yes, she's hit hard, Patsy! She don't know the worst yet, but he can't last more than five or six days, and she's got to be told. She's the only one of the family—never had any brothers or sisters, and the mother's dead and gone. Yes, it's rough on her, Patsy; and I don't see what can be done to help her."

"Well, she'll have the farm and all that's in it and on it, Y'r Anner. She'll be a catch for some one."

"Why, it isn't much of a place," remarked the Young Doctor. "It can't be, or Bordinot wouldn't have been working on the river. He couldn't have been very solid on the farm, Patsy."

"Well, he only worked on the river in the fall, after his crops was in—not so much off a hundred acres, Y'r Anner. And he was a foreman on the river at four dollars a day. That helped to pay for the farm. Three months—ninety days—at four dollars a day; that's three hundred and sixty dollars, and the farm only cost a thousand."

"What do you think the farm's worth now, Patsy?"

"That place? Oh, about four thousand dollars, house, land and cattle. Julie can't fly about on that, but it's better than nothing, and it'll draw a good lot of eyes to her. If I was younger—"

The Young Doctor sniffed. "Patsy, you're a bold buccaneer, but you go too far. If you'd been all you think you are, you'd have been married years ago—women aint so scarce that you'd have had to go grazing alone in the world-pasture."

"Aw, I'm not like Y'r Anner, I know—only a kind of roustabout, with no looks or reputation, and no gifts for recipes or nursing. No, I'm not like Y'r Anner."

The Young Doctor laughed softly now. "Patsy," said he, "you've got as much insolence in you as any man in all the West, but you must be borne, for you're not all bad. Maybe you'd like to go out to Bordinot's with me. You've got some useful ways, and you might be needed. Get ready if you'd like to come."

Patsy's face lighted. "Like to come—ah, Y'r Anner, I'd give a great lot, annyhow, to drive with you! You've got ways of talking like none other; and besides, it's safe going with you. If I fell down a ditch or bumped ag'in' a timber, there you'd be, and I'd be safe. Besides, if the man's going to die, I'd like to be there for the measurin' and embalmin', if there's goin' to be embalmin'. He was well built, was Bordinot. He'd make a good layin'-out an' no mistake."

TWO months later, and over seven weeks after Bordinot had been "measured and embalmed" and buried, a man, Dudy Massaw, was chopping trees on the Sing Song River in good spirits and great heart. He had had a useful and momentous day, and it was drawing to a close. He was a new-

comer in the Askatoon district, and he was clearing a space for building a house on his new farm. It was wooded prairie-land which he had bought of the Government, and he had the deeds safely filed and the land all paid for. Only the morning of the day before, he had bade good-by to a wayfarer who had spent the night at his camp—a man whom he did not like, and concerning whom, from the first, he had had doubts and misgivings. Yet it was a country where everyone who traveled had a right of way, a place in every house and at every table, no questions asked and no demands made; and so the man had gone on his way with his tarpaulin-pack on his shoulders, but leaving behind, by accident, a letter with his name on it,—Wybert Grieve,—and Dudy Massaw had found it. After some twists of conscience, some compunctions and remorseful hesitations, Massaw had read the letter; and he had learned from it that the man who had lost it was wanted for the murder of Michele Bordinot, who lived only three miles away from himself through the wood.

He—Dudy Massaw—had heard of the killing of Michele Bordinot, and after finding the letter, he wondered what he ought to do—go to the police, or to Bordinot's place and tell his daughter. At last he decided that he must find the police and give the information he had, that the man who killed Michele Bordinot had been that day almost within a stone's throw of his victim's home. He decided that he would go to the police the first thing in the morning. Meanwhile he must finish the chopping, cook his supper and go to bed in the tent.

It had been a cold, clear April day, and the sky was bathed in a flood of color from the sinking sun. He was near the end of his long day's job. A big spruce-tree was lodged on the top of two others, and in trying to "butt off" the partly fallen tree, and bring it down, it fell suddenly. He was caught beneath a huge mass of timber, one leg being broken. It was pinned to the ground beneath the tree as in a vice. He had lost consciousness when the thing occurred, and remained lying still and lifeless in the spruce-woods until the stars showed in bright glimmer through the branches. Then, numbed with the cold and faint with pain and loss of blood, he came back to consciousness.

In his cramped position he knew that he would soon freeze, and he made a desperate struggle for life and freedom against his stern fate. He was able to reach his ax, and with his pocket-knife he cut off the helve midway, so that he could use it while sitting almost under the log. With the energy of despair he began cutting through the spruce log—two feet in diameter—to free himself. Only a trained and skillful chopper could have done it, but before the dipper sank out of sight behind the tree-tops, showing that midnight had come, the tree was cut in two; with all his remaining strength Dudy rolled the short butt-log away and was free.

MASSAW'S legs were numb and useless as sticks of wood, and the right one, which had been pinned beneath the tree, was not only broken below the knee, but partly frozen, the blood having ceased to flow from the lacerated flesh. Yet Dudy set out on the pathway which led to Bordinot's house, where he could get help and send for a doctor. Dragging his mangled leg like a log behind him, he crawled over the frosty ground, and with an undaunted courage and hope, suffering agonies every foot of the way he covered.

Again and again he dropped his head on the ground in his pain and trouble, and all his life seemed sinking out of him like water from a pail—an eternal wastage. Yet he held himself firmly and kept on. He had no dread of death, and yet he wanted to live. He had lived so little in all his life, in a sense, and he wanted to begin existence in this wonderful open land, where all the stored energy of the world seemed to be. He had come from a big farm in the East, a farm that belonged to his father, but on which there was only living for one family—not for two; and he meant that there should be a family of his own when he saw a girl of the right sort. Youth, the strength of

youth, and the glow of good blood were strong in him, and he had taken three thousand dollars—all he had, and well earned—and had come West and bought the land which he was trying to clear for his homestead.

As he strained and dragged himself on, it was with the protest of youth against untoward fate. Why should he be sacrificed by the result of a mistake! Now and again he stopped and broke the ice at the side of the path and drank the water beneath, and it gave him new life and strength, though it was agony even to swallow, and his hands were bruised from dragging himself along; for it was impossible to do aught else than pull his weight over the ground foot by foot for over two miles and three-quarters. Then, at last, with the sun well up, he made his miserable way into the open prairie, and saw in the near distance—that is, within a quarter-mile—Bordinot's house, back from the road.

He dragged himself on with fast-glazing eyes, but his strength was failing rapidly, and it seemed to him that he could not endure much longer. Yet he kept his eyes on Bordinot's house—his dimmed, clouded eyes, in which there was only a last flicker of life and a stark look of purpose.

"I must do it, with drums beating!" he said gallantly; yet the vexed distortion of his lips, after saying the words, gave little assurance of the truth of the hope. Food—he had had none since the day before at noon, and yet he had no craving. Drink was all he longed for, and drink he could have by breaking the ice at the side of the path and lapping the water from the little pools. But now he went on with a punishing, agonizing slowness, and he had no strength to call aloud, no voice with which to complain or call. It was a sad, unbearable business, and suddenly all his strength seemed to collapse, and he felt himself sinking gradually into unconsciousness. But before he collapsed, he saw a woman leave the house of Bordinot, and with a last excruciating effort, he drew all his strength to his lips and called—a stark, poignant, despairing call, as of one who made a last summons of life and time.

PERHAPS the woman—Julie Bordinot—heard. At any rate, she put her hat on her head and strode away toward where Dudy Massaw lay unconscious in the path. Her footsteps were quick; her walking was like that of one who knew that there was work for her to do. Yet in truth she had heard nothing, actually. At first she had only felt that she must walk away from the house where her dead father had lived, for it was as though his spirit called to her. Some call she heard, even if it was not the voice of Dudy Massaw. She kept straight on, as though drawn by irresistible influence to the spot where the battered man lay. Her mind was full of her own troubles and sorrows, for many things had harried her since Michele Bordinot's death, and every hour had its call and its duty. She felt sorely the need of her father, of the strange man who had been like a wall of stone against any trouble attacking her, while he was alive.

And now she was alone; and she would have been completely helpless, if it had not been for the Young Doctor, who steadfastly advised her, though she only saw him now and then. Yet he had said she must go to him when she was in perplexity, and she had gone to him twice, and come away stronger and better for the talk. Still, she could not tell him all her troubles—how the need of a man to manage the farm and protect her was ever with her!

She walked quickly, and she kept her head up, for she had too much responsibility to permit a gloom which would weigh down her body or lower her eyes. She had a nature that instinctively looked up; and now, as she walked, she raised her head and drew in the fresh, strong air with eager lungs. She had had hard days since her father died. She had, that very morning, used firm, strong words to her men-helpers, and sent them away with a sting in her words; for they were inclined to play the tyrant over her, if it could be done, and she promptly and decisively acted. There was no one in the house now except an oldish, fat woman-servant, who was very good to her and gave her much help by the fresh and fond nature of her talk. She had come to de-

pend greatly on the woman for inspiration to do her work without whining, and she had counseled with the woman-servant that very morning about the men—to advantage; for Deborah had said:

"Be a man in dealing with men, Miss, or they'll have you under their thumbs for the rest of their days. Stop their mouths, if you've got to."

Julie had followed the advice; the men had taken the dressing-down without resentment and had gone toward Askatoon to complete some arrangements with a neighboring farmer. There were no men at the moment in the house or on the place. It was, therefore, with a shock of anxiety that she saw, lying on the ground, the shattered body of Dudy Massaw. She dropped on her knees beside it.

"Oh, poor fellow—poor man!" she said, and put her hand on his heart. Then she felt his pulse. "Thank God, he is alive!" she added. "But little more. He's been terribly hurt."

She saw the crumpled leg and felt it; she looked at the lacerated hands and the haggard face, and then turned, and putting up her hands to her mouth, called loudly, through them, to Deborah at the house. Three times she called, and the call was a little like the *coo-ee* of the Australian, but even more searching and reaching, and presently she saw the woman appear in the doorway. She beckoned for Deborah, and presently Deborah came running hard, and with an air which seemed to say: "I know there's trouble where you are, but I'm comin'—I'm comin'."

IN a few minutes Deborah reached the spot where Julie was, and found her trying to restore consciousness to the poor shattered fellow by chafing his hands, by lifting his head, by calling to him. To no purpose, for Dudy Massaw was in the last stages of beaten effort.

"Oh, he's been hurt by the trees!" exclaimed Deborah. "He's a stranger. Poor man! He looks as if he'd seen death a hundred times."

"Well, we must carry him to the house," said Julie, "and then you'll go for the doctor—to Askatoon. It's the only way. He can't go on as he is, or he'll be a dead man before noon. Be careful, now."

For some moments they crawled forward without speaking, and then Deborah said:

"He'll need lots of care. He may have come miles like this."

"He'll have all he can do to get well," said Julie. "I'd like to put him to bed in a hospital, but that can't be, and—"

"There's your father's room, and his bed. It's all ready made, and if you'd like—"

"Yes, it's the only place for him, and I'd like to think that it'd be used for the first time after, by one that's been hurt like this poor fellow."

ANOTHER quarter of an hour, and Dudy Massaw was laid on the bed in Michele Bordinot's room, and Deborah was sent to hitch up a horse and buggy and go for the Young Doctor at Askatoon. Dudy Massaw was still insensible, and no effort at resuscitation had any effect. His teeth were set; his body was cold; his broken and lacerated leg was bleeding slightly. Carefully and gently Julie took off his boots, and from the injured leg she removed the stocking with care, not folding up but cutting up the trouser, so that the leg, bare to the knee, showed sickly and sad in the light of morning.

No feelings of false delicacy stirred in Julie's mind. Here was a man in acute suffering and trouble, and he must be attended to. She would do it, and not Deborah, who was single like herself and only a little older—yet no older in all that makes a woman helpful on the earth or entitled to heaven. She heard the rattle of the wheels over which Deborah was hastening for the Young Doctor; and then her heart sank in spite of herself, for the man on the bed might die at any moment, and she be here alone with him. In any case, she would be left alone with him for two and a half hours, for it would take that time, at least, for the Young Doctor to arrive. To be alone with a young man, sick or well, for that time was, in the eyes of the world, a scandalous thing for a young woman. She knew what the wrinkled sisters of the town

of Askatoon would say, if they knew. But she shook such feelings from her mind, and gave herself to restoring consciousness to the battered body before her. Without avail. Yet she had been able to increase the stroke of the pulse by forcing between the teeth some brandy—a very little, yet sufficient to increase the impulses of the heart and the nerves. The eyes, however, would not open, and no chafing of the hands or rubbing of the face or breast—for she opened his shirt and massaged his chest—would bring any change in his condition. She had no compunction in chafing his breast, for all the conditions were such as to make her action sacred. It was her own father's room and bed, and every moment this man stayed here was part of family history, in a way. Soon it became acute family history, for, anxious to know who the man was, she felt in the pocket of the coat for something which could tell her, and she drew out a letter addressed to Wybert Grieve!

With a cry of horror she dropped the envelope on the bed beside the body.

Wybert Grieve—that was the name of the man who had killed her father—the man for whom the police were searching, for whom the law was waiting. Wybert Grieve! Of all names on earth, it was the name most detestable to herself. It had pursued her in her dreams at night, and shocked the air around her senses by day. But wait; perhaps there were two men of the same name? So she opened the letter and began to read it. One glance showed her that it was the real man who had killed her father, who made her an orphan—a fragment of nature from which the soul had been stripped, leaving her, as it were, naked in the place of torment. And here was the murderer lying broken on her father's bed, being cared for by her father's daughter!

It sent her back from the bed with horror; it drained the strength of her body and gripped her very soul with a cold and cruel hand. She sank upon a bunk against the wall, her eyes fastened on the man with malediction in her heart, and at her tongue. Her first impulse was to seize a knife and drive it into the man's heart; but that passed, and she asked herself what she was to do.

There was one thing she could do—which she must do: she must leave the man alone and not try to bring him back to life, not try to restore him. Then there was the Young Doctor. When he came, he could deal with the situation with skill and judgment. Meanwhile, the man was on her father's bed—the man who killed her father was lying on his bed—carried there by her own hands! The thought of it made her tremble with disgust. She had been the agent of evil, the author of her own shame. She had thrown contaminating things on her father's tomb, had polluted the memory of her mother. She had done it, of course, innocently; yet she had done it; and there it was—the contamination on the bed where her dear father's body had lain in life and death.

Thank God, her mother had never lain there! That, at any rate, could not be charged against her. It had been pure bad luck. She had not been a willing agent in this infamous thing. The man ought to be hanged; yet in the passion of her horror and shock something still spoke for him. Her hands had rubbed his legs and his chest; she had felt the cold touch of his body and it had not repelled her. She had spoken kind words to him, and there had been no stark reaction in her mind or heart—no natural instinctive reaction. Surely, if the man had killed her father, she should have felt horror when she touched him. Instead of that, she had felt an infinite pity for him and had prayed God to bring him back to consciousness. She wished to see the color of his eyes—the eyes of the man who had killed her father with a knife on the Rirock River so short a time ago—only eight weeks ago.

SHE got up from the bunk where she sat and went toward the bed slowly, timorously, yet with a great, agonizing rage in her heart. The man had killed her father, and he was lying on the bed where her father had suffered and died. He must not stay there. It was no place for such a man. He must be

moved—where? Oh, any place, any place! He must not be let stay where he now was. As she approached the bed, however, a strange and terrible weakness took possession of her. She could not have lifted a cat from the floor. And the man was, even haggard and insensible, full of handsomeness. Was she mad? Yes, as she looked at him, the sense of his handsomeness came home to her with force. He may have been a murderer, but he was surely handsome, and had the flesh of a man who was no murderer, but a clean-living being. And he was dying —on her father's bed!

Dying on her father's bed! Suddenly a storm of feeling shook her. If the man was really dying, and she raised no hand to help him, she would be revenging her father by causing the man's death, not on the gallows, but here. . . . . Dying—if that was so, what should she do? He was a fellow human being; he had had an accident and been smashed. God had done that to him; and the law, if, and when, it took him, would do more. What, then, should she do—take out of God's hands and the law's hands their rights and duties? When a man was in prison condemned to death, what did the warders do—what did they do if the man was taken ill? Why, they waited on the man, tended him, assuaged his illness, made him fit again and strong enough to be hanged.

If one of the warders was a relative of the convict, what would he do? Her thoughts were like lightning-flashes in her mind. What would the warder-relative do? Well, if it chanced that way, he would say: "The man belongs to the law, and the law must deal with him. For me, I must do my duty as a human being and save the man for the law if I can." Well, here was a man at death's door, who had killed her father, and he was broken like a stick and could not escape. He was there alone with her on the bed of the man he had killed. What, then, should she do, the daughter of the man who had been killed? What should she do?

The man on the bed moaned slightly, and that instant and incident decided her. She raised his head on her arm, and she thought it strange that in spite of all the mental condemnation she felt, no physical repulsion came to her. Surely there was no such thing as natural hatred—natural and justified hatred! Somehow, she could not feel that the man was repulsive to her. She even forced some more brandy between his closed teeth, not now so tightly clenched. She had even a thrill of pity when the poor creature moaned again.

"Open your eyes and look me in the face," she said, with anguished sharpness; but he made no sign that he understood. Yet the warmth of her clasp seemed to do him good, and his head was resting on her bosom. She laid him down again and worked a little with the broken leg, trying, as it seemed, to set it, and she stanched the blood from the bruise and wound which the sharp wood had made.

TWO hours later the Young Doctor examined the still unconscious man. "It's a bad case," he said when he had finished. "He's had a hard time—leg smashed by a falling tree. I wonder who he is."

To this Julie made no reply. She had not the courage to tell the Young Doctor what she knew.

A little later, with the help of a student he had brought with him, the Young Doctor set the broken leg; then he carefully put the man to bed, wearing one of Michele Bordinot's nightshirts, but still unconscious and with some fever.

"As fine a carcass as I've ever seen," was his comment on his patient. "But he's in a bad way, and he'll need a lot of care—that's sure. It's lucky, in a way, though: for Julie is upset, and the care of him may just be what she needs. I must get him back to sensibility, though. He mustn't go on as he is."

Therefore he injected a preparation in Dudy Massaw's shoulder, forced some brandy between his teeth and chafed his hands, as Julie had done. At length the man opened his eyes. The look in them was wild. It had the vague gleam of the irresponsible.

"That's bad," said the Young Doctor, "very bad. How are you feeling?" he asked. Then he added: "Tell me,

what's your name. I'm the doctor. What's your name?"

The reply was a jumble of inconsequent sounds—broken sentences, detached phrases, unkempt rhetoric, appeals to some higher power, adjurations to the tree which had been his undoing, anguished references to his terrible journey in the night.

The Young Doctor saw that there was nothing to be gained by questioning, but presently he was startled by hearing the name of Wybert Grieve spluttered through the disorganized speech, and he looked down at the sick man with sharp inquiry. Wybert Grieve, he knew, was the name of the man who had killed Michele Bordinot—and what did it mean? Was this man—

He gave Dudy some quieting drink, and when the eyes closed again he took from the pocket of Massaw's coat on the chair the letter with Wybert Grieve's name on it.

"Great God!" he said. "And here in this house and in this bed—and in Michele Bordinot's nightshirt! But no, it isn't possible. It can't be." He turned to the student. "Do you know who this is?" he asked, jerking a finger to the bed. The student shook his head in negation. "Well, it's Wybert Grieve, the man who killed Michele Bordinot!"

He looked to see a shocked expression come to the student's face, but none came—only a startled protest came instead.

"Oh, no, it isn't!" said the student. "It certainly isn't Wybert Grieve. I saw the picture of Grieve in *The Winnipeg Free Press,* and it was nothing like this man. This man has an honest, commonplace face and figure—a gentleman's turnout; and Wybert Grieve had a face like what he was, gnarled and stormy and reckless. He was a regular dead-beat, was Wybert Grieve. This man's a prize—an honest pioneer, if ever there was one."

"Yes, that's his appearance," said the Young Doctor, "and I'd have taken my oath on his honesty from his face, but the only letter in his pocket is one addressed to Wybert Grieve. What's the difference in the faces, if you've seen the real picture of Wybert Grieve? Is it the beard, or the eyes, or the forehead, or the hair?"

"Neither—it's the nose. Wybert Grieve had a nose like an ancient Roman, all curve and crook—a regular stone-breaker; and this man's nose is like a piece of beautiful marble cut out to a Greek pattern."

"Well, I'm very glad to hear it. It'd be a bad thing if the girl Julie was housing in her father's bed the man that killed her father!"

TEN minutes later he stood in the dining-room beside Julie, and under the sharp inquiry of Julie's eyes.

"Who is he?" Julie asked. "Did consciousness come back?"

The Young Doctor shook his head in negation. "He had a letter in his pocket with a name on it, but my assistant says it isn't right, that the man on the bed isn't the man whose name was on the envelope."

"Isn't Wybert Grieve!" the girl said, "—isn't Wybert Grieve!" Her face became deadly pale. The flush that had been there for three hours had gone, leaving her like a garden-flower which lightning had flayed—a blighted shrub. Then she sank into the chair beside him with a helpless gesture. "I'm so glad," she cried. "I saw the letter, and I thought—"

"Good God, you saw that letter, and you believed it was Wybert Grieve, and yet—"

"Yes—what else could I do?"

A look of wonder, a comprehending wonder, came into the Young Doctor's face. "You did that, believing—"

"What was there to do—let him die?"

"Some women would have done so," answered the doctor bluntly. "I shouldn't like to have been tempted so—as you were. You have the courage of the saints, and you here all alone with the man—here alone for two hours and a half! I know how you loved your father, and I can guess what all this must have cost you."

"No, not even you could guess," the girl answered, "and that's saying much," she added admiringly, but with her eyes full of tears and her hands trembling in her lap.

"He is almost conscious now," the Young Doctor said. "And you can find out from him who he really is. I'll come to-morrow, and I'll send you a nurse this afternoon, so you can get some sleep to-night. Meanwhile, I'll leave my student-friend here. If you don't mind feeding him, you'll find him a great help."

The girl gratefully acknowledged the kindness, and said: "My men will be back this evening, and one of them can help, but I'll be glad of your assistant meanwhile. I'll find out the sick man's name—just who he is—when he's back to normal again. I'm glad he's not Grieve, and yet I didn't know—how could I know!"

"You've suffered enough in those hours to be a punishment for all your life's wrong-doing, however long your life may be," remarked the Young Doctor.

"I did what I felt I had to," remarked Julie.

A few moments later the Young Doctor, in his buggy behind his roans, said: "Perhaps he may be unmarried, too; and she's going to nurse him back to health—I guess!"

He added the last words rather hesitatingly, for he was not wholly sure that Dudy Massaw would live. Massaw had suffered greatly, and his lungs were affected—whether temporarily or not he was not sure. Pneumonia might set in.

"Never mind—the girl will profit by it. It will call her out of herself. It will be her salvation, no doubt. It will take her mind off her own tragedy."

That was what he said to himself.

NEXT day Julie stood beside the bed of Dudy Massaw, well-controlled and glad to see that the sick man's eyes had a light of wise consciousness.

"I'm glad you're better," she said bravely. "I'm very glad."

"How long have I been here?" he asked eagerly—more eagerly than his condition warranted.

"Only one day," was the reply.

"How did I get here?" he asked.

"I brought you—Deborah and I," she answered. Then she told him what had happened from the time she saw him first. "I couldn't send word to your friends," she said. "I didn't know your name."

"There was a letter in my pocket," he answered astutely, and he eyed her closely.

"But not addressed to you," she replied.

"How did you know that?" he asked.

"I didn't know it—not at first."

"And yet you took care of me—nursed me!"

"You were there before me with broken leg and at your last gasp," she answered, sighing.

"But Wybert Grieve killed your father, and at first—"

"Yes, at first I believed—"

His hands made a motion as though they would take her own, but abstained, and only his eyes showed what he felt.

"My name is Dudy Massaw," he said presently in a hushed sort of voice. "I have a new farm next to yours, and—"

"Yes, I know that now," she said.

"And I have no family. I am not married. I came out here to make a home. I have people in the East, but that's all. I'm a lone stranger, and as soon as I can, I must leave here where you've been so good to me."

"Where will you go?" she asked.

"There's places in Askatoon, I s'pose," he said.

"There's a hospital, of course, but you mustn't go to it."

"Why mustn't I? I'm a load on your kindness here."

"Not a heavy load," she answered; "but it is for the doctor to decide."

"Then I'll ask him," was the serious reply. "Ah!"

The exclamation was caused by a sharp pain that suddenly shot through his chest, and he coughed sharply. "That's bad," he said with anxiety. "That's hell."

"I'll fly-blister you," she said firmly. "It comes from your exposure last night."

She moved out of the room briskly. Her spirits were good, her temper sweet and sane. She was doing what would call her out of herself, what would take her mind off her own grief. The relief from knowing that he was not Wybert Grieve was immense—revealing and

comforting. She felt as though she had had a dose of some stimulating medicine. She sought the kitchen with shining eyes, and there she made the fly-blister ready. Like most farmer's houses on the prairie, Bordinot's house was equipped with such things as fly-blisters. With the blister she returned to Dudy Massaw, and found him suffering much.

"I'll send again for the Young Doctor, if you're not better this afternoon," she said.

"Oh, he'll be out in the morning, and I can stand it till then!" Dudy Massaw said.

TWO months later, in the month of June, the two had another talk. Dudy Massaw stood at the door of the house, near a horse saddled and ready for travel. He had had an hour alone with Julie, and suddenly, at the door, he turned to her again.

"No, I'm going to get that Wybert Grieve. He's the cause of trouble in your life, and I want to get him. He spent a night with me, as you know, and he left that letter behind by accident. I want to see him in the hands of the law. You wont take pay—wont take a cent for all the weeks I've spent in your house and eaten your food and played the sick zany; and I've got to pay it back in other ways. So I'm going to get Wybert Grieve for you, if I can. He's not beyond getting, I'll bet.

"But the police don't understand where to look for him. They think he's far away—east of Winnipeg, or like that. I don't. I think he's up in the country where he did his crime. I bet he's on the Riroch River somewhere camping and fishing—and killing things."

The girl had sense and feeling and good judgment. She wanted him to go. She had learned to care for him in the six weeks he had been in her care, but she felt that she wanted to be alone for a while before everything was settled. He had not asked her to be his wife, but he had said things which were as good as music to her soul. He had held her hand and had pressed it hard when he had thanked her for all she had done; and he had given Deborah and two of the hired men gifts of money for their care and attention. He had struck a note in her life that no one else had ever struck, and all his nature had thrilled at her words and at her touch. While he was dangerously ill, only pity and sympathy moved her, but as soon as he became better, every nerve in her body palpitated with a new feeling—a feeling she had never felt before in her life.

"I'll be glad if you get him," she said at last, and reached out and touched his shoulder with a faint smile. "It'll seem as if we'd done our duty, then. I don't know why the police haven't got him. They do get 'em in the end in this country," she added. "Yes, they do get 'em—I'll say that. But it's long waiting, sometimes—when it's one's own. It isn't because I'm revengeful that I want him caught. It's deeper than that. So get him if you can, please—Dudy."

It was the first time she had ever called him by his Christian name, and his eyes lighted with young fires, but he made no sign of his pleasure. He felt that he must do this thing for her before he asked her to be his wife. It would be proof to her how much he cared. He could spend time and money that way, and so repay her, in a sense, for all she had done. He knew that people had gossiped, had shrugged their shoulders at his being in the house of Julie Bordinot,—he a young man and she a young woman,—but it was only the women who had gossiped, and he did not care, except for Julie's sake. He had asked to be removed to the hospital at Askatoon, but the Young Doctor would not consent, and he had stayed in the Bordinots' house, happier than he had ever been in his life, and suffering physically as he had never suffered. All that was over now, and he faced the open world with a strong heart and a high purpose. The day was perfect—a day of early June, when all the world seemed good and glad, when the air was ringing with life and buoyant with vigor.

"Well, good-by," he said, with a note of friendly regard. "I'll get him if he's to be found. He aint so very far away, I'll bet on that. I'm goin' first to the Break Me Easy Hotel. He's got some

friends there, and he'll have left his address with some one there. They're a bad crowd at that place, and he'll have 'em tight. They'll stand by him, through thick and thin. Yes, I'm goin' there."

A MOMENT later he was cantering away, not toward Askatoon, but toward the back-country, where he meant to look for Wybert Grieve in his river- and wood-haunts. He took the view that a man of Grieve's type was always the victim of habit of mind and body, that he would frequent only paths that he had always known, that he would keep away from towns and villages and that he would not go to "the States." Massaw was sure of his psychology of the man, and he acted accordingly—and wisely. At the end of the second day he came to the Break Me Easy place, and there he learned—after two days—that Wybert Grieve had been in the district within the week, that he had gone "nor'west."

He found that out by astute means from an old groom and horse-cleaner. He spoke as though he knew that Wybert Grieve had been at the Break Me Easy, and said he had a letter for him from an old friend—one of the lot who were with him when Michele Bordinot was struck down. He showed the letter to the man, who saw that he had spoken the truth, and at once admitted the fact that Wybert Grieve had been lately to the Break Me Easy, and was now on the Sing Song River, farther west and north. He had been made to believe that the letter had been intercepted and opened, and that it had come into Dudy's hand by good chance.

With his newly got information Massaw made his way west and north. At the end of some days, after a hunt, he found his man in a camp on the Sing Song River. And after a surprise and a play of pistols, he brought down the murderer by a shot in the thigh which gave him no chance to escape, though Wybert Grieve tried to stab Massaw when the latter stooped to bind him.

"No, you don't, honey," said Dudy Massaw as he evaded the blade. "No, you don't, my man-killer. They'll cure you of that in the place where I'm takin' ye."

Then, with his man bound, Massaw carried him to the wagon which he had exchanged for his horse, and drove away south—none too soon, for Wybert Grieve's two friends, who camped with him, missing him, got on the track and rode many hours in chase—but without avail.

"I've got him safe and easy," said Dudy Massaw to himself; and he made his way to Askatoon, where he delivered his man into the hands of the sheriff and the Young Doctor.

"Now you're going out to Bordinot's place—eh?" the Young Doctor said when Wybert Grieve was safely housed in jail.

"Some such place," said Dudy Massaw with a quizzical smile.

"Good luck to you," said the Young Doctor.

"I'm hopin'," was the reply.

AT the door where he had bade good-by to Julie Bordinot a month before, Massaw saw her again and alone. She knew by the look in his face that he had been successful. It saddened and pleased her too.

"You've got him?" she said with assurance in her voice.

"He's in Askatoon with a bullet-wound," was the reply. "They'll hang him," he added firmly.

Her face clouded; her eyes closed for an instant. "It's horrible—oh, it is!"

"But he'll not spoil other homes," said Dudy Massaw.

"Is this one spoiled?" she asked.

"Not so spoiled that we can't restore it—you and me, Julie," he answered, and he held out his arms to her with a storm of love in his eyes. For one instant she hesitated; and then, with a little cry, she slid into his arms.

After a moment, when he raised her face from his breast to his lips, she said: "You've got all I can give, Dudy. I can't tell you—"

"There's naught to tell—I understand," he said. "I was alone and lonely too."

Another story by Gilbert Parker in our April issue—on sale March 1st.

By Kennett Harris

IT has been said of me, Pinkie, that for a successful salesman of high-class groceries, one from whom action and subsequent substantial results are to be expected, rather than philosophical speculation, I am of an unusually philosophical and speculative turn of mind. Those who have said this have said a mouthful! I am. By speculating philosophically, analytically and critically on causes I arrive at effects, and generally with both pedal extremities firmly implanted.

Still, there have been instances in my experience where cause and effect have been decidedly balled up. I have skidded into the destructive ditch on a perfectly plain and level road, at times, while—to shift my metaphoric gear—a vicious and malignant kick has occasionally impelled me to the exact and precise spot upon which I ardently desired to land. To a certain extent and in a manner of speaking, Mr. Parker H. Bonnithorne, sales-manager of the Pomona Pure Food Products Company, of Chicago, kicked me into the Tancred Buckman mix-up at Shannon.

I was just about to set out on my sixth trip and had been summoned to Mr. Bonnithorne's august presence, presumably for parting instructions. I found him in consultation with our credit-man, Bixby. I was about as passionately attached to Bixby as I was to Bonnithorne, by the way. He was a small-sized, slack-jowled, gimlet-eyed individual with a thin nose that was flattened at the end and twisted to the left as if some husky, righteous-minded citizen had recently biffed it. He and Bixby were brothers-in-law and kindred souls. They both looked at me in a particular way as I entered, and Bonnithorne spoke up at once, with what he intended for a smile.

"Mr. Pinkie," he said silkily, "I want you to attend to a little matter at Shannon while you are there. Mr. Bixby was intending to send a man from the office, but it occurred to me that you would be there anyway and that, by exercising your usual tact and good judgment, you would be more likely to succeed than an ordinary office-person. I have just mentioned to Mr. Bixby

that I have great confidence in your resourcefulness and energy."

OF course, I expressed my gratification at this well-deserved tribute and asked for further particulars. It seemed that one Tancred Buckman, a Shannon groceryman, had got his auger into Pomona to a perfectly scandalous amount. He had started in well, capitalized by a rich uncle, had done a remarkably good business and discounted his bills regularly; then he had begun to slump on the paying end, at the same time buying with the utmost liberality. Spargo, my predecessor on that particular route, had stilled the whisperings of alarm in Mr. Bixby's trusting bosom—up to a certain point; but eventually little old Mister Alarm slipped the gag and screamed like a siren—whereupon ball-bearing rollers were expeditiously adjusted to Spargo, and a swift shove sent him in search of a new job.

Very good! But firing Mr. Spargo didn't get beyond being a slight relief to Mr. Bixby's feelings. Late reports from Shannon were to the effect that the rich uncle had turned his back and removed his backing and, moreover, was trying to attach the store-fixtures. The stock was broken and wouldn't do Pomona much good. Buckman, it appeared, was still doing a small business and had nervily represented that he could do more if the house would extend his credit; but he was very vague on the subject of even a small payment on account.

"What would you like to have me do?" I asked.

Bixby answered as if I had been trying to take his bone away from him. "Collect the account," he said.

I smiled—just smiled.

Here Bonnithorne broke in. "You wouldn't lose anything by it," he said.

That remark irritated a large-sized and still sore spot in my memory. On a recent occasion Mr. Parker Highbinder Bonnithorne had promised me a ten-per-cent commission on an order that he was perfectly certain I couldn't get, and which I got. I was also to have a raise of salary. I got the raise, although it was not high enough to accelerate my heart-action; but regarding the commission, Mr. Bonnithorne explained that he had but jested and was disappointed to find me so lacking in a sense of humor as to take such an absurdity seriously.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bonnithorne," I told him, "but I've lost confidence in myself as a collector ever since I failed to get that Egbert Sprat commission, and so I think I'll stick to my speciality of selling."

He wanted to fire me and considered it. But he needed me. The outcome was in the nature of a compromise. He gave me an order on the cashier for that commission (I saw that the account was properly noted on the order) and I undertook to do what I could with Tancred Buckman. It seemed pretty certain that trouble for Bixby was brewing *in re* Buckman—serious trouble, or I wouldn't have got that hundred and forty-five commission. And they wouldn't send an office-person! Sure they wouldn't. And Bonnithorne knew that I would bring home the bacon! That touched my pride, and it was by pride that the angels fell, according to somebody. Well, it would be a pity if I couldn't get a little the better of a low-browed rural crook —I, Pinkie!

IT was a long, long way to Shannon, but I made it by easy stages, and business was good at every stage. I have a way of making business good, if I may be allowed to say so. Being well occupied, I was happy, although a little nervous whenever I thought of the wealth I had tucked away in my inner vest pocket. A hundred and forty-five dollars may not seem much to a person accustomed to hoarding, but I had hitherto spent as I earned, and I had resolved to turn over a new leaf with this velvet and had already added to it a fifty-dollar surplus from my salary. I figured that a person of my ability could do better working for himself than for a corporation, but I realized the necessity of capital to a beginning on my own. I was chuck full of ambitious dreams now, and the feel of that little wad gave them a touch of reality.

Two stations from Shannon, I was happily musing when I happened to look across the aisle, and straightway I forgot all ambitious dreams in an emotion of pure, unadulterated admiration. Brunette! I might say "a beeyoutiful brunette" and let it go at that, but you wouldn't get me. I should like to describe her eyes, anyway. A sort of an amethyst, I should say, in color, but amethysts vary—a violet amethyst with not much red in the composition, and with deep lights; long, thick, curling lashes to set them off, and— No, it can't be done! But with those eyes, the oval of her face, the texture of her skin and its tinting, the line of her neck—believe me, Roderigo, she was some man-killer! Understand me, though: she didn't sort of try. Modest as mignonette—you could see that—neat and natty, but not expensively got up.

I just got a glimpse of those gorgeous glims. I think the young woman had been contemplating me with a certain interest, and I don't think that any judge of a good-looking man would blame her; still, she didn't allow her pensive gaze to linger on me, but turned to the scenery from her window —and without biting her underlip to make it redder, which I have known ladies to do. The golden minutes flew— but nothing doing! Her handkerchief and a magazine remained in her lap. Not a glance! I might have been a hundred miles away. I don't deny that I was piqued, not to say peeved. "Pinkie, my boy," said I to myself, "there's some reason for this. Mark me, there's some reason."

There was. As I came to that conclusion, he came down the aisle. Some reason, all right! A six-footer, nicely built and wearing Anglo-American clothes, which, take it from me, are about the right kind. He was a young man and had the appearance of being younger than he was, owing to the pleasantly innocent expression he wore. He sat down beside Miss Amethyst without the least hesitation, and she wasn't the least bit coy in her manner; but nevertheless I bore him no malice.

"B. and G.," I sighed.

That was my first guess. They talked together in very low tones but with great animation, and their eyes took a good part in the conversation, but I considered and changed my mind. Her outfit wasn't bridy—no part of it; and it didn't look like a stall. And what would they be doing on this old accommodation off the main line? Well, I gave it up, and as my seat was rather too near them, I gave that up too and went back to the smoker.

AS we pulled out of Trebizond I looked out of the window, and there was Miss Amethyst on the platform, alone and waving her hand— but not to me, alas!—to somebody on the train. Then a line of freight-cars intervened, and she was nothing but a beautiful memory. The next thing, my stalwart, curly-headed friend came into the smoker, looked at me as he was passing, stopped and took the turned-back seat opposite me.

"Fine, large day," he remarked with a friendly smile that showed even white teeth.

"Equally charming and capacious," I agreed. "Particularly for the time of year."

He grinned and taking a cigar-case that I wouldn't have minded owning myself from his pocket, offered it to me. I drew a dark *Londres* that looked like the real thing, and he took another and snapped a neat silver lighter.

"*That* is a good cigar," I said with fervent emphasis as I reluctantly let the first mouthful of smoke escape. "Vuelta Abajo, and the pick of the crop."

He looked pleased. "I was sure that you had good taste, from the moment I laid eyes on you," he observed. "I see you have *The Tribune*. Line fan?"

"You bet!" said I, and he solemnly shook hands with me.

"How do you like your lobsters served?" he went on to ask.

"In strict privacy," I replied, "with the shades drawn down and my shirt-sleeves rolled up. Broiled, *of* course, *and* hot, with unlimited drawn butter and tartar-sauce, a congenial compan-

ion, a combination salad, crusty bread and a cold bottle of lager."

"My more than brother!" he exclaimed. "And one question more before we swear an eternal friendship: if you had your choice between comparative wealth and superlative beauty, which would it be?"

I considered a moment. "If superlative beauty had amethyst eyes with jet trimmings, I'd take it—if I could get it—and think myself a lucky scoundrel."

This time, while he only nodded, he seemed to exude a cordial warmth, and we chinned about one thing and another like old friends until the train whistled for Shannon. "I get off here," he said, jumping up. "I wish you did too, but I'm going to see you again some time if you'll tell me where you hang out. Here's my card. Glad I didn't miss this half-hour."

I glanced at the card.

"We'll have another little session together before we part," I told him as I arose. "My name is Pinkie, representing the Pomona Pure Food Products Company of Chicago, and I've a little matter of business to talk over with you, Mr. Tancred Buckman."

NATURALLY the shock of surprise chased the color from Mr. Buckman's ruddy cheeks and he staggered back, a pallid, guilt-stricken wretch, detected at last. All right; have it your own way. But I'm stating facts, and the fact is that I was the surprised party, for he slapped me on the back with every appearance of satisfaction. "Fine!" he ejaculated; and then: "Your traps in the other car? Come along, then, old scout."

He got his own walrus bag and insisted on toting one of my grips. We got off, and he hustled me into the hotel 'bus and climbed in after me. "Stopping at the hotel myself," he said. "We'll have lunch together. Man! I wish it was lobster. One thing we've got, though, and that's a quiet room with heavy window-shades." He chuckled at this, but I didn't get the joke.

We had lunch together, and I noticed that the waiters moved around for Mr. Buckman. It was a pretty good lunch, and my friend seemed in high spirits and was entertainingly conversational. I wasn't. I was trying to size the gentleman up and struggling against my growing feeling of liking.

"Didn't suppose I was a grocer, eh?" he laughed. "Wait till you see my store. Yes, I come of a family of grocers, you might say. My uncle made his money in the business at Louisville, and my grandfather on my mother's side ran the first cash grocery in Balsover, Ohio. It's the only business. Look at Lipton; there's my idea of a grocer, a good sport and a money-maker. I'm going to be the Sir Tommy of these United States."

I told him that he might be a good sport, but I had my doubts about the other part.

"Pish, tush!" says he easily. "No trick at all to get money, once you get started. Finished? Then we'll go up to my room and smoke; then we'll go over to the store for a look-see, after which I want to take you for a little spin out into the country. How about it?"

"We'll discuss that little business-matter first, old top," I said. "Too bad! but it's got to be done."

We went up to his room, which, I believe, must have been the bridal-chamber, furnished and equipped a little nearer to the heart's desire of a single man. Here he at once busied himself hospitably and, the rites concluded, he settled back in his chair and told me to shoot.

I drew the deadly statement of his account from my bosom. "The question before the meeting," I said, "which, for your sake and mine, I hope will be answered satisfactorily, is: 'What are you going to do about it?' "

He looked at the statement curiously and then laughed. "We'll consider the business concluded," said he. "I'm going to pay it."

"Fine and dandy!" I remarked. "And when?"

"To-morrow morning," he replied coolly.

"Positively?"

"Do you know any one little thing positively," he asked me, "such as two

and two making four, and the majestic orb of day rising in the east? Well, it's surer than that. A pipe, a skinch, a moral, a dead open-and-shut proposition. See here: did you ever see a large, juicy melon cut by an expert hand? Sit up with me to-night, *amigo,* and you shall see not one but three of 'em delicately dissected."

MY heart, which had been beating high with hope, sank deeper than ever plummet sounded. "In the room with the heavy window-shades?" I inquired wearily.

"You've guessed it the very first time," he grinned. "Sharks! Wolves! Vultures! They began by skinning me; then they battened on my flesh; and to-night they calculate to pick my bones. But will they? Listen: they will not. I've been leading them on, letting them win while I studied their play, and now I'm ready for them. There will be bones gnawed to-night, but not my bones. There will be blood on somebody's jaws and a distension of somebody's stomach, but it will not be their jaws nor their stomachs. Pinkie, old scout, I'm in a carnivorous and relentless mood, and nothing will happen in that room but a killing."

"Leaving that interesting certainty for a moment—how long have you been gambling?" I asked coldly.

"Ever since the necessity of getting a little capital became evident to me," he answered. "If it hadn't been for that, I should have paid your bills as they fell due."

I said that I had surmised as much.

"But how was I to know your people were in such a sweat?" he went on plaintively. "Here was your man Spargo telling me not to inconvenience myself—and by the way, Mr. Spargo is some little long-fanged *lupus,* himself. I was hoping that he would be among those present at Armageddon, but I'll get him on his next trip."

"Mr. Spargo has been summarily bounced for taking your orders and making overoptimistic reports concerning your ability to liquidate," I informed him. "How about that avuncular relative of yours? I'm instructed to call on him."

"You might call," he grinned. "I'm forbidden to, but you could. I'm afraid I haven't made the situation clear, Pinkie. My uncle wishes me to wed an estimable young lady for whom I have no feeling but friendship. On the other hand he is opposed to my marriage with another lady for whom I entertain an unalterable affection. You might not think it, but I am a very firm and unyielding sort of person when I know that I am in the right. My uncle, between us, is mule-headed; moreover, he is passionate and plain-spoken. We actually have a lawsuit pending; still, I shall be able to settle that end of it to-morrow."

He looked so absurdly, idiotically sure of it that I had to laugh, although I felt sick. To see that big, lubberly, blue-eyed innocent sitting there and glowing at the lively prospect of settling a lawsuit or two and an impending bankruptcy with the proceeds of an unplayed poker-game would have set anybody between laughing and weeping.

"Tancred, my sapient sport," I said, "would you take a little plain talk from me? Very good, then. Your plan for getting even is highly original, but speaking plainly, inadvisable. In the first place it would take capital—a stake, in fact."

He went deep into his right-hand trousers pocket and produced a yellow, rubber-banded paper cylinder. "Borrowed it from a true friend," he said, returning it to his pocket, "but I'll pay it back to-morrow."

I proposed, as an amendment, that he should turn that wad over to me and, if it amounted to enough, which it seemed to, I would undertake to get him a little extension of credit. I suggested further that he should quit his foolishness, cut out all games of chance and hazard, and hustle for trade.

He twisted his little blond mustache thoughtfully for a moment or two. "Pinkie, you're a good fellow," he said, "and your advice sounds reasonable, but it really isn't. I'm going to land those buccaneers at Execution Dock to-night. No use arguing. I've not only made careful calculations, but I've got a hunch."

I SAW that argument was useless, and we broke up the session. I declined, for the present, his invitation to go to the store, and wended my way to the bank to have a little cozy talk with Mr. Herbert Plunket, the cashier. Mr. Plunket was a neat, youngish old person with a soft, cooing voice, a wide, mirthless smile and about two inches of black side-whisker, carefully trimmed. As to Mr. Buckman, Mr. Plunket admitted regretfully but frankly that he had not realized the—well the discouraging condition of Mr. Buckman's affairs. He had, perhaps, been too hopeful and had, possibly, allowed his optimism to color his communications to the Pomona people. At the same time, it would, even now, be too much to say that the account was absolutely hopeless. Mr. Buckman was a young man of a certain business ability, and in a way his store had been a success, and so it was not improbable that he might pull through if he were not unduly pressed.

"How does it happen that he's got himself into this sky-blue mess?" I inquired. "Any bad habits?"

"I have every reason to believe that his habits are good," says my low-voiced friend. "At the same time, Mr. Buckman has had an expensive college education, which may or may not be a good preparation for the grocery trade. Possibly he has been somewhat reckless in his personal expenditures. His uncle, Mr. Findlay, was his guardian during his minority, but there was a special and liberal allowance made by Mr. Buckman's father for the young man's education; also there was a nice little sum that came to our friend on his majority, but I regret to say that it lasted less than a year. Then Mr. Findlay stepped in, and the upshot was the grocery-store. I think if there had not been an unfortunate disagreement between the two, all might have been well; and as it is, the difference may possibly be adjusted."

"Nature of the difference?" I asked.

A tinge of pink appeared on each of Mr. Herbert Plunket's prominent cheek-bones, and his Adam's apple disappeared for an instant below the rim of his collar. At the same time, he bowed to a plump and pleasing young lady who had just entered the bank.

"I think that is about all the information I can give you, Mr. Pinkie," the cashier murmured hurriedly. "If you'll excuse me now—and any assistance we can give—" He broke off and hastened to the paying-teller's window. I noticed that the blonde lady who was waiting there gave him a particularly coquettish smile and dropped a bank-book on the slab. "I've lost confidence in you, Mr. Plunket," I heard her say, and then, after a sidelong glance at me, she lowered her voice—whereupon I departed, musing over Mr. Herbert Plunket, his pink cheek-bones, his smile and his tolerant ideas.

MY next call was on Tancred's uncle, whom I found in a large, weather-beaten, spired, domed and pinnacled house, set in extensive but ragged grounds on the principal residence-street of the town. A stout woman, with a Scandinavian cast of countenance, opened the front door when I rang. I told her that I wished to see Mr. Findlay, and as she hesitated, a gruff voice came from a near-by room.

"Ask him what's his business."

"On private business," I answered distinctly, not waiting for the woman to repeat the question. "Mr. Pinkie, of Chicago."

"Show him in here."

The woman silently indicated the door with a jerk of her thumb, and I showed myself to the square-built, bull-necked, red-faced, totally bald owner of the unpleasantly gruff voice. He was sitting in a big leather-covered chair, with his fat legs stretched out on a small straight-backed one, and a newspaper across his knees. There were other chairs in the room, but he seemed to have forgotten it, and merely rolled a pair of lack-luster eyes on me with a severely inquiring expression.

"My business with you is of a somewhat delicate nature, Mr. Findlay," said I with an ingratiating smile. "It concerns Mr. Tancred Buckman, your nephew."

He gave a palpable and most surprising start and took his legs down from the chair.

"Well?" he asked huskily.

"Good old boy!" I thought to myself. "He loves the scapegrace. The mere mention of his name moves him to emotion. Here's where I reconcile them." Aloud, I said: "A fine fellow, Mr. Findlay. I have already had the pleasure of meeting him."

He said nothing to that, but I could hear him breathe heavily. "I represent the Pomona Pure Food Products Company of Chicago," I went on. "Your nephew is indebted to us in a considerable amount, and I am entrusted with the collection or settlement of his account. We have no desire—"

He was out of his chair like a jack-in-the-box. "Get out of here," he roared, his face purple with rage and his dull eyes bulging alarmingly. "Get out of here!"

"But my dear sir—" I began.

He flourished his clenched fists and advanced toward me. "Will you get out?"

Would I? Certainly I would. By all means! With all the pleasure in life! As a matter of fact, I got out as expeditiously as was consistent with dignity, but I must say I thought him a queerly behaved sort of an old gentleman and singularly unresponsive to a polite, diplomatic address.

SO I went over to the store, which, I am bound to say, surprised me. The window-display was a corker, and inside, everything was as clean as a syndicate dairy lunch-room, and as up-to-date in fittings and arrangement. The stock was low, but it looked considerably bigger than it was, and two smart young clerks in white aprons were making a beautiful bluff at being busy. My friend Tancred wore an apron too, and his shirt-sleeves were covered by white linen protectors. He jumped up when he saw me and shook my hand cordially.

"Pinkie!" he exclaimed. "Pinkie—and not changed a bit! Well, well, I'm glad to see you."

I responded in kind, and he gathered up some sheets of paper and dropped a weight on them. "An order I'm making out for you," he explained. "I thought it would save time to have it ready. Now take a look around the shop and tell me what you think of it."

I thought well of it. I could see too that he was proud of it and that he was tickled to death when I signified my approval. I found that he had some ideas about the grocery business that gave me a new respect for him, although I felt obliged to dampen his enthusiasm in the matter of wholesaling his own pickles and preserves. You may have your secret recipes by celestially inspired home preservers, and your cherry orchard and gooseberry patch, and get away with it on a small scale; but when it comes to supplying the trade in a big way—no sir!

Tancred took down the receiver of his telephone. "We'll take that drive now," said he. "Trask's garage. . . . . That you, Clinton? Bring my car around, will you? . . . . Yes, right away."

In a few minutes there was a honking from the curb, and as we went out, a remarkably handsome, well-built young fellow with a particularly sulky expression jumped out of a shiny, late-model runabout and scowled at Tancred, who greeted him with his usual amiability. We got into the car, and I sat down —with no more than ordinary deliberation; but we were at the end of the block and headed for the open country before I had got fairly settled.

It was an interesting drive, but in a sense it got me nowhere. I couldn't have had a more entertaining companion than Tancred, but whenever I edged around to the sinfulness of revenge and the added improbability of getting it at a poker-table, I found him little above a well-trained moron in point of intelligence, and about as yielding as a stalled mule. Yet he spoke shrewdly enough about the people of the country that we passed through, pointing out the indications of prosperity and consequent market for Pomona products apparent in the farmers' houses. He talked good roads like a publicity man for a cement-concern, and it transpired that he himself was a road-supervisor. Something to the fellow, in many ways.

"You'll be among those present at

the spoiling of the Egyptians to-night, Pinkie?" he asked as he let me out at the hotel. "You wouldn't have the heart to remain coldly aloof with nobody to root for me?"

"You're on," said I. It was hard to refuse that light-hearted lunatic when he begged. After all, I had done what I could, and my little wad—the nest-egg of my future fortunes—was secure. I certainly took comfort in that. Then my conscience became active. Had I done all that I could? A bargain was a bargain, even with Bonnithorne, and even if the skate had previously robbed me. Tancred was a fine fellow, and I liked him, but business was business and—that automobile, for instance, was an asset. We had overlooked the young man's automobile.

I STROLLED around to the garage and found the proprietor, Mr. Samuel Trask, a cock-eyed, elderly man with a long, smoothly shaved upper lip that was twisted around a gold-banded cigar. He was sitting in a chair tilted back against the wall, watching the young man who had brought the machine around to the store and was now engaged in cleaning it. I noticed that the young fellow was no longer looking sulky and was whistling as he worked.

"That's a fine car, Colonel," I remarked to the proprietor. "I've just been taking a ride in it. Must have cost my friend Mr. Buckman quite a piece of change."

The cock-eyed man nodded and slightly shifted his cigar with his flexible lip.

"It *is* Mr. Buckman's car, is it?" I proceeded.

"Nope," Mr. Trask replied. "Was. Mine now."

The young man gave a short laugh and began to polish the brass on the bonnet with renewed energy.

That seemed to settle it, but I still lingered. I had a suspicion that Mr. Trask was looking at me with some curiosity, but his one wandering eye made it rather uncertain until he spoke.

"Friend of yours, did you say?"

"I'm interested in him," I answered.

He again shifted his cigar.

"Financially?"

I winked at him. I have a particularly effective wink.

"Well—" he began, and then he stopped abruptly as a young lady passed. It was the same young lady whom I had observed in the bank and who had made the cashier flush. Now the good-looking young man named Clint changed color perceptibly, and his face brightened astonishingly. The girl gave him a rapid, smiling glance and tripped on.

"There goes Buckman's financial salvation," observed Mr. Trask with another twist of his lip that may have been meant for a grin.

"Don't you never think it," said the young man, with heat.

"I was going to say, if Plunkett don't get ahead of him, Clint," said Trask. He turned to me. "She's old man Findlay's adopted daughter, and if she plays her cards right—"

"See here," interrupted Clint angrily, throwing down his cloth and facing the cock-eyed man. "You aint got no call talking about a lady to strangers that way. What's more, when you're handing out your info', you want to get it right. Buckman's got about the same show as Plunket, and if you take odds on a hundred to one on either, you'll be foolish."

He jumped into the car, started the engine and backed the car neatly into place against the wall—after which he stripped off his overalls and taking a coat and cap from a locker, put them on and left us without another word or look.

"Touch and go," commented the cock-eyed man calmly. "I'm beginning to believe he's stuck on the girl himself. All the same, if he wasn't worth more than I pay him, I'd fire him."

"Do you think he's got it right?" I asked.

But Mr. Trask seemed to think that he had been sufficiently communicative. "There's the pump for gasoline," he said, indicating that apparatus with a jerk of his thumb. "It's in working order."

"Air-pump isn't, eh?" I laughed. "Well, I guess supper's about ready over at the hotel; I'll move on."

AT nearly nine o'clock that night there came a brisk tattoo at my door and I opened it to Tancred. His eyes were so particularly bright and his color so high that, for a moment, I suspected other than animal spirits; but in that sense he was perfectly sober. "The time has come, Pinkie," he announced in the low, guttural tone of melodrama. "The time has come, the Buckman said, to deal with many things—with chips of red and white and blue, with aces, queens and kings; to list to screams of anguish, when the stung one turns and stings."

"Tancred," said I seriously, "I'm not going to argue with you. If you're bound to make a fool of yourself, I suppose you'll do it, but I'm not going to look on, and I'd just like you to ask yourself whether you are going to be an honest kind of fool."

He laughed, and just that laugh told me for the first time that if he was a lunatic he was not altogether a light-hearted one. "Piffle!" he said, and taking me by the arm, he conducted me up two flights of stairs and into a room blue with cigar-smoke, where three men were seated at a round table with the usual appurtenances.

"Gentlemen," said Tancred, "permit me to introduce Mr. Pinkie, of the famed Pomona products. Mr. Pinkie, I make known to you Mr. Stoddard, Mr. Trask and Mr. Plunket, my victims. Look at them carefully. You see them now prosperous and purse-proud citizens. In a few fleeting hours they will be reduced to deserved penury and pauperism."

Mr. Stoddard, a chubby, fresh-skinned little man, with gold-rimmed spectacles, arose and shook hands with me cordially; my friend Mr. Plunket likewise got up and, with quite obvious embarrassment, gave me a limp hand. Mr. Trask remained in his chair and acknowledged the introduction with a nod.

"Glad to have you with us, Mr. Pinkie," said Stoddard. "You'll sit in, wont you?"

I declined, although Mr. Plunket politely seconded the invitation, adding that he found an occasional evening's diversion of this harmless nature did him real good. "We limit ourselves to low stakes, of course," he said. "The game's the thing."

"Sure," agreed Trask, with a suspicion of a sneer.

"Pikers all," Stoddard chimed in, with a beaming smile.

Tancred drew in his chair. "But we're going to be dead-game sports for this one evening," said he. "The Milky Way isn't going to be any obstruction to us—what?"

"We'll humor you, if you insist, but don't say we didn't warn you," said Stoddard kindly.

Tancred had already produced his bundle and skinned off several bills; they cut for deal. "Now let her flicker," said Stoddard.

I DON'T pretend to be a poker-expert, but in my unregenerate days—in the long weeks gone by—I had played a little, and after a few hands I judged that it was a square game. I was relieved to find that Tancred was playing conservatively. At first he lost, but after a little he began to forge steadily ahead, and yet always with good enough cards to back him. It struck me presently that the party indulged in an unusual amount of running comment on their hands. Even Trask, who, I supposed, would be one of the grimly silent and imperturbable sort, exulted boisterously or complained bitterly with every card he drew. Plunket generally complained, and being an almost invariable loser, that seemed natural enough, and it was natural enough that Chubby Stoddard should be loquacious from mere professional habit—he being a real-estate agent. Tancred was as voluble as any of them, perhaps more so, and his tone was properly jubilant, the bulk of the blue chips being at his right hand. It was certainly an interesting game to watch.

It was a little after midnight when the tide of fortune turned. First Plunket spurted, and Stoddard, who had been winning a little, fell back. Trask raked in three successive pots, and Tancred's noble stack dropped, tier by tier, to the bare table. His gibes were as gay and confident as ever, but

his play became more erratic in spite of the increased consideration that he gave to it, and now and then I noticed a nervous twitch at the corner of his mouth as he smiled. Twice—three times—he bought more chips, and the yellow-backed roll grew more and more attenuated, until I could only guess what remained of it.

So it went, deal after deal, but at last the golden moment came for Tancred. I looked over his shoulder as he picked up the cards that Trask dealt him. Ace of hearts, trey of diamonds, ace of diamonds, ace of clubs, two of diamonds. Three aces!

"Not so worse," Tancred remarked. "We may be happy yet."

He tossed the deuce and trey into the discard. Plunket called for one card and Stoddard for two; Trask stood pat. "Here's your pair," said Trask. Tancred picked up the two cards. One of them was the ace of spades.

"Not so worse," Tancred murmured again. "Worth a couple of cerulean disks, I should say."

He dropped them, and Plunket's slender bank-teller's fingers strayed to his blue pile. "This is something a man only gets once in a lifetime," said he. "Unaccustomed as I am to recklessness in any form, I'll have to see you and raise you ten of them."

"Call that recklessness?" cried Chubby Stoddard. "How about this? Watch my eyes while I'm doing it. Maybe I *am* reckless." He made three movements, and the third carried his last chip to the center. I felt my heart beating double-time and my breath coming short. If Trask stayed in—

"Most reckless crowd I ever knew," said Trask. "Bucky, you said something about the Milky Way. Here's where I milk the lot of you, if your nerve is good. Reckless?"

VERY deliberately he pushed in his chips, stack by stack, to the last one; and then, leaning back in his chair, he pulled out a shiny, well-worn bill-book and thumbed out four of Tancred's new fifty-dollar bills, which he added to the pot. Tancred stared blankly before him for a moment or two and then sized up his own pile. It was even less than Trask's had been. He brought out his last two bills and began to fumble in his pockets.

"There's your watch and pin," suggested Plunket with a sneer. "I'll take them with the rest for a couple of hundred."

I had noticed the pin that Tancred wore. It was a modest gold-and-pearl thing that might have cost ten dollars. Later I learned that it was a gift from the lady with the amethyst eyes, but even in my ignorance I had an impulse to smite Mr. Plunket behind his little, malformed, close-clinging ear.

I didn't, though. Instead, I spoke up. "That wont be necessary," said I; and then—I went into that inside vest pocket of mine, fished out my treasured roll, my hard-earned, hard-got capital, my foundation of fond auriferous dreams—and handed it to Tancred.

"And now," I continued, "on with the dance and let joy be unconfined."

NEXT MONTH

"For the Sake of the Children"
By Peter B. Kyne
A *Tib Tinker* story, and an exceptionally amusing one.

"The Fixing Kid"
By Walter Jones
One of the funniest stories the versatile Walter Jones has ever written.

"The Joy-Garden"
By Bessie R. Hoover
A complete book-length novel by the author of "Pa Flickinger's Folks."

"New Stories of Tarzan"
By Edgar Rice Burroughs

"Ransom!"
By Arthur Somers Roche

"Vagabonds of Chance"
By George Washington Ogden

And many other fine stories by such writers as Ellis Parker Butler, Robert J. Casey, Clarence Herbert New, Albert Payson Terhune, James Francis Dwyer and the like.

I have to admit that I admired Mr. Plunket's self-control. He simply smiled and dug up his wallet as Tancred counted my nest-egg and staked it.

"A show-down," declared Tancred, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"But confidence is the foundation of business," said Plunket. "I'm going to take that pot." Whereupon he saw the raise of fifty-eight dollars.

"Not this one," smiled Stoddard, and once more he raised. "I'll get this much extra from friend Trask—if he isn't bluffing."

"Not so you'd notice it," said Trask easily, and again his thumb rasped against the bills in his book. The man was a mint. "Now we'll see who's who and what's what," said he.

I think everybody held his breath then.

Tancred spread his four aces, and Plunket swore as he laid down a straight, seven high. Stoddard giggled nervously and showed four queens for his draw of three. "Can you beat it?" he exclaimed superfluously.

"Lemme call your attention to this," said Trask. For a moment he let one of his dirty hands cover the cards. Then he removed it and disclosed a straight heart flush, jack high.

AS my friend Plunket had remarked, confidence is the basis of all business. He had it right, but at the same time, too much confidence isn't business. If it had been, I might perhaps have waited over for Tancred Buckman at Waybridge as per his wired request, but I was through with my business at Waybridge, and it was within fifteen minutes of train-time when I got his telegram; so I simply wired back:

> Sorry but business presses. Buntington next stop. Write it.

By "it" I referred to the "big news" that Tancred's message merely mentioned. Then I made my train. I had been trying not to think of Tancred or his confounded affairs. The thought of my loved and lost two hundred was not pleasant or easy to dismiss from my mind, but I had dismissed it—several hundred times. It had been no consolation to me to learn that he had been skinned largely by means of a simple system of spoken signals between the criminal conspirators—seemingly innocent remarks in which certain words conveyed to each of the trio the values of each hand—which expedient of itself gave them very considerable advantage irrespective of crooked deals or an occasional freeze-out.

Tancred said that he had worked out that code and based his confidence of winning on it, but they had been mean enough to switch to another set of words after a misleading use of the first. As to the last and fatal deal, my friend confessed himself puzzled—unless the word *reckless* meant anything. He was proceeding to further analysis when I told him that I was not interested in post-mortems and wanted to snatch a few hours' sleep.

Well, now I had to think of it all again. I believed Tancred would repay me—when he was able. I believed his expression of gratitude to be sincere. It was short but earnest. I tried to believe that he would keep to the "never again" resolution that he had made on that eventful night. I knew that I would keep to mine. But what was the big news, and why should he have the nerve to suppose I would wait over a day to hear it? It was not until I got busy with the Buntington merchants that I was able to stop speculating on that point.

I did good business, though. It was a big comfort to me, for though a drummer have the tongue of an angel and goods of amazing purity to inspire his eloquence, he is liable to failure now and then; but at the close of my afternoon's work, I had a sweet little batch of orders to send in and an elegant prospect for the morrow. I was so busy with them at the hotel that evening that I did not even notice the incoming of the down-train arrivals, and I did not look up when somebody coughed loudly just behind me as I sat at one of the desks writing. Then a hand fell on my shoulder, and I turned and saw Tancred grinning down at me.

But he was a wreck! A three-days' stubble of beard on his haggard face, red-rimmed eyes and rumpled linen and the knot of his necktie slipped an inch below his collar-button. If it had not been for his grin, I should have been seriously concerned.

"Holy cat," I cried, "you haven't been indulging that revengeful disposition of yours again, have you?"

"Not exactly," says he. "I've been too busy, even if I had forgotten the nature of an oath. But Pinkie, my tulip, things have been happening at Shannon. First, I suppose you have reported to the house on my business?"

"I haven't," I answered. "I thought I would defer that until I got in."

He gave a joyful whoop that made everybody in the office look at us. "Good enough!" he cried. "Why? I'll proceed to tell you. Item number one: my uncle, God rest him, died in an apoplectic fit about an hour after you pulled out of town."

I registered surprise and polite regret.

"Item number two," Tancred proceeded: "the fit was caused by the discovery of his adopted daughter's elopement with a promising young automobile mechanic in our town, named Clinton Massey. I think if Plunket had been an apoplectic subject, he would have had a fit too. I'm almost sorry for Plunket."

"I know Clinton," I said. "Go on."

"The rest is rather a mix-up. We've been poking into the old gentleman's papers, his lawyer and I, and it seems that he had been doing a bit of juggling with my patrimony, and the reason he was so keen to have me marry Claire was that he was threatened with a show-down and thought that he could depend on the girl's affection for him to make me reasonable on the question of restitution. Lord knows I'd have been reasonable. He was fond of Claire, too. I've been up to my eyes trying to straighten out the tangle, and I'm not through yet. Got to get back right away. Oh, and another thing: Trask declines to divvy on the last clean-up; consequently Stoddard and Plunket are sore. I got that from the coon who looks after the room and happens to be a warm friend of mine. He slipped up and applied his ear to the keyhole after we had gone, and he says he thought there was going to be a sure-enough scrap, but it seems Stoddard and Plunket took it out in curses. Next time you come to Shannon, I may have a story to tell you—How an Honest Man Came by His Own."

"Fine and dandy," I commented at last. "Still, I don't understand even now why you didn't write it."

Tancred jumped to his feet. "Lord! don't you understand that I'm out of my troubles?" He laughed excitedly. "I'm not rich, but—look here!" He took a slip of paper from a morocco letter-case. "That's a draft for the amount of my indebtedness to the Pomona Products Company; and here,"—he dived into his breast pocket and handed me an envelope,—"here's two hundred dollars, which is about one millionth part of my indebtedness to you. Say, what did you think I came skyhooting down here after you for?"

I had barely grasped the draft and the envelope, to say nothing of their blessed meaning, when the bull voice of the porter filled the office.

"Bus at the do-or! All abo-oard for the train north."

Tancred wrung my hand. "I've got to get back, old man. The funeral takes place to-morrow morning. After that—"

"A wedding?"

He nodded. "Very soon now, thank heaven! And Pinkie: *never again!*"

The next minute he was gone and I was standing—landed, as I previously remarked, and with both feet.

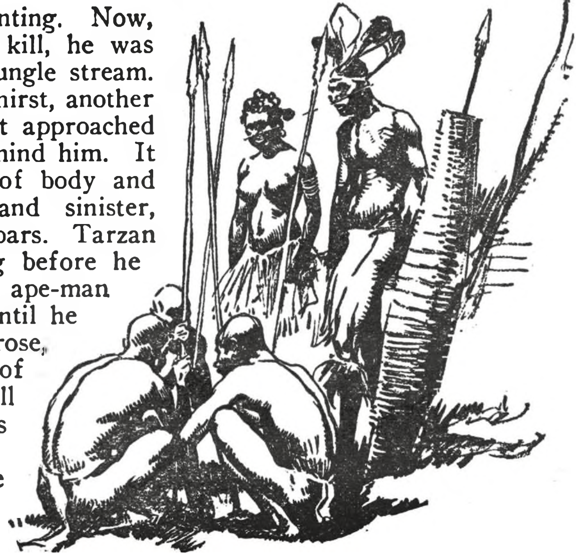
There will be another of Kennett Harris' delightful stories in the April issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale March 1st.

The New Stories of Tarzan

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

The Witch-Doctor Seeks Vengeance

TARZAN had been hunting. Now, having eaten of his kill, he was drinking deep at a jungle stream. As he quenched his thirst, another denizen of the gloomy forest approached the stream along the path behind him. It was Numa the lion, tawny of body and black of mane, scowling and sinister, rumbling out low, coughing roars. Tarzan of the Apes heard him long before he came within sight, but the ape-man went on with his drinking until he had had his fill; then he rose, slowly, with the easy grace of a creature of the wilds and all the quiet dignity that was his birthright.



Numa halted as he saw the man standing at the very spot where the king would drink. His jaws were parted, and his cruel eyes gleamed. He growled and advanced slowly. The man growled too, backing slowly to one side and watching, not the lion's face, but its tail. Should that commence to move from side to side in quick, nervous jerks, it would be well to be upon the alert; and should it rise suddenly erect, straight and stiff, then one might prepare to fight or flee. But the tail did neither, and so Tarzan merely backed away and the lion came down and drank scarce fifty feet from where the man stood.

To-morrow they might be at each other's throats, but to-day there existed one of those strange and inexplicable truces which are so often seen among the savage ones of the jungle. Before Numa had finished drinking, Tarzan had returned into the forest and was swinging away in the direction of the village of Mbonga, the black chief.

It had been at least a moon since the ape-man had called upon the *Gomangani*. Not since he had restored little Tibo to his grief-stricken mother had the whim seized him to do so. The incident of the adopted *balu* was a closed one to Tarzan. He had sought to find

Copyrighted, 1916-1917, by The Story-Press Corporation. All rights reserved.

something upon which to lavish such an affection as Teeka lavished upon her *balu;* but a short experience of the little black boy had made it quite plain to the ape-man that no such sentiment could exist between them.

The fact that he had for a time treated the little black as he might have treated a real *balu* of his own had in no way altered the vengeful sentiments with which he considered the murderers of Kala. The *Gomangani* were his deadly enemies; nor could they ever be aught else. To-day he looked forward to some slight relief from the monotony of his existence in such excitement as he might derive from baiting the blacks.

It was not yet dark when he reached the village and took his place in the great tree overhanging the palisade. From beneath came a great wailing out of the depths of a near-by hut. The noise fell disagreeably upon Tarzan's ears: it jarred and grated. So he decided to go away for a while in the hope that it might cease; but though he was gone for a couple of hours, the wailing still continued when he returned.

WITH the intention of putting a violent termination to the annoying sound, Tarzan slipped silently from the tree into the shadows beneath. Creeping stealthily and keeping well in the cover of other huts, he approached that from which rose the sounds of lamentation. A fire burned brightly before the doorway, as it did before other doorways in the village. A few females squatted about, occasionally adding their own mournful howlings to those of the master-artist within.

The ape-man smiled a slow smile as he thought of the consternation which would follow the quick leap that would carry him among the females and into the full light of the fire. Then he would dart into the hut during the excitement, throttle the chief screamer and be gone into the jungle before the blacks could gather their scattered nerves for an assault.

Many times had Tarzan behaved similarly in the village of Mbonga the chief. His mysterious and unexpected appearances always filled the breasts of the poor, superstitious blacks with the panic of terror; never, it seemed, could they accustom themselves to the sight of him. It was this terror which lent to the adventures the spice of interest and amusement which the human mind of the ape-man craved. Merely to kill was not in itself sufficient. Accustomed to the sight of death, Tarzan found no great pleasure in it. Long since had he avenged the death of Kala; but in the accomplishment of it he had learned the excitement and the pleasure to be derived from the baiting of the blacks.

It was just as Tarzan was about to spring forward with a savage roar that a figure appeared in the doorway of the hut. It was the figure of the wailer whom he had come to still, the figure of a young woman with a wooden skewer through the split septum of her nose, with a heavy metal ornament depending from a lower lip which it had dragged down to hideous and repulsive deformity, with strange tattooing upon forehead, cheeks and breasts and a wonderful coiffure built up with mud and wire.

A sudden flare of the fire threw the grotesque figure in high relief, and Tarzan recognized her as Momaya, the mother of Tibo. The fire also threw out a fitful flame which carried to the shadows where Tarzan lurked, picking out his light-brown body from the surrounding darkness. Momaya saw him and knew him. With a cry she leaped forward, and Tarzan came to meet her. The other women, turning, saw him too; but they did not come toward him. Instead they rose as one, shrieked as one, fled as one.

Momaya threw herself at Tarzan's feet, raising supplicating hands toward him, and poured forth from her mutilated lips a perfect cataract of words, not one of which the ape-man comprehended. For a moment he looked down upon the upturned, frightful face of the woman. He had come to slay, but that overwhelming torrent of speech filled him with consternation and with awe. He glanced about him apprehensively, then back at the woman. A revulsion of feeling seized him. He could not kill little Tibo's mother; nor could he stand and face this verbal

geyser. With a quick gesture of impatience at the spoiling of his evening's entertainment he wheeled and leaped away into the darkness. A moment later he was swinging through black jungle night, the cries and lamentations of Momaya growing fainter in the distance.

It was with a sigh of relief that he finally reached a point from which he could no longer hear them, and finding a comfortable crotch high among the trees he composed himself for a night of dreamless slumber while a prowling lion moaned and coughed beneath him.

AS Tarzan followed the fresh spoor of Horta the boar the following morning, he came upon the tracks of two *Gomangani,* a large one and a little one. The ape-man, accustomed as he was to questioning closely all that fell to his perceptions, paused to read the story written in the soft mud of the game-trail. You or I would have seen little of interest there, even if, by chance, we could have seen aught. Perhaps had one been there to point them out to us, we might have noted indentations in the mud; but there were countless indentations, one overlapping another into confusion that would have been entirely meaningless to us. To Tarzan each told its own story. Tantor the elephant had passed that way as recently as three suns since. Numa had hunted here the night just gone, and Horta the boar had walked slowly along the trail within an hour; but what held Tarzan's attention was the spoor-tale of the *Gomangani.* It told him that the day before, an old man had gone toward the north in company with a little boy, and that with them had been two hyenas.

Tarzan scratched his head in puzzled incredulity. He could see by the overlapping of the footprints that the beasts had not been following the two, for sometimes one was ahead of them and one behind, and again both were in advance, or both were in the rear. It was very strange and quite inexplicable, especially where the spoor showed where the hyenas in the wider portions of the path had walked one on either side of the human pair, quite close to them. Then Tarzan read in the spoor of the smaller *Gomangani* a shrinking terror of the beast that brushed his side; but in that of the old man was no sign of fear.

At first Tarzan had been solely occupied by the remarkable juxtaposition of the spoor of Dango and the *Gomangani,* but now his keen eyes caught something in the spoor of the little *Gomangani* which brought him to a sudden stop. It was as though, finding a letter in the road, you had suddenly discovered in it the familiar handwriting of a friend.

"Go-bu-balu!" exclaimed the ape-man, and at once memory flashed upon the screen of recollection the supplicating attitude of Momaya as she had hurled herself before him in the village of Mbonga the night before. Instantly all was explained—the wailing and lamentation, the pleading of the black mother, the sympathetic howling of the shes about the fire. The little *Go-bu-balu* had been stolen again, and this time by another than Tarzan. Doubtless the mother had thought that he was again in the power of Tarzan of the Apes, and she had been beseeching him to return her *balu* to her.

Yes, it was all quite plain now; but who could it have been who had stolen the *Go-bu-balu* this time? Tarzan wondered, and he wondered, too, about the presence of Dango. He would investigate. The spoor was a day old, and it ran toward the north. Tarzan set out to follow it. In places it was totally obliterated by the passage of many beasts, and where the way was rocky even Tarzan of the Apes was almost baffled; but there was still the faint effluvium which clung to the human spoor, appreciable only to such highly trained perceptive powers as were Tarzan's.

IT had all happened to little Tibo very suddenly and unexpectedly, within the brief span of two suns. First had come Bukawai, the witch-doctor,—Bukawai, the unclean,—with the ragged bit of flesh which still clung to his rotting face. He had come alone and by day to the place at the river where Momaya went daily to wash her body

and that of Tibo, her little boy. He had stepped out from behind a great bush quite close to Momaya, frightening little Tibo so that he ran screaming to his mother's breast.

But Momaya, though startled, had wheeled to face the fearsome thing with all the savage ferocity of a she-tiger at bay. When she saw who it was, she breathed a sigh of partial relief, though she still clung tightly to Tibo.

"I have come," said Bukawai without preliminary, "for the three fat goats, the new sleeping-mat and the bit of copper wire as long as a tall man's arm—all the things which you promised me if I would cause the white jungle-god to restore your boy to you."

"I have no goats for you," snapped Momaya, "nor a sleeping-mat, nor any wire. Your medicine was never made. The white jungle-god gave me back my Tibo. You had nothing to do with it."

"But I did," mumbled Bukawai through his fleshless jaws. "It was I who commanded the white jungle-god to give back your Tibo."

Momaya laughed in his face. "Speaker of lies," she cried, "go back to your foul den and your hyenas. Go back and hide your stinking face in the belly of the mountain, lest the sun, seeing it, cover his face with a black cloud."

"I have come," reiterated Bukawai, "for the three fat goats, the new sleeping-mat and the bit of copper wire the length of a tall man's arm, which you were to pay me for the return of your Tibo."

"It was to be the length of a man's forearm," corrected Momaya; "but you shall have nothing, old thief. You would not make medicine until I had brought the payment in advance, and when I was returning to my village the great while jungle-god gave me back my Tibo—gave him to me out of the jaws of Simba. His medicine is true medicine; yours is the weak medicine of an old man with a hole in his face."

"I have come," repeated Bukawai patiently, "for the three fat—" But Momaya had not waited to hear more of what she already knew by heart. Clasping Tibo close to her side, she was hurrying away toward the palisaded village of Mbonga the chief.

THE next day, when Momaya was working in the plantain-field with others of the women of the tribe and little Tibo had been playing at the edge of the jungle, casting a small spear in anticipation of the distant day when he should be a full-fledged warrior, Bukawai had come again.

Tibo had seen a squirrel scampering up the bole of a great tree. His childish mind had transformed it into the menacing figure of a hostile warrior. Little Tibo had raised his tiny spear, his heart filled with the savage bloodlust of his race, as he pictured the night's orgy when he should dance about the corpse of his human kill as the women of his tribe prepared the meat for the feast to follow.

But when he cast the spear he missed both squirrel and tree, losing his missile far among the tangled undergrowth of the jungle. However, it could be but a few steps within the forbidden labyrinth. The women were all about in the field. There were warriors on guard within easy hail, and so little Tibo boldly ventured into the dark place.

Just behind the screen of creepers and matted foliage lurked three horrid figures—an old, old man, black as the pit, with a face half eaten away by leprosy, his sharp filed teeth, the teeth of a cannibal, showing yellow and repulsive through the great gaping hole where his mouth and nose had been. And beside him, equally hideous, stood two powerful hyenas—carrion-eaters consorting with carrion.

Tibo did not see them until, head down, he had forced his way through the thickly growing vines in search of his little spear, and then it was too late. As he looked up into the face of Bukawai, the old witch-doctor seized him, muffling his screams with a palm across his mouth. Tibo struggled futilely.

A moment later he was being hustled away through the dark and terrible jungle, the frightful old man muffling his screams and the two hideous hyenas pacing now on either side, now before,

now behind, always prowling, always growling, snapping, snarling or, worst of all, laughing hideously.

To little Tibo, who had passed within his brief life through such experiences as are given to few to pass through in a lifetime, the northward journey was a nightmare of terror. He thought now of the time that he had been with the great white jungle-god, and he prayed with all his little soul that he might be back again with the white-skinned giant who consorted with the hairy tree-men. Terror-stricken he had been then; but his surroundings had been nothing by comparison with those which he now endured.

The old man seldom addressed Tibo, though he kept up an almost continuous mumbling throughout the long day. Tibo caught repeated references to fat goats, sleeping-mats and pieces of copper wire. "Ten fat goats, ten fat goats," the old negro would croon over and over again. By this little Tibo guessed that the price of his ransom had risen. Ten fat goats! Where would his mother get ten fat goats, or thin ones either, for that matter, to buy back just a poor little boy? Mbonga would never let her have them, and Tibo knew that his father never had owned more than three goats at the same time in all his life. Ten fat goats! Tibo sniffled. The putrid old man would kill him and eat him, for the goats would never be forthcoming. Bukawai would throw his bones to the hyenas. The little black boy shuddered and became so weak that he almost fell in his tracks. Bukawai cuffed him on an ear and jerked him along.

AFTER what seemed an eternity to Tibo they arrived at the mouth of a cave between two rocky hills. The opening was low and narrow. A few saplings bound together with strips of rawhide closed it against stray beasts. Bukawai removed the primitive door and pushed Tibo within. The hyenas, snarling, rushed past him and were lost to view in the blackness of the interior. Bukawai replaced the saplings and seizing Tibo roughly by the arm dragged him along a narrow, rocky passage. The floor was comparatively smooth, for the dirt which lay thick upon it had been trodden and tamped by many feet until few inequalities remained.

The passage was tortuous, and as it was very dark and the walls rough and rocky, Tibo was scratched and bruised from the many bumps he received. Bukawai walked as rapidly through the winding gallery as one would traverse a familiar lane by daylight. He knew every twist and turn as a mother knows the face of her child, and he seemed to be in a hurry. He jerked poor little Tibo possibly a trifle more ruthlessly than necessary even at the pace Bukawai set; but the old witch-doctor, an outcast from the society of man, diseased, shunned, hated, feared, was far from possessing an angelic temper. Nature had given him few of the kindlier characteristics of man, and these few fate had eradicated entirely. Shrewd, cunning, cruel, vindictive was Bukawai the witch-doctor.

Presently Tibo saw a faint lightness ahead of them, and a moment later they emerged into a roughly circular chamber to which a little daylight filtered through a rift in the rocky ceiling. The hyenas were there ahead of them, waiting. As Bukawai entered with Tibo, the beasts slunk toward them, baring yellow fangs. They were hungry. Toward Tibo they came, and one snapped at his naked legs. Bukawai seized a stick from the floor of the chamber and struck a vicious blow at the beast, at the same time mumbling forth a volley of execration. The hyena dodged and ran to the side of the chamber, where he stood growling. Bukawai took a step toward the creature, which bristled with rage at his approach. Fear and hatred shot from its evil eyes; but fortunately for Bukawai, fear predominated.

Seeing that he was unnoticed, the second beast made a short, quick rush for Tibo. The child screamed and darted after the witch-doctor, who now turned his attention to the second hyena. This one he reached with his heavy stick, striking it repeatedly and driving it to the wall. There the two carrion-eaters commenced to circle the

chamber, while the human carrion, their master, now in a perfect frenzy of demoniacal rage, ran to and fro in an effort to intercept them, striking out with his cudgel and lashing them with his tongue, calling down upon them the curses of whatever gods and demons he could summon to memory and describing in lurid figures the ignominy of their ancestors.

Several times one or the other of the beasts would turn to make a stand against the witch-doctor, and then Tibo would hold his breath in agonized terror, for never in his brief life had he seen such frightful hatred depicted upon the countenance of man or beast; but always fear overcame the rage of the savage creatures, so that they resumed their flight, snarling and bare-fanged, just at the moment that Tibo was certain they would spring at Bukawai's throat.

At last the witch-doctor tired of the futile chase. With a snarl quite as bestial as those of the beasts, he turned toward Tibo. "I go to collect the ten fat goats, the new sleeping-mat and the two pieces of copper wire that your mother will pay for the medicine I shall make to bring you back to her," he said. "You will stay here." And he pointed toward the passage which they had followed to the chamber. "I will leave the hyenas. If you try to escape, they will eat you."

He cast aside the stick and called to the beasts. They came, snarling and slinking, their tails between their legs. Bukawai led them to the passage and drove them into it. Then he dragged a rude lattice into place before the opening after he himself had left the chamber. "This will keep them from you," he said. "If I do not get the ten fat goats and others things, they shall at least have a few bones after I am through." And he left the boy to think over the meaning of his all-too-suggestive words.

WHEN Bukawai was gone, Tibo threw himself upon the earth floor and broke into sobs of terror and loneliness. He knew that his mother had no ten fat goats to give and that when Bukawai returned, little Tibo would be killed and eaten. How long he lay there he did not know, but presently he was aroused by the growling of the hyenas. They had returned through the passage and were glaring at him from beyond the lattice. He could see their yellow eyes blazing through the darkness. They reared up and clawed at the barrier. Tibo shivered and withdrew to the opposite side of the chamber. He saw the lattice sag and sway to the attacks of the beasts. Momentarily he expected that it would fall inward, letting the creatures upon him.

Slowly the horror-ridden hours dragged their slow way. Night came, and for a time Tibo slept; but it seemed that the hungry beasts never slept. Always they stood just beyond the lattice, growling their hideous growls or laughing their hideous laughs. Through the narrow rift in the rocky roof above him Tibo could see a few stars, and once the moon crossed. At last came daylight again. Tibo was very hungry and thirsty, for he had not eaten since the morning before, and only once upon the long march had he been permitted to drink; but even hunger and thirst were almost forgotten in the terror of his position.

It was after daylight that the child discovered a second opening in the walls of the subterranean chamber, almost opposite that at which the hyenas still stood glaring hungrily at him. It was only a narrow slit in the rocky wall. It might lead in but a few feet, or it might lead to freedom! Tibo approached it and looked within. He could see nothing. He extended his arm into the blackness; but he dared not venture further. Bukawai would never have left open a way of escape, Tibo reasoned, and so this passage must lead either nowhere or to some still more hideous danger.

To the boy's fear of the actual dangers which menaced him—Bukawai and the two hyenas—his superstition added countless others quite too horrible even to name, for in the lives of the blacks, through the shadows of the jungle-day and the black horrors of the jungle-night, flit strange, fantastic shapes peopling the already peopled

forests with menacing figures, as though the lion and the leopard, the snake and the hyena, and the countless poisonous insects were not quite sufficient to strike terror to the hearts of the simple creatures whose lot is cast in earth's most fearsome spot.

And so it was that little Tibo cringed not only from real menaces but from imaginary ones. He was afraid even to venture upon a road that might lead to escape, lest Bukawai had set to watch it some frightful demon of the jungle.

But the real menaces suddenly drove the imaginary ones from the boy's mind, for with the coming of daylight the half-famished hyenas renewed their efforts to break down the frail barrier which kept them from their prey. Rearing upon their hind feet, they clawed and struck at the lattice. With wide eyes Tibo saw it sag and rock. Not for long, he knew, could it withstand the assaults of these two powerful and determined brutes. Already one corner had been forced past the rocky protuberance of the entranceway which had held it in place. A shaggy forearm protruded into the chamber. Tibo trembled as with ague, for he knew that the end was near.

Backing against the further wall he stood flattened out as far from the beasts as he could get. He saw the lattice give yet farther. He saw a savage snarling head forced past it, and grinning jaws snapping and gaping toward him. In another instant the pitiful fabric would fall inward and the two would be upon him, rending his flesh from his bones, gnawing the bones themselves, fighting for possession of his entrails.

BUKAWAI came upon Momaya outside the palisade of Mbonga the chief. At sight of him the woman drew back in revulsion; then she flew at him, tooth and nail; but Bukawai, threatening her with a spear, held her at a safe distance.

"Where is my baby?" she cried. "Where is my little Tibo?"

Bukawai opened his eyes in well-simulated amazement. "Your baby!" he exclaimed. "What should I know of him other than that I rescued him from the white god of the jungle and have not yet received my pay? I come for the goats and the sleeping-mat and the piece of copper wire the length of a tall man's arm from the shoulder to the tips of his fingers."

"Offal of a hyena!" shrieked Momaya. "My child has been stolen, and you, rotting fragment of a man, have taken him. Return him to me, or I shall tear your eyes from your head and feed your heart to the wild hogs."

Bukawai shrugged his shoulders. "What do I know about your child?" he asked. "I have not taken him. If he is stolen again, what should Bukawai know of the matter? Did Bukawai steal him before? No, the white jungle-god stole him, and if he stole him once, he would steal him again. It is nothing to me. I returned him to you before, and I have come for my pay. If he is gone and you would have him returned, Bukawai will return him—for ten fat goats, a new sleeping-mat and two pieces of copper wire the length of a tall man's arm from the shoulder to the tips of his fingers; and Bukawai will say nothing more about the goats and the sleeping-mat and the copper wire which you were to pay for the first medicine."

"Ten fat goats!" screamed Momaya. "I could not pay you ten fat goats in as many years. Ten fat goats, indeed!"

"Ten fat goats," repeated Bukawai. "Ten fat goats, the new sleeping-mat and two pieces of copper wire the length of—"

Momaya stopped him with an impatient gesture. "Wait!" she cried. "I have no goats. You waste your breath. Stay here while I go to my man. He has but three goats; yet something may be done. Wait!"

Bukawai sat down beneath a tree. He felt quite content, for he knew that he should have either payment or revenge. He did not fear harm at the hands of these people of another tribe, although he well knew that they must fear and hate him. His leprosy alone would prevent their laying hands upon him, while his reputation as a witch-doctor rendered him doubly immune from attack. He was planning upon

compelling them to drive the ten goats to the mouth of his cave, when Momaya returned. With her were three warriors—Mbonga the chief, Rabba Kega the village witch-doctor, and Ibeto, Tibo's father. Bukawai greeted them with an insolent stare as they came and squatted in a semicircle before him.

"WHERE is Ibeto's son?" asked Mbonga.

"How should I know?" returned Bukawai. "Doubtless the white devil-god has him. If I am paid, I will make strong medicine and then we shall know where is Ibeto's son, and shall get him back again. It was my medicine which got him back the last time, for which I got no pay."

"I have my own witch-doctor to make medicine," replied Mbonga with dignity.

Bukawai sneered and rose to his feet. "Very well," he said, "let him make his medicine and see if he can bring Ibeto's son back." He took a few steps away from them, and then he turned angrily back. "His medicine will not bring the child back—that I know; and I also know that when you find it out, it will be too late for any medicine to bring him back, for he will be dead. This I have just found out, the ghost of my father's sister having but now come to me and told me."

Now, Mbonga and Rabba Kega might not take much stock in their own magic, and they might even be skeptical as to the magic of another; but there was always a chance of *something* being in it, especially if it were not their own. Was it not well known that old Bukawai had speech with the demons themselves and that two even lived with him in the forms of hyenas! Still, they must not accede too hastily. There was the price to be considered, and Mbonga had no intention of parting lightly with ten fat goats.

"Wait," said Mbonga. "Let us see some of your magic, that we may know if it be good magic. Then we can talk about payment. Rabba Kega will make some magic too. We will see who makes the better magic. Sit down, Bukawai."

"The payment will be ten goats,—fat goats,—a new sleeping-mat and two pieces of copper wire the length of a tall man's arm from the shoulder to the ends of his fingers, and it will be made in advance, the goats being driven to my cave. Then will I make the medicine, and on the second day the boy will be returned to his mother. It cannot be done more quickly than that, because it takes time to make such strong medicine."

"Make us some medicine now," said Mbonga. "Let us see what sort of medicine you make."

"Bring me fire," replied Bukawai, "and I will make you a little magic."

MOMAYA was dispatched for the fire, and while she was away Mbonga dickered with Bukawai about the price. Ten goats, he said, was a high price for an able-bodied warrior. He also called Bukawai's attention to the fact that he, Mbonga, was very poor, that his people were very poor, and that ten goats were at least eight too many, to say nothing of a new sleeping-mat and the copper wire; but Bukawai was adamant. His medicine was very expensive, and he would have to give at least five goats to the gods who helped him make it. They were still arguing when Momaya returned with the fire.

Bukawai placed a little on the ground before him, took a pinch of powder from a pouch at his side and sprinkled it on the embers. A cloud of smoke rose with a puff; Bukawai closed his eyes and rocked back and forth. Then he made a few passes in the air and pretended to swoon. Mbonga and the others were much impressed. Rabba Kega grew nervous. He saw his reputation waning. There was some fire left in the vessel in which Momaya had brought it. He seized the vessel, dropped a handful of dry leaves into it while no one was watching and then uttered a frightful scream which drew the attention of Bukawai's audience to him. It also brought Bukawai quite miraculously out of his swoon, but when the old witch-doctor saw the reason for the disturbance he quickly relapsed into unconsciousness before anyone discovered his *faux pas*.

Rabba Kega, seeing that he had the attention of Mbonga, Ibeto and Momaya, blew suddenly into the vessel, with the result that the leaves commenced to smolder, and smoke issued from the mouth of the receptacle. Rabba Kega was careful to hold it so that none might see the dry leaves. Their eyes opened wide at this remarkable demonstration of the village witch-doctor's powers. The latter, greatly elated, let himself out. He shouted, jumped up and down, made frightful grimaces; then he put his face close over the mouth of the vessel and appeared to be communing with the spirits within.

It was while he was thus engaged that Bukawai came out of his trance, his curiosity finally having gotten the better of him. No one was paying him the slightest attention. He blinked his one eye angrily; then he too let out a loud roar, and when he was sure that Mbonga had turned toward him, he stiffened rigidly and made spasmodic movements with his arms and legs.

"I see him!" he cried. "He is far away. The white devil-god did not get him. He is alone and in great danger; but," he added, "if the ten fat goats and the other things are paid to me quickly, there is yet time to save him."

Rabba Kega had paused to listen. Mbonga looked toward him. The chief was in a quandary. He did not know which medicine was the better. "What does your magic tell you?" he asked of Rabba Kega.

"I too see him," screamed Rabba Kega; "but he is not where Bukawai says he is. He is dead at the bottom of the river."

At this Momaya commenced to howl loudly.

TARZAN had followed the spoor of the old man, the two hyenas and the little black boy to the mouth of the cave in the rocky cañon between the two hills; here he paused a moment before the sapling barrier which Bukawai had set up, listening to the snarls and growls which came faintly from the far recesses of the cavern.

Presently, mingled with the beastly cries, there came faintly to the keen ears of the ape-man the agonized moan of a child. No longer did Tarzan hesitate. Hurling the door aside, he sprang into the dark opening. Narrow and black was the corridor; but long use of his eyes in the Stygian blackness of the jungle nights had given to the ape-man something of the nocturnal visionary powers of the wild things with which he had consorted since babyhood.

He moved rapidly and yet with caution, for the place was dark, unfamiliar and winding. As he advanced, he heard more and more loudly the savage snarls of the two hyenas mingled with the scraping and scratching of their paws upon wood. The moans of a child grew in volume, and Tarzan recognized in them the voice of the little black boy he had once sought to adopt as his *balu*.

There was no hysteria in the ape-man's advance. Too accustomed was he to the passing of life in the jungle to be greatly wrought even by the death of one whom he knew; but the lust for battle spurred him on. He was only a wild beast at heart, and his wild beast's heart beat high in anticipation of conflict.

IN the rocky chamber of the hill's center little Tibo crouched low against the wall as far from the hunger-crazed beasts as he could drag himself. He saw the lattice giving to the frantic clawing of the hyenas. He knew that in a few minutes his little life would flicker out horribly beneath the rending yellow fangs of these loathsome creatures.

Beneath the buffetings of the powerful bodies the lattice sagged inward until with a crash it gave way, letting the carnivora in upon the boy. Tibo cast one affrighted glance toward them; then he closed his eyes and buried his face in his arms.

For a moment the hyenas paused, caution and cowardice holding them from their prey. They stood thus glaring at the lad; then slowly, stealthily, crouching, they crept toward him. It was thus that Tarzan came upon them, bursting into the chamber swiftly and silently—but not so silently that the keen-eared beasts did not note his com-

ing. With angry growls they turned from Tibo upon the ape-man as with a smile upon his lips he ran toward them. For an instant one of the animals stood its ground; but the ape-man did not deign even to draw his hunting-knife against despised Dango. Rushing in upon the brute, he grasped it by the scruff of the neck just as it attempted to dodge past him and hurled it across the cavern after its fellow, which already was slinking into the corridor bent upon escape.

Then Tarzan picked Tibo from the floor, and when the child felt human hands upon him instead of the paws and fangs of the hyenas, he rolled his eyes upward in surprise and incredulity; and as he recognized Tarzan, sobs of relief broke from the childish lips, and his hands clutched at his deliverer as though the white devil-god were not the most feared of jungle creatures.

When Tarzan came to the cave-mouth, the hyenas were nowhere in sight, and after permitting Tibo to quench his thirst in the spring which rose near by, he lifted the boy to his shoulders and set off toward the jungle at a rapid trot, determined to still the annoying howlings of Momaya as quickly as possible, for he had shrewdly guessed that the absence of her *balu* was the cause of her lamentation.

"HE is not dead at the bottom of the river," cried Bukawai. "What does this fellow know about making magic? Who is he, anyway, that he dare say Bukawai's magic is not good magic? Bukawai sees Momaya's son. He is far away and alone and in great danger. Hasten, then, with the ten fat goats, the—"

But he got no further. There was a sudden interruption from above, from the branches of the very tree beneath which they squatted, and as the five blacks looked up they almost swooned in fright as they saw the great white devil-god looking down upon them; but before they could flee they saw another face, that of the lost little Tibo, and his face was laughing and very happy.

And then Tarzan dropped fearlessly among them, the boy still upon his back, and deposited him before his mother.

Momaya, Ibeto, Kabba Rega and Mbonga were all crowding around the lad trying to question him at the same time. Suddenly Momaya turned ferociously to fall upon Bukawai, for the boy had told her all that he had suffered at the hands of the cruel old man; but Bukawai was no longer there—he had required no recourse to black art to assure him that the vicinity of Momaya would be no healthful place for him after Tibo had told his story, and now he was running through the jungle as fast as his old legs would carry him toward the distant lair where he knew no black would dare pursue him.

Tarzan had also vanished, as he had a way of doing, to the mystification of the blacks. Then Momaya's eyes lighted upon Rabba Kega. The village witch-doctor saw something in those eyes of hers which boded no good to him, and backed away.

"So my Tibo is dead at the bottom of the river, is he?" the woman shrieked. "And he's far away and alone and in great danger, is he? Magic!" The scorn which Momaya crowded into that single word would have done credit to a Thespian of the first magnitude. "Magic indeed!" she screamed. "Momaya will show you some magic of her own." And with that she seized upon a broken limb and struck Rabba Kega across the head. With a howl of pain the man turned and fled, Momaya pursuing him and beating him across the shoulders through the gateway and up the length of the village street, to the intense amusement of the warriors, the women and the children who were so fortunate as to witness the spectacle, for one and all feared Rabba Kega, and to fear is to hate.

Thus it was that to his host of passive enemies Tarzan of the Apes added that day two active foes, both of whom remained awake long into the night planning means of revenge upon the white devil-god who had brought them into ridicule and disrepute.

There will be another of *"The New Stories of Tarzan"* in the next—the March—issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale February 1st.

Special at Twenty-two Fifty

By Royal Brown

EIGHT dollars and seventy-five cents was the sum which Nora Dwight received every Saturday night for six days of smiling and skillful service at the underwear-table bargain in Gradine's basement. But put your handkerchief away: eight dollars and seventy-five cents served—oh, ever so nicely—to keep the sleek and pampered he-wolves from being anything in *her* young life!

The second glance you would have given her would by no means have been tinctured with pity. Even in Gradine's, where the girls toil arrayed as the lilies of the field, Nora held her own. And she had a slim, supple body, graceful hands and arms, and an oval, vivacious face. The manner in which she arranged her vivid blonde hair was perhaps a trifle extreme. Moreover her blue eyes were sophisticated, but what would you? Nora's attitude toward the world was one of watchful waiting; when she delivered an ultimatum, it ultimated.

It was May. Nora descended the steps of the Hancock Square House and paused to set her close black hat more firmly over her small, delicately tinted ears. The world was as clean and as sweet and as rosy as a baby fresh from its bath. The brilliant sunlight glinted from her darting hatpins; the soft south wind whipped a trim skirt about slim ankles. She drew a deep breath into vigorous young lungs, savoring the sweetness of the morning.

Fifty city blocks separated her from Gradine's. She started briskly across the park, where, in season, the grass grew green and water splashed in the rusty iron fountain. The park was a relic of the days when Hancock Square was bordered by the homes of the well-to-do, before the Back Bay was filled in and Commonwealth Avenue, with its costly mansions, sprang out of what had formerly been tidewater and mud-flats.

Once the playground of prettily attired children, guarded by starched and ironed nurses, the park had degenerated into a city oasis for those who never

work except when a wearily disdainful judge says: "Sixty days—next case."

Now, as she traversed the park, Nora's lithe figure stiffened and her lips set in a scarlet manifestation of disapproval. All the worker's intolerance for the professional idler was epitomized in the glances she cast at the benches on which the unshaven, the unkempt and the unwashed sunned themselves during the precious interim that would elapse before the policeman on the beat set them in aimless motion once more.

It was not until she turned north into Washington Street and began to tell off the blocks with her swift, sure steps that 'her face relaxed. The world bloomed anew; her small white teeth flashed in a smile.

"PARDON me," broke in a voice at her elbow, "but your bag is open."

Blue eyes alarmed, she probed the depths of the gaping handbag, tumbling handkerchief, powder-puff and mirror with swift-moving fingers. Again and again she searched; the fair surface of the fresh handkerchief was rumpled; the powder-puff flattened its spongy surface against the side of the bag; the mirror glinted and turned over on its back. They were all there. Only her purse was gone!

Men and women, faces turned cityward, pressed by her as she stood there, even white teeth set into her lips to keep them from quivering, tears washing the sophistication from her eyes, leaving them a swimming, childlike blue.

Back in the park, a hobo on the bench nearest the cast-iron fountain lazily opened his eyes. Blue-gray eyes they were, with the glint of steel in them. Fresh from the realm of dreams, he readjusted himself to the realities. Becoming conscious of a weight on his right shoulder, he jerked that member, displacing the disreputable head of his neighbor.

"Wake up," he commanded, with unreasonable disgust at the other's discolored teeth and sagging jaw. "Wake up," he repeated, with even more peremptoriness.

The sleeper stirred, opening bleared eyes and instinctively drawing his feet under him in readiness for instant flight. But as his startled eyes discovered nothing to alarm, he demanded sulkily: "Where's the cop?"

The blue-gray eyes shone with brief amusement as their owner removed the wreck of a hat and ran his fingers through a mop of hair. It was a riotous red, and to it he owed one half of his "monacher"—the "Red-haired Professor" his traveling companions called him.

"What do you think I am?" he demanded without heat. "A free bed in a bo's lodging-house?"

The aggrieved tramp shot a truculent glance upward under disordered eyebrows. But the flash of resentment flickered and flared out as the Red-haired Professor rose to his feet and stretched himself. Tall and broad as a traffic-policeman he loomed, the bulk of his shoulders filling out and giving form to the shapeless coat he wore. A moment he stood thus; and then, without the suggestion of effort, he bent, stiff-kneed, and laid his hands flat on the sun-frescoed pavement.

Four inches from the tips of the fingers of his right hand lay a black purse.

THE blear-eyed tramp saw it at almost the same instant and reached for it, but too late to capture it. "Aren't you going to divide?" he whined.

The Red-haired Professor surveyed him with speculative eyes. "What's your monacher?" he asked with tolerance.

"Greedy Pickles," was the reluctant answer. And then, with an attempt at bluster, he added: "I seen it first."

"Did you, now? Really? Well, I got it first, and possession, my friend, is nine points of the law."

The Red-haired Professor ran ruminative fingers through a curling, three-weeks beard and cast an interrogative eye at Greedy Pickles.

"I am twenty-seven," he continued. "I have always thought that at twenty-seven something would happen that would change my life. A mere superstition, perhaps, due in part to the prophecy a fortune-teller once made. She wasn't really a fortune-teller, but a

remarkably pretty girl at a charity bazaar—did you ever attend a charity bazaar, Greedy Pickles?"

Greedy Pickles, his eyes on the purse, emitted a noncommittal grunt.

"I thought not," said the Red-haired Professor. "It's all as much Greek to you as—as Greek is to me now.

"Still," he continued, "there is the case of Patrick Henry, for instance. At twenty-seven, Patrick was—well, Patrick was a village ne'er-do-well, with even less excuse than I have, Greedy Pickles."

"Aw, quit the beefin'," grumbled Greedy Pickles.

"I fail to interest you," observed the Red-haired Professor regretfully. "Very well! I was going to place before you a hypothetical question—to wit: with a suit of clothes, a clean shave and a few dollars in my pocket, could I, at twenty-seven, reinstate myself as a social and financial success? You refuse to consider the question; so"—he held up the purse—"let us look upon this as the oracle. If there is less than ten dollars in this purse, I will present it to you, without reservation, to have and to hold. I shall accept the decree of fate, and at twenty-seven I shall be even as you."

He paused, eyes somber for an instant.

"If, on the other hand," he went on, his tone light once more, "there is more than ten dollars, I will retain it as my own, with the exception of one dollar, with which you may proceed to drown your overwhelming grief."

Involuntarily Greedy Pickles stretched out his hand.

"One minute," interposed the Red-haired Professor. "Your desire to enter into possession, though perhaps well founded, is premature. While it is probable there is less than ten dollars in the purse, let us be sure."

He opened the purse and smoothed out a wad of bills. There were six twos and eleven ones! The change in the bottom of the purse totaled sixty cents more.

Greedy Pickles snatched at the bills. As his fingers closed on them, the Red-haired Professor's fingers gripped his coat-collar.

"Let go," he commanded, his eyes flashing. He shook Greedy Pickles as a Great Dane might shake a mongrel.

"You are well named, Greedy Pickles," he added as the other obeyed. "I gave you a sporting chance, and you lost. Now I'm going to teach you to mend your manners."

Greedy Pickles struggled, but the Red-haired Professor deposited him in the fountain without visible effort. Then he turned and sauntered out of the park, leaving a disreputable and bedraggled caricature of Triton to emerge from the shallow pool as best he might.

AT nine o'clock there was a momentary lull in the rush in Gradine's bargain basement, a brief interim during which the hordes of the bargain-hungry diminished noticeably. To the black-eyed Stella Day, who presided over the women's shoe table,—special at ninety-eight cents,—the red-eyed Nora confided her misfortune.

In Gradine's, the bargain basement is a subcellar into which air is forced by fans and into which the shoppers are driven by grim necessity. In and out the maze of tables the women folks of underpaid clerks and bookkeepers thread their ways—wives and mothers to whom a pair of shoes for Johnny for seventy-nine cents is a blessed solution to a nagging problem in domestic economy, a coat for Mildred at two dollars and thirty-eight cents the miraculous answer to a desire as fervent as a prayer.

In the basement the goods are displayed on plain pine tables, each of which bears its staring placard. Here is the bald prose of shopping, without the suggestion of its poetry, such as is found in Gradine's above the street-level, where the air is subtly perfumed and elusive strains of music are always hovering at your ears wherever you go.

"I'd been saving six months for it," Nora finished. "And I saw just what I wanted yesterday upstairs in the misses' department, a special at twenty-two-fifty. I was going to get it this noon, during lunch-time. It's black, but black is always classy, specially with something white at the neck. And now—"

She turned to wait on an impatient customer.

"Good value, madam! Why, they cost more than that to manufacture," she exploded with unusual asperity.

A minute later she resumed the Odyssey of her woes.

"Perhaps some one will find it and advertise it," submitted Stella, trying to administer comfort. "Jack lost a pocketbook once with seventeen dollars in it, and the guy that found it advertised it. He had a swell office, down on State Street, Jack said, and he wouldn't take a cent except the money he'd paid out for the ad."

"That's different," replied Nora, uncomforted. "I lost my purse in the park, and I'll bet one of those bums found it. Small chance of their advertising anything except by getting drunk to celebrate," she finished with a vindictive click of her small teeth.

Then once more the current of business engulfed Nora and her trouble.

GRADINE'S main entrance is an eddying whirlpool. The busiest man in Boston is not the mayor, but the white-gloved traffic-policeman on the easterly crossing. At eleven o'clock by Gradine's clock the traffic-policeman swept an elderly woman out of the path of one automobile and turned to see a small boy poised in the path of another.

The danger was real, for the car was a heavy one. The driver threw his brakes in vain effort to arrest relentless momentum, while the spectators held their breath in horror—all except a woman who, with an agonized scream, threw herself from the sidewalk. The traffic-policeman caught her and held her safe, while a man snatched up the round little body and held it in his arms.

The radiator struck the rescuer's leg; his hat fell off, revealing a close-clipped mane of thick, well-brushed red hair. The traffic-policeman rescued the hat from beneath the hoofs of a truck-horse; the mother took her boy; and the rescuer withdrew into a convenient doorway and sought to repair the damage.

"Yesterday it wouldn't have mattered," he thought. "To-day it does. It's—it's hades to be respectable."

He gave the hat a final pat and put it on his head. As he turned to glimpse it in the window mirror, a gray-haired woman collided with him. He stopped to gather her flying bundles.

Straightening up, he saw her face squarely. The expression, the strong modeling, were so reminiscent of another face which remained in his memory unblurred by the passage of time, that he caught his breath. She took her bundles, and unconscious of the effect her appearance had caused him, passed with smiling serenity into Gradine's.

Upon impulse he turned and followed her through crowded aisles, down low-treaded stairs, into the Gradine's bargain basement. She paused at the underwear-table, and he saw her face in profile. Viewed from this angle, the resemblance no longer existed. He would have turned and retraced his steps had he not glimpsed Nora standing beyond her and paused to pay Nora the tribute of that inevitable second glance.

Conscious that his eyes were on her, Nora covertly surveyed him. He was tall and broad-shouldered; his eyes were so clear that she could tell the color across twenty yards of intervening space. His mouth was good, and so was his clean-shaven chin. He wore a blue suit that was new and well pressed.

All this she took in at a single fleeting, seemingly impersonal glance. Apparently she was unaware that he existed. But Stella Day saw her fingers pass over her hair. And Stella instinctively looked about for the man.

"Sly boots!" she said during the next breathing space.

Nora looked at her, blue eyes innocent.

"Sly boots!" scoffed Stella. "He's mashed on you. And he's not one of these bargain-counter Willies, either. I say, Nora, wouldn't it be great if a guy like that found your purse and advertised it?"

Nora's pretense of innocence vanished; her red lips set in a hard though still lovely line.

"Small chance!" she retorted with bitterness. "One of those bums got my purse."

THE stride at which the Red-haired Professor swung up Washington Street bespoke purpose. In the space of a few minutes there had been presented to him two visions. One held memory of the dead past; the other, in some indefinable way, seemed to present a promise for the future. Each challenged slumbering forces within him.

Once upon a time he had answered to the name of William Emery. On a certain historical occasion, a crowd of enthusiastic youths had lifted him to their shoulders as they shouted: "Who's all right? Big Bill Emery! He's all right!" Some of those youths were in business now, men with families and responsible, lucrative positions. They had mothers like the gray-haired woman with the strongly molded features—sisters like the blue-eyed girl at Gradine's.

Could he go to those old acquaintances and say, "I'm William Emery—Big Bill Emery—come back. And I want a job?" He knew he couldn't, for they would ask him where he had come back from. That chapter of his life was closed.

Nevertheless he squared his shoulders and unconsciously thrust out his jaw. There were other places where a man as big and as husky as a traffic-policeman could get a job and make good—he'd find one of them. His strides slackened, and his brows knit thoughtfully.

Five hours, and his search had carried him almost as far south as Hancock Square. He had visited forty places of business; to him the world seemed peopled with disdainful stenographers, insolent office-boys and short-tempered employers. At six o'clock he was back in the park, his mouth hard, his eyes cynical. As he gravitated toward a familiar bench, he paid no more attention to his surroundings than did Nora Dwight, walking with her eyes searching the path.

"I beg your pardon," she said as they came together. She glanced up, a little breathless; and as recognition came to her, the color leaped from her throat to her temples.

"I—I was looking for my purse," she explained confusedly.

The words registered only in his subconscious mind. He did not even know he was staring at her. With her cheeks still flaming, she drew a little to one side and with a quick nod of her head stepped past him. It was not until she had almost reached the edge of the park that he realized what she had said.

Breathless, and without clear conception of what he meant to do or say, he caught up with her as she reached the steps of the Hancock Square House.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered as she turned a surprised face toward him. "But you spoke of losing a purse."

In her eyes hope flamed. "Yes—there was twenty-three dollars and sixty cents in it," she said.

He swallowed hard. "I think I know who got it, then. It was—one of those hoboes."

The hope faded from her eyes. "Then there is small chance of my getting it," she said.

The color stained his face as red as his hair. "I'll get it for you," he promised, conscious only of the need of restitution.

"Really?" Her lips parted eagerly, like a child's.

He nodded. She thrust out an impulsive hand, which he hesitated a moment before taking. But she did not notice.

"Ask for Nora Dwight," she said. "And I'll thank you—oh, ever so much."

BACK in the park, Bill Emery found an unoccupied bench and—so strong is habit—sat down to consider his problem. Of the money that had been in the purse, he had only five dollars left. He had promised to return twenty-three dollars and sixty cents to Nora Dwight—and *he must!* But how?

No such problem beset Nora. She never doubted that the flame-haired stranger would accomplish his purpose. He was so big; his mouth had set so grimly when he promised! He was a masterful man, and he would have his way.

In her room, to which she sped after dinner was finished, Nora brought out

her one purely decorative dress. It was yellow, like a Maréchal Neil rose. She had bought it, in the misses' department at Gradine's, against the advice of Stella Day.

"It's too much your coloring," Stella had announced, after due consideration.

"But Paris fashions say to match the coloring this year," Nora had replied abstractedly as she pirouetted before the long glass. "Besides, it's the best of the eight-dollar lot. And I can't afford more than six—that's what it comes to with twenty-five per cent off."

Now she slipped into it and studied herself in the mirror. That piece of furniture, being about a foot square, gave her only a tantalizing glimpse of the bodice, and when she stood on the chair she could see only a part of the skirt. She wished she might see herself all at once instead of in quarter-sections, but instead of repining she set deft fingers the task of rearranging her hair.

When she appeared in the corridor below, the other girls flung quip and jest at her.

"What's he like, Nora darling?"

"Stingy, if he brings candy and you don't divvy."

"Tell him there's some swell pictures at the Modern."

Nora ignored these thrusts. But when at eight-fifteen William Emery presented himself at the matron's office and with an equanimity that was an echo of other days asked for Miss Dwight, he was the conscious target of a score of interested glances. She, also conscious of them and glorying in his bigness and clean-cut good looks, gave him a slim white hand and then led the way to the reception-room.

The Hancock Square is a splendid institution; it gives scores of girls like Nora a chance to live decently and respectably on small wages. Its virtues are manifold; its faults are its reception-rooms.

In each of these there are four spindly chairs set down with geometrical precision in each of the four corners, a shiny-topped table and a half-portion sofa on which two could sit in comfort—and perhaps would, if they dared. There is no low, shaded light to give a homelike atmosphere.

In spite of himself, Bill Emery's spirits sank even lower as he sat down.

"Did you get it?" she asked, eager-eyed.

"I—I found the chap that took it," he said. "He had spent most of it, but he—he's got a job, and he'll pay it back."

Nora's face fell. She had set her heart on getting the money in hand. "I didn't know such men ever worked," she said dubiously. "They're so dirty and ragged, I shouldn't think they could even get a job."

He avoided her eyes. "He—he'd spent most of his money for clothes."

"He did," she exclaimed, wide-eyed. "Why, I thought they always spent their money for drink."

He shifted uneasily. "Oh, I—I know lots of hoboes that never took a drink," he began.

From somewhere close at hand a suppressed giggle sounded. Nora's chin went a little higher.

"Really," she said.

Her reply left him at a loss. His eyes roved desperately about the room and then fell, abashed by its austerity. A second suppressed giggle increased his discomfiture.

"Would you—could you take a walk with me?" he said, turning toward her, mouth eager, eyes wistful. "Just around the square. I—I feel as if somebody were listening."

There was a chorus of giggles at this. Nora's eyes were indignant, but her lips smiled as she told him she would get her coat.

ONCE outside in the languorous, clangorous night they walked in silence for a time. The stars were bright overhead; a suggestion of witchery lay in the softness of the night that even the street noises, with the occasional crescendo of the elevated trains, could not dispel.

In his mind Bill Emery was going over what he must say. It was a tangled mass; he searched for some loose end with which he could begin. And whenever it seemed as though his wits might clutch at one, they were sent

scattered by chance contact with the girl at his side.

He seemed drawn physically toward her, in that unaccountable fashion that sometimes draws two people together as they walk side by side, even though they consciously try to avoid it.

At last he turned toward her in pure desperation.

"Miss Dwight," he said, "I—I found the purse myself."

Eyes wide, she slackened her step and stared at him in frank astonishment. "But—but you said a tramp took it?"

"I was the tramp."

He had said it. The words fell ominously on his ears. He feared she might turn from him with scorn and resentment. But she did not. After a startled glance she fell automatically in step with him. When he dared a glance, he saw her face was averted.

"It's hard to explain," he began haltingly, but determined to see it through now. "I've been a 'bo—a tramp, that is—for six years. I always was wild, and when I had a scrap with my father while I was in college, I showed my independence by getting a job harvesting, out West, instead of going home for vacation.

"I'm not going to give you a long history. But when harvesting stopped, I hadn't heard from my father, and I was determined I wouldn't be the first to break the silence. So I went logging. Some of us hoboed our way to the camp. Then—well, after the logging season finished, I hoboed it until harvesting commenced.

"At the start, it was just an adventure, a wild life I could stop any time. I never drank very much, and I always kept myself in condition. Then my father died. That left me without any close ties—my mother died when I was a boy.

"Several times I tried to get something regular. But it was hard—almost impossible. Everybody wants references, except for the roughest kind of work. And then, foo, there would come days when the outdoors simply clamored to me. And there was no reason why I should resist."

He paused and glanced at her. They were passing the scintillating façade of a moving-picture house, and though the lights illuminated her face, its expression was inscrutable.

"You can't understand, of course," he went on. "I never intended to keep on being a tramp. I always thought that when I was twenty-seven I'd—I'd do something. Did you ever read about Patrick Henry?"

The question took her by surprise; she gave him a quick glance and then shook her head.

"He was a ne'er-do-well too. When he was sixteen he eloped with the village belle, on a dare. He'd always been wild, and he wouldn't settle down. They couldn't get him to do any work. He and his wife just sort of lived hand to mouth, first with his folks and then with hers.

"That went on until he was twenty-seven. Then he changed right over. He read law and—well, he did a lot of things besides that 'Liberty or Death' speech. I used to tell the tramps about him—that was one of the reasons they called me the Red-haired Professor. I used to boast that when I was twenty-seven I'd do something too."

He paused and drew a full breath.

"I am twenty-seven to-day. This morning, when I found your purse, I never thought of its being anybody's money. I suspect that's what being a tramp has done to me. I bought a suit of clothes and got a shave and took a bath. Then I went looking for a job.

"I walked around town all afternoon, but I didn't get a job. I'd about decided to quit, when I met you to-night in the park, and found out it was *your* purse." He hesitated; then he added, "I'd seen you before—in Gradine's this morning, though you didn't see me."

NORA blushed, but they had turned into a side-street, away from the lights, and the velvety darkness kept her secret.

"I promised you I'd get the money back, but I didn't know how I was going about it. All I could think of was taking the clothes I wore back and trying to get the money for them. Of course that was foolish—but that shows how hard pushed I was.

"Then, all of a sudden, I remembered something I read in a newspaper a long time ago, about a man who was vice-president of the street-car lines in New York. He said that if a man had twenty dollars and spent it all getting clothes and a shave and then asked for a job, he'd give him one.

"That was in New York, of course, and this is Boston. But I went down to the office of the Elevated on Milk Street and took my nerve in my hand. I asked for the vice-president. Luckily he was there, working late. I put it up to him, straight. You see, I'd been trying to fool them all, pretending to be something I wasn't.

"This time I laid the cards on the table. I told him the whole story. His name is Matt Brush, and he's a prince. I'm going to start work to-morrow, and I'll pay you back every cent. And he's promised to keep an eye on me—if I make good."

They had completed the square and were back in front of the Hancock Square House. Nora paused. He took five dollar-bills from his pocket. "It's all I have left," he apologized.

Nora started to take the bills but swiftly withdrew her hand. "What will you have to live on?" she asked.

"I'll live, all right."

"Keep it for now."

He shook his head.

She glanced up at him. His hat was in his hand; his red hair rippled back from a tanned forehead. His chin was lifted; his eyes were at once wistful and yielding. He was satisfyingly big, and she liked his clean-cut good looks.

"Please do," she said softly, meeting his eyes fairly for the first time in fifteen minutes.

The light on the corner flickered and went out unaccountably. But Big Bill Emery, so far from noticing it, felt as if twenty million arc-lights had been switched on.

"I—I think you are the kind of a girl that would give the very clothes off her back to help a chap," he said, when he could command his voice, and she thrilled to a vibrant something in his words.

The arc-light flashed bright again, revealing her poised on the lower step, deliciously, mysteriously feminine, from the aura of her hair to the slim ankles about which her short skirt whipped. The sight of her filled him with an ecstasy of unanalyzed longing. Conscious that his heart was thumping with unprecedented violence, he put his fortune to the test:

"If I keep this, can I bring it to you?"

For an instant she seemed to hesitate. Then: "If you are sure you wouldn't rather send it," she said softly—and fled precipitately up the stairs.

THE door swung to behind her. Big Bill Emery took a full breath and then strode across the park like a conquering hero.

Sprawling forms which had pre-empted the benches obtruded themselves on his mood. He glanced at them with subconscious disgust. "Bums," he thought, with that small corner of his mind that was not busy with thoughts of Nora.

But at the same instant a form on the bench nearest the fountain took familiar shape. He stopped and shook it.

"Greedy Pickles," he said, "here's a dollar a chap told me to give you. Take it and beat it to a good bed."

The next mroning, when Nora Dwight appeared in Gradine's bargain basement, her eyes shone as though somewhere in their blue depths they held imprisoned a glorious vision.

"Gee," exclaimed Stella, "you look as if you had good news. Did you get your money back?"

Nora nodded, fearing the explanation.

"You did!" ejaculated Stella incredulously. She stared at Nora for a moment; then she added in a tone of unshaken conviction: "I knew you would, and you able to see nobody but a bum with it."

Nora's eyes flashed, and she tossed her head. "I guess bums are just as human as other folks," she said.

Stella shot her a glance of surprise.

"You must be in love," she scoffed, "to be so fond of the whole world all of a sudden."

The color flamed in Nora's cheeks.

"Why, you are!" breathed the awe-stricken Stella.

RANSOM!

A New Mystery Novel by the Author of "Loot"

A Complete Résumé of the Opening Installments

IT all started in a Paris café when Waring rescued a young American girl from the attentions of a red-haired Apache who annoyed her. After fighting their way out of the place, Waring escorted the girl to her hotel in a cab; and he learned from her that she had been brought up in a French convent, that she was at present in Paris on a visit with her Uncle Peter Randall, and that she had slipped away from him that evening to see the sights.

Next morning Waring read in *The Paris Herald* of the defalcation and suicide, in New York, of Carey Haig—the broker who had been Waring's trustee during his minority and who still took care of his investments.

Waring of course hurried back to New York. There he found that Haig had begun selling his own and his client's securities suddenly on January 17th. On the 28th he had killed himself, leaving a confession saying he had embezzled the funds realized. The only record of what had become of these funds was a memorandum of Haig's having paid one Simon Bergson the sum of $1,450,000 on January 26th.

And now the mystery took a surprising turn. For one day while returning from a call on a friend, Mrs. Sinsabaugh, Waring was conscious that he was being followed. And when he reached his apartment,—a ground-floor one,—he left the front door open and watched the hallway. Presently there entered—none other than "Raoul the Red," the Apache from whom he had rescued Peter Randall's niece in Paris!

The man was bending over Waring's letter-box when the latter sprang upon him. Raoul broke away and ran outside—directly under the wheels of a passing taxicab.

When Waring and the chauffeur picked the Frenchman up, he was dying. And when, later, a search was made of his pockets to determine his identity, an envelope was found bearing the address of Simon Bergson, the man to whom Haig had paid over the embezzled funds. Inside this envelope was a letter signed with the initials "P. R." and introducing the bearer, Raoul Carvajal, as a man of daring and courage who would be useful to "the Society." The "matter of Burton Conybear" was also mentioned. Conybear was one of the wealthiest men in the country.

The spirit of adventure was ever strong in Waring; and he wanted to get back his lost fortune. He realized that by a curious chance he strongly resembled the dead Carvajal—red hair and all. A little alteration of his clothing, a few other precautions—and Waring stood on the doorstep of Simon Bergson, determined himself to present "P. R.'s" letter introducing Carvajal. Waring's scheme was at first successful. He was accepted as Carvajal and made an employee of the Society.

BURTON CONYBEAR receives a letter signed "The Readjustmenc Society of the World" and demanding a hundred million dollars. He calls in two detectives who—with Henderson, his private secretary—prove themselves to be members of this mysterious society and who, on Conybear's refusal to pay over the enormous sum demanded, proceed to kidnap him. He is taken to the rendezvous at Bergson's house. Thence, escorted by "Carvajal" and others of the Society, he is taken to a bank, where—with everyone unsuspicious that he is under duress—he is compelled to draw twenty-five thousand dollars for his captors.

Herkomer, Commissioner of Police, receives a note picked up by a half-witted fellow just outside Conybear's estate and signed by the financier, stating that he has been kidnaped. Herkomer calls up Conybear's house and is told by Henderson that Mr. Conybear is all right—is up in New England on business. So Herkomer concludes that the note is a hoax.

Waring, after the episode at the bank, gains Bergson's permission to go out and buy some clothing. His first impulse is to telephone the police, but he wishes to avoid publicity and so calls up Conybear's house. And again Henderson, answering the 'phone, prevents Conybear's rescue. Aware that Waring is betraying the Society, he sends him to an address on Camp Avenue—another rendezvous of the Society. Waring unsuspiciously proceeds thither. The door is opened for him by the girl of the Paris café!

CHAPTER VII

HERKOMER played a massé shot very creditably and proceeded to run out his string. Flushed with victory, he led his companion to the grill of the Patroons' Club and ordered two cocktails. But his friend was not dining at the club and so gulped his drink, leaving the Police Commissioner to sip his Tripoli more leisurely.

Thus it happened that, with no companion to engage his ears, Herkomer overheard the talk at the next table. It was not his intention to listen, but Malcolm, the youthful president of the Seventy-third National Bank, didn't seem to care who heard him.

"It's enough to make anyone turn socialist," he was telling the man with him, a broker named Boyd. "The men who created Amalgamated General, who control it now, performed, and are performing, a public service. But public service should mean public trust. When it comes to taking your trust so lightly that you can't bother to attend a directors' meeting, and thereby almost precipitate a panic—it's wrong. I told old Conybear so, to-day."

It was the mention of the old financier's name that made Herkomer prick up his ears and do deliberately what he'd been doing subconsciously—listen.

"You have your nerve," chuckled the broker. "What did he say?"

"Told me to go to grass. He was in my bank to cash a check—with young Phil Waring. Twenty-five thousand dollars. I sort of got the idea the money was for Waring. Don't know why, except that I supposed Waring lost his money in the Carey Haig crash and has been living in a fairly expensive fashion—manservant and all that sort of thing, ever since. And you can't do that on nothing a year. But if he's borrowing—well, I didn't even know that he knew old man Conybear. However, it doesn't concern me. I may be wrong, anyway."

The banker finished the drink before him and rose to leave. Herkomer rose too. At the door of the grill he tapped Malcolm on the shoulder. The young banker turned with a smile.

"Well, Commissioner, what can I do for you?" he asked.

"I overheard you talking with Boyd," said Herkomer. "I didn't mean to listen, exactly, but—"

"Any time I say anything in a grill that I wouldn't say in my bank or anywhere else, I'll be a different man, Herkomer," grinned Malcolm. "Well, you heard me roasting old Conybear. What about it?"

"Nothing much," answered the Com-

Copyrighted, 1916-1917, by The Story-Press Corporation. All rights reserved.

missioner. "Only—you know his signature, of course. Is this his?"

He showed Malcolm the signature of the note that Peter Perkins had brought from Long Island yesterday, and which Herkomer had since carried. Sensitive to ridicule, not wishing to appear easily hoaxed, he folded the waterproofed paper on which the message was written, so that only the signature showed.

Malcolm scrutinized it carefully.

"Well," he smiled, "if this is a note, I'll discount it for you the moment the bank opens in the morning."

"It's genuine, then?"

"Absolutely," said the banker.

"Much obliged," said Herkomer.

MALCOLM lingered a moment; then, seeing that Herkomer was slightly embarrassed and wished to say no more, the banker nodded and left the room.

Herkomer stared at the folded paper in his hand. Conybear's signature! So Malcolm affirmed, and Malcolm, in addition to his financial accomplishments, had invented and caused to be adopted in many banks besides his own a system of verifying signatures that had been very successful. He was by way of being a handwriting expert, and if he said that this was the signature of Burton Conybear, then Burton Conybear's signature it was!

Herkomer walked to the club dining-room and ordered dinner. He ate mechanically, his mind perplexed. Why should old Conybear have written such a note? The old financier was not in the habit of playing practical jokes, Herkomer knew.

He studied the writing of the message. Scrawled jerkily, the words were; nevertheless they were patiently written—even to one not a graphologist—by one to whom jerkiness and scrawling were natural. There was no evidence of undue haste in the writing. There were no blots, no spatters where the pen had scratched, its points spread by haste. If the signature was genuine, the body of the note was genuine. If Malcolm had noticed nothing wrong about the signature that sprawled half the width of the sheet of paper, then there was nothing wrong about the other words that ran so irregularly across it.

But why? Herkomer leaned back in his chair, his hand playing with the sugar-tongs. His forehead wrinkled. The envelope was creased, and the note within was creased—not with the wrinkles that lying in the dust, or being carried around by Peter Perkins, might have put in them, but with the wrinkles that weeks of continual carrying around in a pocket put in any paper, wrinkles that denote comparative age.

Herkomer pulled from his pocket the last letter that his father had written him before he died seven years ago. Although of different texture, this paper held the same sort of wrinkles and creases, even though Herkomer had always carried it inside a leather bill-fold. His eyes softened as he glanced at the lines penned by the old judge, his father; then he put the letter away, and he frowned again.

An old note, carried around in old Conybear's pocket until an emergency—Herkomer sat up stiffly. In due time he could see Conybear and have an explanation of the note. Meantime, wasn't it sufficient that he had the financier's confidential secretary's word for it that Conybear was all right?

The financier had had plenty of time to return from New England. Why, New England might have meant merely across the Connecticut line! Conybear could easily have got back to-day. And if he were seen in a bank, in company with Philip Waring,—whom Herkomer knew by sight and name,—why—Herkomer was becoming an old woman! He must shake off this creepy feeling, unbecoming a grown man and the Commissioner of New York's police.

He signed his check and rose from his chair. As he did so, a boy came to his table.

"You're wanted on the telephone, Mr. Herkomer," he said.

HERKOMER walked to the booth just outside the dining-room door.

"This you, Commissioner? This is Kelcey talkin'. Say, you know that note you got this afternoon?"

"Certainly. What about it?"

"Looks like there might be something in it, Commissioner."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"H. Hathway Symons—you know, president of Amalgamated General—has been down here lookin' for you. He's in a terrible stew. The Burnhams have been workin' for him since morning and aint found out a blasted thing, so—"

"What's *happened?*" roared Herkomer.

"Clurg, Prendergast, Larned and Mikells,—the four biggest guys in Amalgamated except old Conybear,—they're missin'! And Symons can't get hold of Conybear—out of town, they tell him at his Portsmouth place. And at his office they say the same thing. And Symons is in a terrible state; he—"

There were occasions when Sergeant Kelcey let excitement master him. Herkomer could hardly blame him, for if there was more than hysteria bothering Symons, then the biggest job that Herkomer had ever tackled confronted the Commissioner now. But Kelcey must not be permitted to wander.

"What's *happened?*" demanded the Commissioner again. "Words of one syllable, Sergeant, and take your time."

He could hear Kelcey, down at Headquarters, gulp. Then, in the colorless voice in which policemen make reports to their superiors, Kelcey spoke.

"Them four I just mentioned, Commissioner: They, with Conybear, are the real bosses of Amalgamated General. The other directors are dummies. Nothin' is done unless one of them is present. Well, to-day was the big day with Amalgamated—dividend-day and all that. Well, when none of them four showed up, Symons supposes it's just a coincidence: Clurg thinks Mikells will be there, and Mikells thinks Larned will be there, and Larned thinks Prendergast— Well, the dividend couldn't be passed without *one* of them bein' present; so Symons telephones Larned. He learns that Larned left his house at ten after 'phonin' his office he wouldn't be there till noon. Had to attend Amalgamated General's directors' meetin', he said.

"Symons don't think much of that; he just tried to get hold of Mikells. And he learns that Mikells had told his wife he couldn't take her to a mornin' musicale uptown because he was late gettin' started for the directors' meetin'. And Mikells don't show up at *his* office, either. Same thing with Clurg and Prendergast; both of 'em said at home this mornin', or at their offices last night, that they was goin' to take in the meetin', and neither of 'em can be located by Symons. Then he 'phones Conybear's office, and the old boy aint there, and out at Portsmouth they tell him that Conybear's out of town for a few days.

"Well, there's nothin' for Symons to do but to tell his bunch of dummies to postpone the meetin' a week, which they do. Symons wouldn't dare do nothin' with none of the big guys present. And Symons aint really rattled, then. But along toward afternoon, when Larned's chauffeur arrives home with a headache and a tale of bein' took sick at breakfast, and says he aint driven the car to-day *at all;* well, Symons gets nervous, especially as not a word has come from any of them four what left home headed for the meetin'.

"And Symons rushes over to the Burnhams. Here's what they've got, so far: Somebody impersonated Larned's chauffeur. Must have been clever, too, because evidently Larned didn't suspect him, and when he turned the car in at the garage later,—sure, he did that,—no one noticed him particularly. No trace of him.

"Prendergast took a taxi. One of his servants says he 'phoned the Occidental Taxi Company. If he did, the Occidental aint got no record of the call. No trace of the taxi that took Prendergast away.

"Mikells hadn't got a block in his car when the front wheel rolled off. A limousine followin' stopped; the owner called Mikells by name and offered to take him downtown. That's the last seen of Mikells. Mikells' chauffeur says it was a big blue limousine car. The Burnhams have combed the city

for a car like that and have found a hundred, but they all got alibis straight enough.

"And Clurg always walks to the subway from his house and takes an express downtown. He left the house all right this mornin'—and that's the last seen of him!

"Well, Symons is frightened to death that the newspapers will get hold of it all, but he's twice as frightened at the idea that somethin' phoney has happened to the four of 'em. And that last fear drove him to us. He feels that a private agency, no matter how good it is, aint the thing to handle this. Well, what's the orders, Commissioner?"

Herkomer could dream and speculate and wrinkle his brows; he could also think and act quickly.

"Detail half a dozen men to look up Philip Waring. Know him? Clubman, amateur explorer, big-game hunter—"

"I got you," said Kelcey. "Shall they bring him in?"

"If they find him. Has an apartment somewhere—"

"I know," said Kelcey. "He was in the *Era* last Sunday—that yarn about society bachelors of New York. Picture, too. And address."

"Send some one over to the *Era* office for a photo' of him, then. Make some excuse so they wont suspect anything. Have copies made up at once."

"Anything else?"

"'Phone Conybear's Portsmouth place. Get his private secretary—Henderson's his name; tell him that Conybear was seen in the Seventy-third National Bank to-day, cashing a check—with Philip Waring. Ask Henderson if he knows anything of Conybear's relations with Waring. Attend to that now."

"Yes sir. And you?"

"I'm coming right downtown."

CHAPTER VIII

"COME in," said the girl softly. She cast a frightened glance over her shoulder toward the telephone, giving its insistent call.

Waring hesitated on the threshhold. Somehow that backward glance of hers galvanized all his dormant suspicion.

Henderson had been *too* cool. In the excitement of the moment of his speaking with Conybear's secretary, he had been glad that Henderson was self-possessed; in the enormity of the crime, it had not seemed too absurd that preparations against the crime's commission should have been of apparent magnitude; in his hurry to get to Camp Avenue, he had been too occupied with his errand to reason calmly about the plausibility of Henderson's words.

But one thing stuck out: Henderson had stated that there was no telephone at 88 Camp Avenue, that there had not been time to install one. That was false. It might be the falsehood of ignorance, but—Waring did not think so. It had sounded all right when Henderson had said it, but now— If Conybear had feared kidnaping, and had taken precautions because of his fear, one of those precautions would be the installation of a telephone. Henderson had said that there had not been time. But Burton Conybear was the richest man in America. Within five minutes after Burton Conybear had asked for a telephone, a corps of men would have started to do the work.

Henderson, then, had uttered a knowing falsehood about the telephone. Why? There was the rub! Although his nerves tingled with suspicion, Waring did not know where those suspicions pointed. And now the girl spoke again.

"Please," she said.

She was not the merry-eyed convent-girl-on-a-lark that he had driven to a Paris hotel one night last winter. Nor was she the frightened-eyed girl whom Carvajal the dancer had accosted. In her eyes then, as now, had been fear, but it was a disdainful, prideful fear—the fear of something unclean touching her. The fear that Waring saw in her eyes now was something different; it was a fear that seemed to have eaten into her soul; it was horror.

And she was the girl of his dreams, the girl whom, absurd though it seemed, he loved. Waring no longer hesitated;

though every instinct warned him to back down the steps, he crossed the threshold. As he did so a voice called from the floor above—a masculine voice:

"Have you answered the door, Claire?"

THE girl pointed toward an open door. She put her finger on Waring's lips. The intimate touch thrilled him, although he noted, with anger against some one undefined, that the finger was hot, feverish. She motioned him toward the door, gently urged him with her hand on his shoulder now. Waring tiptoed into a large room. But he stood by the door.

"The door?" He marveled at the coolness of the girl's voice. "It's the telephone that's ringing."

"I heard the door-bell too."

Waring watched the girl. He saw her open the door, not quietly, as she had done when he rang, but noisily.

"There is no one here; it must have been the 'phone," she called.

"Well, answer it, then," snapped the voice upstairs.

It was not a request; it was a surly command. Waring trusted that he would meet the speaker soon.

"I was just going to," she replied.

She walked swiftly down the hall and lifted the receiver to her ears.

"Yes," she said. "Yes. . . . . All right."

She hung up the receiver and came down the hall. Her face was white.

"Who was it?" called the voice from upstairs.

"It was a mistake; some one got the wrong number."

Waring marveled again at her coolness, at the firmness of her voice, the nonchalance, almost, with which she uttered that which he divined to be a falsehood.

"Oh," grunted the voice upstairs. "Stay down there where you can answer it if it rings again."

Again Waring resented the quality of command in the voice, again hoped that he would meet the speaker soon. But the girl answered calmly that she would. Then, humming, she entered the room where Waring stood. She crossed to the middle of the room, Waring following her. Her humming ceased.

"Go," she said, "quickly! Mr. Henderson just telephoned. It's the second time. His car's broken down, and he is going to take the train at Rollansville. He said that you knew—that he'd tricked you into coming here—that's why I was waiting at the door—so ready. I didn't tell them—upstairs. I said — it was the grocer — please go."

WARING looked at her. Her bosom heaving, her face no longer white, but crimson with excitement, she was even more alluring than the girl he remembered.

"But you asked me in," he protested.

"I wanted to speak to you—to warn you—I thought that he"—and she pointed upstairs—"was asleep. But he's awake—please go."

"And leave you here? Tell me—where do you come in, anyway? Do you know what's going on? Is Henderson—"

"I know it all! Henderson is with them. He—they'll kill you. Please go."

"Henderson wont be here for a while yet, if he's just taking a train. I want you to explain—"

"But the others! Bergson—they'll be here. I haven't dared to go out—not even to tell the police. And I've been afraid—they might kill Mr. Conybear—and the others—"

She put her hands to her face.

"Please," said Waring. *"Please!* If you'll tell me—what you know—"

"Nothing," she answered. "Except that Mr. Conybear and some other rich men have been kidnaped by a man named Bergson, and that Henderson, Mr. Conybear's secretary, is in the plot."

"But what are you doing here? Tell me that!"

"My uncle—I have been living with him in Paris. But I was tired of France. I wanted to come back to America. I insisted, and he let me. But—there were certain things—he explained certain facts to me—that I had

not known—things that bound him to Bergson. And I told him that I'd help him—break those bonds. . . . I thought I could, but—oh, I *can't* explain now. Please go."

"To the police?"

"Yes. No—oh, I don't know. If the police could come upon them without alarming them—oh, I don't know."

Her body shook as she fought against a sob. Waring patted her shoulder.

"It's all right. I felt as you do—about the police. But—*something* must be done. Henderson fooled me—"

"Oh, if Uncle had sent the man he was going to send. He told me—when I left him—that he'd send some one. But maybe he was afraid. Bergson is dangerous—"

Waring suddenly remembered the name of her uncle. Peter Randall! And "P. R." undoubtedly stood for that name! But it was hardly the time to tell her that her uncle supplied Bergson with murderers. If she thought that Peter Randall aimed at Bergson, instead of standing with the chief of the Inner Council of the mysterious society, let her think so—for the present, at any rate.

"Look here," he said. "We can't stay here—either of us. You come with me. We'll go down to Police Headquarters. I'll tell them all I know, and you tell them what you know. We can slip out now, quietly."

"And they'll miss me, and suspect, and perhaps kill those men at once. You go. I'll stay, and—"

HER voice died away. At the front door were men entering the house. She looked wildly about her. But the only door to the room was the one through which they had entered.

"The window," she gasped.

But Waring shook his head. If he were to die, he preferred to die facing his enemies; he did not care to be shot in the back. But the first words of Bergson, bursting into the room, told him that death was not too near to him to be avoided, if his wits were quick. For Bergson's suspicions were not yet awakened.

"You, Carvajal?" he cried. "What are you doing here?"

Waring saw the light of hope—mystified, yet still hope—flash in the girl's eyes. And Waring, fighting for his life, he knew, found that his wits were sharpened by his danger.

"I saw a man spying when I left Hancock Square," he said. "He followed me, and I—I eluded him, and then *I* followed *him*. I saw him go to a telephone—in a saloon. He left and I still followed him. He came to this house, mounted the steps, and I thought that he would enter. But he seemed to change his mind. He descended and walked to your subway. I am not familiar with its passages. I lost him there. So—I returned here and decided that I would make some investigations. I rang the bell; the young lady admitted me, and she asked if I came from you. And so I knew that I had done well in coming here. For though I have only been here a moment, she has told me that she was one of us—"

"Your tongue is loose, Mademoiselle," snapped Bergson.

"Not so," retorted Waring. "It is I—I who speak too freely. But—we are both of the same society. There is no harm done."

"No," cried Bergson, "—none at all, except that the police suspect, except that your spy, one Philip Waring, has probably gone to the police by this time, if Henderson—the fool, the *fool!*"

"What did he do?" asked the girl.

"Do? The police telephoned him this afternoon—told him that there was a rumor that Conybear was kidnaped. And Henderson, because he put them off with fair words, thought that they were deceived, and so did not tell me until just now. He feared that I would take needless alarm. The fool! The fool!"

WARING had seen angry men in his life before, but he had never seen one so mastered by rage as was Bergson now. And still, though his nostrils twitched, Bergson seemed to have a dual identity, one part of which raged at the absent Henderson while the other planned swiftly.

"Henderson is coming here?" he asked the girl.

She nodded.

"You told the others?"

She shook her head. "They have been drinking. I—I am afraid of them."

Waring, with her words, thought he understood the surly quality of the voice upstairs. He looked at Bergson, to see how the man would take this news. Bergson seemed unimpressed.

"They would not drink enough to hurt themselves. Although I will admit that Cantrell and Durney, without liquor at all, are not attractive to a woman, and with a drink—" His eyes suddenly narrowed. "But how did you expect, if you had not told them, to handle this Waring—did Henderson fail to tell you that he had sent this Waring, who had telephoned him?"

"Henderson said that Waring was coming here, and told me to detain him. But those beasts upstairs—I was going to wait until Waring got here and then tell them."

"If I could only get people who do no thinking for themselves," raged Bergson. "If you had told them, when he came to the steps they would have captured him. And Henderson—if Henderson had not delayed telling me that in some manner the police had got wind of Conybear's capture by us— I am cursed with the brains, the infinitesimal brains of those who surround me, their desire to think for themselves, to save me alarm."

He turned to Ranney, who had entered the room with him.

"If that Waring has gone to the police—let those swine upstairs—"

BUT at this moment the "swine" entered, attracted by the voices downstairs.

"What's wrong?" demanded the foremost, whose voice was that of the man Waring had heard speaking to the girl.

"The police know of this place," snapped Bergson, "—doubtless of the other too. But if they go there, they will find the birds have flown, and if they come here—you shall pay for your drinking, my friends."

"We've not drunk a drop," protested the second man.

"She says you have; why lie to me?" demanded Bergson.

"Why—she—she—"

"It doesn't matter now. We will settle later the price you pay." He turned to Waring. "This Waring, who telephoned Henderson—he said that his name was Philip Waring. You, Carvajal, find out where he lives. He is a fool! None but a fool would have come to this house on so flimsy an excuse. But—he thought better of it. He may be the sort of fool to think again. He—he can't *know* anything. And he may think again before he tells the police. It is a chance. And we must take that chance. You, Carvajal, find him. Kill him!"

Waring's nerves were taut, and yet he almost laughed at Bergson's command. To find himself, and kill himself—but his sense of the ludicrous was less insistent than his sense of peril.

"And after that?"

"*You* are a man, Carvajal," cried Bergson. "No doubts, no wondering, no thinking for yourself! After that, you say? You came here, on the *Montania,* as Jacques Pelletier, eh? Then resume that name. Go to—oh, the Plutonia, and remain there."

"And if I can't get this Waring?"

"Try! I shall delegate others, too, as soon as— We have talked enough. There are two cars outside. Come—"

"But Henderson?" said one of the men.

"He thinks, and not always foolishly. He will telephone from near by before he comes here. If there is no answer, he will go to one of the offices—quick."

THERE was not a police officer in sight as he reached the sidewalk. There was not a man within a block. Helplessly—it would do no good to attack half a dozen armed men by himself—Waring watched the two cars drive off. There was not even a taxi in sight whereby he could trail them. He could think of no excuse to detain the girl. He could think of nothing, save the fact that, with the Society at his mercy, he had been duped by Henderson and was lucky to have escaped with

his life, much less capture the kidnapers of Conybear and rescue that millionaire.

This house was deserted of the Society; the Hancock Square house was deserted. Bergson, whether from caution or because it simply wasn't necessary to waste valuable time giving instructions to his latest recruit, had not told Waring where the "offices," to one of which he had said that Henderson would go, were located.

And there was no use in his trying to locate Henderson. That treacherous gentleman would doubtless do just what Bergson prophesied that he would do. From some place he would telephone, get no answer, take alarm— Waring felt like a fish out of water. He did not know what to do.

Of course, he could still go to the police. But if he did, what could he tell them, of any value? That he had located Bergson, had helped to force Burton Conybear to draw money from the bank—there was the weakness of his position. The police would not complaisantly believe everything that Waring told them. They would arrest Waring on suspicion, anyway. If he could lead the police to Conybear's prison, matters would be different. But if he could merely tell them that he had pretended to be one of Bergson's gang, and could not tell them where the gang was now— The police were an unimaginative lot; they would not believe that anyone, an innocent anyone, would have found it necessary to assist in a crime in order to get evidence. The police would ask why Waring had not denounced the plotters in the bank. They would laugh at Waring's fear that both Conybear and himself would be instantly killed. No, if Waring went to the police now, he would, at the very least, be put under surveillance. And Bergson's men would soon discover that "Carvajal" was shadowed, would wonder why, would learn that the police were shadowing, not "Carvajal," but *Waring*. Trust Bergson's crew to learn so simple a thing as that.

At this the plot to raid the Conybear vaults would be abandoned, and some other scheme would be cooked up and would be put through without interference from a baffled police-department. Waring could help better if he delayed informing the police until he was in with Bergson once more—as he would be, if he registered at the Plutonia as Bergson had commanded.

Maybe it was his duty to inform the police, but—he was not a member of the police-force. If he chose to go ahead and do some detective work of his own, he was well within his rights in so doing—the more so, inasmuch as he would be, perhaps, saving Conybear from death. For the girl whom the voice of Cantrell had called "Claire" had had the same thought, at first, as Waring: that summoning the police meant Conybear's death. There was danger that way.

Waring thought of the girl. Even now, perhaps, Bergson was discovering that she lied, that Cantrell and Durney had not taken a drink, that she was not in danger at their hands. Still, Bergson had seemed to know that the men upstairs were drinking men; Bergson could not pick and choose, in a venture like this, as the president of a corporation would select his employees. Bergson must make the best of what material he could gather.

No, Bergson would not believe their protestations of complete abstinence. Claire would not be blamed for failing to give them Henderson's message at once. And she was quick-witted enough to explain away her failure to tell Cantrell and Durney of "Carvajal's" arrival. She was clever, and probably safe enough, and yet— Waring's thoughts were not pleasant as he turned in the direction of his Twenty-eighth Street apartment. To have seen her again, and to have lost her so soon!

Waring's intention to play a lone hand hardened. The girl, like himself, was innocent of wrongdoing. But she would be subjected to arrest, to the notoriety and shame of a trial, maybe, if the police captured her along with the rest of the gang—unless Waring so arranged matters that her innocence was demonstrated in advance by her helping in the capture of the gang. Waring could not arrange that, if he were suspected by Bergson. And sus-

pected by Bergson he would undoubtedly be if he went to the police—even if the police did not arrest him, but merely had him trailed. He was back at the start of his reasoning.

Yes, he must play a lone nand, for her sake as well as his own. And despite her peril and his own, he could hardly forbear smiling as he turned down Fifth Avenue. It *was* absurd, this commission to stalk and slay himself.

CHAPTER IX

"WELL, what have you done?"

Kelcey, standing stiffly at attention, waited until the Commissioner had hung his coat and hat upon a hook. Then he answered.

"Sent over to the *Era* office for a photo' of Waring. Ought to be here any minute. Ordered a hundred copies made as soon as possible and sent to each precinct. Telephoned Portsmouth. Henderson not there."

"Not there?" Herkomer was at his desk now, and he stared at the sergeant. "Where is he?"

"Servant answered that he'd gone to New York awhile ago on business."

Herkomer frowned. "What else did you do?"

"Sent six men off in search of Waring. Looked him up in the Blue Book. Belongs to the Exploration, the Bachelors', the Mummers' and the National clubs. Man to each of them and a couple to his apartment."

"Who's his lawyer?"

"Sent a man to the *Era* as you ordered. Told him to look up Waring in the 'morgue' there. Probably have all that information when he returns, sir."

"Send some one out to interview him, whoever he is. Get all you can about Waring's finances; see if he owns any property that he could have mortgaged to Conybear. See if—"

A knock on the door interrupted him. Kelcey admitted a uniformed man who laid on the Commissioner's desk a sheet of paper. It was a brief *dossier* of Waring. Herkomer nodded comprehendingly at Kelcey.

"Very quick work, Sergeant."

He glanced at the terse sketch of the career of Philip Waring. Complete, it told little of Waring that Herkomer was not already vaguely aware of, save that it stated the name of the attorney who had, while Waring was crossing the Atlantic last winter, represented him at the early inquiries into the Carey Haig smash.

"This may help a little," said the Commissioner. "Samuel Balch is Waring's attorney. At least, he was at one time. You've worked fast, Kelcey. But I guess we need speed, at that."

"Yes sir, I imagine so. Shall I send a man out to this Balch?"

"Better. What else is being done?"

Kelcey shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing, sir. I've told Captain Casey to drop everything else the detective bureau has on hand. There was a raid planned for to-night. Strong-arm Squad was going to visit Tex Granville's house on Forty-third Street. He's running a wheel pretty openly—"

Herkomer dismissed Tex Granville's gambling-house with an impatient gesture.

"Have 'em stay here." He tilted back in his chair and eyed his subordinate, who, because of his secretarial relation, was closer to the Commissioner even than the civilian deputies or the civilian secretaries whom the exigencies of politics had forced upon him.

"KELCEY," said Herkomer, "if you were in my place now, what would you do?"

Kelcey sighed. "Well, sir, first of all I'd pray God that the newspapers wouldn't tumble to this for a while. Then I'd pray Him that I'd have a little accident, like a busted leg, sir, or smallpox, or typhoid fever, or appendicitis, or somethin' nice and mild compared to what's goin' to happen once the public learns about this—somethin' that would keep me confined to the house, and—"

"Help you dodge responsibility? I don't believe you, Sergeant," chuckled Herkomer.

"Well, I'd *pray*, anyway," grinned Kelcey.

Herkomer put humor away from

him. "The Greenhams? What are they doing?"

"What do they ever do except run up an expense-bill?" demanded Kelcey scornfully. "Watchin' the ferries and the railroad stations or somethin' nice and original like that, I suppose."

"You don't think much of that, then? But you sent, or have ordered to be sent, Waring's picture to all the 'houses?'"

"Well, sir, we got to do somethin', aint we?"

Herkomer laughed mirthlessly. He changed the subject.

"Why isn't Symons here?"

"I chased him," said Kelcey. "He was like a wild man, sir, and the night boys from the papers was about due to drop in, and I didn't want them seein' him here. They'd smell a story, and they'd *get* it, before they was through. And we don't want that to happen."

Herkomer shook his head.

"Who was going to lead the Strong-arm raid?"

"Loot'nant Dan McGaw, sir."

"Better have him do it, after all. It'll keep the newspaper men busy. Tell him to make it spectacular."

"Right, sir. All the frills? Hydraulic jack for the door, and all that?"

"Yes. And red fire and a brass band—anything to get the town talking. It'll keep, help keep, maybe, this other thing dark. And I hardly think, Kelcey, that strong-arm men are what we need for this other matter—just yet. We need—brains, Kelcey."

"Well, you got 'em, Commissioner," said Kelcey. His tone was not one of flattery; it was one of challenge. Herkomer eyed his subordinate.

"You want me to use 'em, eh?"

He stared unseeingly at the *dossier* of Philip Waring. Back of that, back of the apparent abductions of Clurg, Mikells, Prendergast and Larned, lay Peter Perkins, the half-wit from Portsmouth. And behind Peter Perkins lay the note now in Herkomer's breast pocket. In that note, cast by Burton Conybear into the dust of the Long Island road, lay the solution of the mystery, Herkomer felt.

And yet—how could that be? For *the note was old, had been written* months ago, at least, and—Herkomer's head whirled. He must not speculate; he must act. He was all business as he turned to Kelcey.

"Have a couple of men go out to Conybear's Portsmouth place. Have 'em stay there till Henderson gets back. Meanwhile, let 'em pump everyone out there. Learn as much as they can. And if they get anything at all, telephone it in."

"Yes, sir." Kelcey saluted and left the office.

HERKOMER got up and paced the floor. If the four millionaires mentioned by H. Hathway Symons had been kidnaped, and heaven knew it looked as though they had been!—and if Burton Conybear was also a prisoner—and if Philip Waring, last of a prominent family, well known socially—if Philip Waring were mixed up in the abductions, then Herkomer would need every ounce of the brains with which Kelcey credited him.

This was not an extraordinary conclusion, considering the circumstances. For, as all policemen know, there are two kinds of artists in criminality. First there is the professional criminal who has been at odds with the law since childhood, or who, having lapsed once from the straight road, finds the climb back difficult or undesirable. Second, there is the criminal who has led, so far as the world knows, so far as, often, investigation shows, a blameless life, and yet who is suddenly discovered to have planned a crime of magnitude and executed it with amazing cunning. It is these latter who are the more difficult of apprehension.

For in almost all cases they come from the brainier, better-educated class. They are men—or women, sometimes—of imagination, and imagination means forethought, painstaking care, the drawing-on of the loose ends. At least, it means that in criminality.

And so, having imagination, they are much more dangerous than those of the first class who have drifted into crime, sunk to it through psychological gravity. For the work of this second variety is not haphazard, chance-born; *it is calculated, weighed,* measured.

Herkomer knew that the case con-

fronting him was the work of the second class of criminal artistry. The appearance of Philip Waring in the affair was proof enough of that—provided, of course, that there was connection between the note found by Peter Perkins and the abductions of Clurg, Prendergast, Larned and Mikells.

And while that connection was unproved, while it was still not at all certain that Burton Conybear was, despite the note he had written, a prisoner at all, if Herkomer should assume that there was connection, it would give him a working basis to go upon. And it was rather improbable that two crimes, so similar in nature, should occur almost at the same time without relation to each other.

It was a crime of the second class. Philip Waring's blood, his position, his life, lifted him above the level of the first class of criminals. A Waring would not jeopardize his whole career without weighing the matter very carefully. He would use imagination; he would forestall the various moves of the police; he would—

Herkomer sat down at his desk. He was a good, capable executive, with a through knowledge of police methods. He had studied the Scotland Yard system and the ways of the Continental police. Educated for the bar, hoping to follow in the footsteps of his father, a well-known jurist, Herkomer, taking a course in criminal jurisprudence at a German university, had become interested in municipal government, especially that portion of it relating to enforcing and upholding the law.

Called back to America by an offer of an assistant professorship in his alma mater, his lectures on European police departments had attracted the attention of a municipal welfare league in a large Western city. He had delivered two addresses to that league. Later, the newly elected mayor of New York, anxious to put the police department on a high plane, invited Herkomer to a consultation, with the result that Herkomer had become Police Commissioner.

ASIDE from one or two matters that —like the crank who had been refused admittance to the Commissioner and later had given valuable information to a newspaper—were of no real moment, Herkomer had given complete satisfaction to the Mayor, to the press and to the public. Many changes in method and personnel of the force had proved conclusively that Herkomer was more than a mere pedantic theorist, that he was a practical business man with sound sense.

But—and it was the "but" that confronted the Commissioner now—Herkomer knew his own limitations. He was not a detective. He could direct the operation of the detective bureau, could instruct his subordinates to round up "wanted" criminals, could even advise them how to go about that rounding-up process—under certain conditions. And those conditions always had to do with a crime committed by a criminal of the first class. But when a crime such as this occurred,—there had really been nothing quite like it in his experience,—he was at a loss how to proceed.

He thought of Kelcey's description of the Greenhams' activities and shrugged his shoulders. It was but another proof of his oft-iterated opinion: that, as public opinion conceived them, there were no detectives in the world, never had been any detectives in the world. There were policemen, and that was all. And he himself was only a policeman!

And policemen's limitations were so obvious! Policemen could, if lucky, apprehend a professional criminal, after the fact. In rare cases, aided by stool-pigeons, they could catch a professional criminal in the act, or when a crime of violence was committed too openly. But rarely indeed did policemen catch a professional, habitual criminal in the midst of his plans, *before* he had committed the crime he intended.

And as for the imaginative beginner, who had planned every detail, who had brains and education—there was not a chance in the world, hardly, of apprehending such a one before the fact—not, at least, for a policeman. Superhuman detectives might do such things, but even they would need something to go upon, to work from.

Herkomer sat down again. He had

been pacing the office once more. He was dwelling too much on what *might* happen to the missing millionaires. As a matter of fact, the purpose of the kidnaping didn't matter; the kidnaping itself was a crime. And he could not say that he had nothing to go upon. He had Philip Waring's visit to the bank with Burton Conybear—which might be innocent, but which, if not, gave Herkomer a working basis.

He smiled, although a trifle ruefully. What great detective of fiction was ever given more by the author than this, as a basis from which to deduce? Yes, but Herkomer was only a policeman. And he could deduce nothing, save that it was vital to apprehend Waring. His smile became less rueful. The same deduction, and no more, would be made by the greatest detective that ever mystified an anxious reader.

He'd been forgetting the important fact that Rome was not built in a day, that it had been laid stone by stone. Herkomer's first stone was Waring. Without him as a foundation, there was nothing to build from. He must have patience.

He picked up a newspaper; a little inconspicuous paragraph leaped from the page at him. Tucked away in a corner, there was no reason why he should have read it. It was an item of a hundred words telling about an accident, fatal, to an unidentified man, apparently a Frenchman, who had been run down by an automobile at Twenty-eighth Street. Alarmed by the approach of a tenant of the apartment-house that the man was apparently intending to rob, the victim had fled, been knocked down by a car and instantly killed. And the tenant who had frightened the man to his death was Philip Waring!

HERKOMER was never bothered by reports of minor accidents that were plainly no more than accidents. Undoubtedly there was a report of this accident filed away already in the police records. Wondering that the city editors had overlooked the name of Waring and failed to "play up" the story, and deciding—what was true—that the accident was deemed so unimportant in the City of Manslaughter, as New York had been called, that even the name of Philip Waring could not give it importance, Herkomer reached for a press-button to summon a clerk. He didn't suppose that the accident possessed any more importance than it seemed to possess, but he was obsessed with Waring by now, and anything that would shed any light at all upon the character of Waring was of interest. The telephone at his elbow buzzed, and while he answered the telephone he postponed sending for the record of the accident.

The Headquarters central spoke to him.

"Officer Dooling on the wire, Commissioner."

"All right," said Herkomer.

A moment later Plain Clothes Man Dooling spoke.

"I'm up near the Sinsabaugh place, Commissioner. 'Phonin' from a drug-store round the corner on Madison Avenue. William Sinsabaugh, the railroad man and financier, sir. On the Waring matter, sir."

Kelcey had done more than tell Herkomer that he had assigned men to the pursuit of Waring. He had written their names and their posts on a slip of paper on the Commissioner's desk. Herkomer glanced at this list, now.

"You were detailed to the Exploration Club, Dooling."

"Yes sir. And the doorman there is Tom Fields. Before your time, Commissioner. He was 'broke' for drunkenness. But he aint a bad sort, and we remembered each other, and he gave me the tip-off on Waring. Waring had been in there half an hour before I got there. Been in with Mr. Sinsabaugh. They only stayed a minute or two—had a drink, I guess; then they left in a taxi outside the club. The chauffeur was there, and I asked him where they'd gone. Straight to the Sinsabaugh house, he told me. I chased right up here, and Officer Carmichael was on the corner. He knows Sinsabaugh by sight, and he said he'd been on fixed post at the corner for half an hour, and he hadn't seen Sinsabaugh nor anyone else come out. He's watchin' the house now while I 'phone.

I told him if Waring came out—Tom Field described him pretty well, and Carmichael says the man that got out of the taxi with Sinsabaugh is that man—which, of course, the chauffeur havin' no reason to lie—"

Loquacity under excitement was a thing that Herkomer had to contend with frequently. As he had brought Kelcey up awhile ago, so now he brought Dooling back to earth.

"Well, what are you driving at, Dooling?" he demanded.

Dooling coughed deprecatingly. "Sergeant Kelcey said to make a pinch, sir, and if Waring should come out of the Sinsabaugh house I'll do it—or Carmichael, if he should come this minute. But I didn't know but perhaps you was in a hurry, Commissioner, and breakin' into the house without a warrant and takin' him away—"

He paused, to let the Commissioner digest the inalienable rights of Anglo-Saxons.

"That's all right," said Herkomer. "You don't need a warrant for murder. I *am* in a hurry. Go to the Sinsabaugh house with Officer Carmichael. Ask for Waring. If he wont come out to see you, effect an entrance any way you see fit. The charge is murder. If he asks you questions, don't answer them. Bring him in!"

"Right," said Dooling. The receiver clicked, and Herkomer leaned back comfortably in his chair. He forgot all about his worry of a little while back; a policeman was all that was needed—so far. This superhuman detection business was all rot, anyway. And the accident to the unknown man in front of Waring's house was suspicious enough to justify the charge of murder and protect Herkomer from action for false arrest.

THE telephone rang again. Eagerly Herkomer answered it, to hear a very discomfited Officer Dooling state that Waring had slipped through his fingers.

"I didn't believe Sinsabaugh, sir. The servant who answered the door told me that Mr. Waring was dining with the Sinsabaughs, but Sinsabaugh came out and said there was a mistake. Mr. Waring had gone half an hour ago, and I searched the house, and—he aint there, sir. Only guest was a young lady. The butler said Waring hadn't been there, and there wasn't any place set for him, and then the servant that answered the door said he must of been mistaken, and—what'll I do, sir?"

Herkomer sighed. Then he felt his spine stiffen. William Sinsabaugh was a rising man in the city's affairs, but the law was bigger than any man. Dooling was a painstaking officer; Carmichael was no fool; there was no question but that Waring had been in the Sinsabaugh home. There was no reason for Sinsabaugh to lie about the time of Waring's departure, unless—h'm! William Sinsabaugh was a most daring financier, who had rehabilitated himself after losing one fortune, with amazing rapidity. Could it be possible that—why not? No more impossible than that Philip Waring was mixed up in the bewildering plot!

"You watch the house, Dooling. If Sinsabaugh goes out right away, follow him, and when you get a chance, 'phone here. I'll rush a relief, so that Sinsabaugh wont know that he's being followed, right up to you."

He hung up the telephone and pressed the button. To the clerk who entered, he said that he wanted Sergeant Kelcey to come to him.

CHAPTER X

A HAND, touching him on the shoulder, made Waring experience the sensation that must always be lurking close at hand for the fugitive criminal—the sensation of being "wanted." He turned like a shot, his right hand clenched, to meet the grinning face of Billy Sinsabaugh.

Waring's hand relaxed, and he forced an answering smile.

"Jove, Phil, you act as though you expected some one to knife you in the back! You started as though you were sadly in need of a drink. And right here is the place!"

Gripping Waring's hand within his own mighty fist, Sinsabaugh impelled his friend toward the portals of the

Exploration Club, in front of which he had stopped Waring.

A drink would do no harm, thought Waring.

"With you, Billy!" he exclaimed.

Together they entered the club.

"Glad I caught you," said Sinsabaugh. "And before I forget it, my thanks for piloting Mrs. Bill Wife home for me."

"Some day, if you continue neglecting her in the shameful fashion that has become your practice, Mr. William Sinsabaugh, I shall pilot her *away* from the Sinsabaugh mansion," said Waring.

"Well,"—and Sinsabaugh eyed his drink knowingly,—"if you ever elope with my wife, Phil Waring, I'll strike you off my list of acquaintances."

"Devilish unclubby of you, Billy! Do you see me?"

"Here's looking at you!"

They set their glasses down. Sinsabaugh looked the least bit embarrassed.

"Phil!"

"Fire away!"

"About that position I offered you awhile back. Mrs. Bill Wife told me this morning something of what you'd been telling her yesterday—very crude, I thought it, talking about another man fifteen minutes after I'd been summoned for speeding from the railroad-station to the house; but let it pass!" He frowned heavily at Waring.

"Mrs. Willy *must* be more careful or you'll be shooting me," laughed Waring.

"Uh-huh! Well, Phil, how about it?"

"Many thanks, old top, and will you let a beggar starve in his own good way?"

"Told her so! You're a stubborn jackass, Phil Waring. But you can't get out of it as easily as all that. Mrs. William Sinsabaugh has been giving much thought to you, and—well, I've telephoned your apartment three times, and Mike said you were out somewhere, and I didn't dare go home without you, so—come on."

"Eh? Sorry; it can't be done," said Waring.

"How chipper we are! Do you realize that Mrs. Bill Wife told me to come home with you, or not at all?"

"Sorry." Waring smiled, but he began to itch with impatience. Billy Sinsabaugh was one of the very best, but—and Waring's eyes grew merry—Waring had a most important engagement: to seek himself and do murder. The merriment left his eyes. Somewhere in this city Claire was undergoing cross-examination at the hands of Bergson.

"Got to toddle along, Billy," he said. Not for a moment did he think of confiding in his friend. Sinsabaugh would listen, exclaim loudly, and—take matters into his own hands. That meant the police.

"Nothing doing! Listen, Phil! Madge insists that you come up to dinner. Didn't you promise her yesterday that you would?"

Waring had forgotten all about his promise.

"Yes, but something has turned up, Billy, and—"

"And you think we'll let you off, eh? I like that."

"But I intended to telephone, Billy."

"You'd forgotten all about it," reproached Sinsabaugh. "And after Madge has dug up Miss Claire Sorel, niece of some eccentric old buck named Randall, worth a pot of money—eh, what's wrong, old man?"

"What's her uncle's name?" demanded Waring, harshly.

"Randall—Peter Randall. Expatriate. Lives in Paris, I believe. What about it?"

WARING controlled his features as best he could.

"You say that she's going to be at your house to-night? Sure?"

"Why not? I 'phoned Madge awhile ago saying that I hadn't been able to locate you, and she said that she'd found Miss Sorel at the Plutonia and that Miss Sorel was coming to dinner all right and that I *must* locate you. You see, Phil, you've been so blamed shy and offish since the Carey Haig smash that we don't trust you. You're too frequent with your last-minute regrets."

There was some little truth in Sinsabaugh's remarks. People urged Waring; they refused to take "no" for an

answer. Waring had been compelled—or felt that he had been, which amounted to the same thing—to accept many invitations, to send regrets later. It was silly of him, he knew, and yet he had a stubborn pride that recked not of silliness. He was not the decently-well-to-do Phil Waring any more; and he would not become a hanger-on at society's affairs—which, if he but knew it, was one of the reasons, though perhaps a minor one, why people still wanted him so badly.

It was impossible that the Claire of the Paris restaurant, of the house on Camp Avenue, should be the Claire Sorel that was Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh's friend. But it was also quite impossible that Waring should be embarked upon so amazing and desperate an adventure as he found himself let in for. It was still more impossible that Burton Conybear should be the captive of a band of criminals. Yet these last two things had come to pass. And it seemed that the first had, also.

"Are you *sure* that Miss Sorel will be there? Has Madge heard from her to-day?"

"Ten minutes before I 'phoned—and that was half an hour ago—Madge had her on the 'phone at the Plutonia. Why, Phil Waring, you old hider-out in the tall grass, have you seen Miss Sorel? Do you know her?"

"Why—er—maybe I do," said Waring stammeringly. "I—I'd better run home and dress and—"

"Not to-night. This is informal to the last notch. I made Madge promise that it would be on my first night home with her in months. You come as you are, and you come now, d'ye hear?"

"I hear," said Waring.

THEY left the club and taxied directly to the Sinsabaugh mansion, Waring hardly hearing, on the short ride, anything that Sinsabaugh said. For his mind, bewildered enough, had still more amazement to contend with. How *could* the Claire of the Camp Avenue house be going out to dine this evening, after the events of the past few hours? How was it possible? How could she have been at the Plutonia half or three-quarters of an hour ago? She had been at the Camp Avenue house at that time. And there could not be two Peter Randalls, living in Paris, each with a niece named Claire. That was stretching coincidence too far, to believe that. And the "P. R." who had written the note that Waring had found on Carvajal *must* be Peter Randall, for "P. R." had sent Carvajal to Bergson, and the Claire of the Camp Avenue house had said that her uncle had intended to send a man to the chief of the mysterious menacing society.

But he could not unriddle these perplexities now. He would meet Miss Sorel in a few minutes; he could wait until then.

Upstairs, in Sinsabaugh's study, Waring asked permission to use the telephone. An explanation of his absence from the apartment was really due Mike, his Japanese. Also it would be just as well to give Mike a hint, necessarily vague because of Sinsabaugh's presence, as to the use of discretion should any inquiries be made for Mr. Philip Waring.

But Central reported to him that she could not raise his apartment; and Waring, after a final futile protest as to his daytime garb, descended to the drawing-room with Billy.

Madge Sinsabaugh and a young woman were awaiting them. Waring heard himself introduced; he felt himself bowing over the hand that the young woman who answered to the name of Miss Sorel extended toward him. He knew that he was uttering some commonplace, but what the words were he could not have told.

For he had convinced himself that Miss Sorel and the girl whom he had last seen in the company of Simon Bergson *must* be the same person. It was thoroughly incredible that it should prove otherwise. Coincidence was stretched to the last notch, if there were *two* Peter Randalls, and *two* nieces named Claire.

Keyed up, firmly of the belief that ten minutes alone with Claire would solve the mystery, would free Conybear, would round up Bergson, would restore him his pilfered fortune, reaction was too great. For the tall girl with the

bloom of youth gone from her was not his Claire!

MECHANICALLY he proceeded to the dining-room. Seated, he rallied himself. Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh was nothing if not open. She threw the two at each other's heads without a pretense at disguising her match-making intentions. And big, blundering Sinsabaugh, who was so clever at business but such a puppet in the hands of his butterfly wife, yielded to Madge's desire. He began telling her of his trip to Chicago, and Waring eyed the girl across the table from him. It was not Mrs. Willy's intention to make the conversation general, and though Waring could have cheerfully spanked his hostess, she was, after all, his hostess.

"You have been in New York some time, Miss Sorel?" he said.

"Not of recent years," she answered. "You see, I have been in a convent so many years, in France."

More coincidence! The Claire that Waring knew had been brought up in a French convent!

"Indeed!" said Waring.

"Yes. Had it not been for my great good fortune in meeting Mrs. Sinsabaugh, some months ago, in Paris, I should not have an acquaintance in this country."

"No relatives?"

"Distant. And not near New York."

Mrs. Willy, one ear cocked to overhear what they might say, entered into the conversation here.

"Yes, Phil. I met this dear girl at the Russian Embassy, at a tea, and she told me that she wanted to visit America—small wonder, her birthplace!—but that her uncle was definitely tied to Paris, and I told her to come over and that I would find friends for her. It shows how highly I regard you, Philip Waring, that you are the first I find for her."

The color receded from Miss Sorel's face. Waring had come to the conclusion that her rather high coloring was not natural. Somehow, he sensed that this girl was not exactly the sort of girl that Mrs. Willy would ordinarily take up. Subconsciously he had come to this conclusion, influenced perhaps by the idea that she rouged quite boldly.

But he was wrong; she did not rouge. Her face was now as pale as wax. Indeed, she seemed startled and, oddly enough, a trifle younger than he had mentally put her down as being. It was as though her face, schooled to certain expressions, took on a hardness that, when she gave way to a natural emotion, vanished. At least, if it did not entirely vanish, the rigidity of expression that had made her seem —well, thirty—disappeared. She didn't look over twenty-five now, as she leaned across the table.

"I—I—I'm sorry, but—when we were introduced—I'm stupid at such things. Your name is—Philip Waring?"

"Why, yes," said Waring, surprised.

"That's funny," exclaimed Sinsabaugh. "When I told Waring your name, he acted as though I'd struck him. And now you seemed all fussed up because Phil's name is what it is."

"Yes. I thought he was named Deering," said the girl.

Mrs. Willy looked from one to the other of them. "Well, what does it all mean?" she asked wonderingly.

But Miss Sorel had regained her self-control. "Why, did I make a display of myself? It's nothing, but—I have a very distant cousin, an Englishman, by that same name, and—I was rather startled."

THE hard expression had returned to her features. In her eyes was a contemplative look; Waring had seen the same cruel contemplation in the eyes of a cat. And the girl was lying. Her explanation was so thoroughly lame that he wondered that Sinsabaugh and his wife didn't see it. But they didn't. They accepted her statement as fact.

"Well, Phil, I know that you haven't any cousin, whose name is like Miss Sorel's. Why the amazement on your part awhile ago?" Sinsabaugh felt no strain, but there was a silence and he filled it in.

"You imagine things, Billy," said Waring easily. "I wasn't amazed a

bit; I was merely delighted." He smiled at Miss Sorel. "You haven't been over very long, then?"

"On the *Candric,* last week. I was to have sailed with Mrs. Sinsabaugh, but I had some things to attend to in London for my uncle; so we thought, Mrs. Sinsabaugh and I, that perhaps it would be as well for me to sail from there. Besides, I really wanted to look around New York all by myself for a few days."

"To become acquainted with the city, of course," said Waring.

Then Mrs. Willy came to his rescue with a question as to whether or not Miss Sorel had seen something or other. Waring didn't know what it was; he didn't care. He only knew that that sixth sense that had saved him from a wild beast in Uganda, that had protected him from the knife of Carvajal yesterday, was working in his behalf again. The girl was compelled to look at Mrs. Sinsabaugh. Waring could study her. Yes, she was hard; she was no girl fresh from a convent. And there was menace about her. Waring felt his muscles grow taut. He mentally shrugged; it was a coincidence, this girl's name and her uncle's name. And there was plenty of real danger awaiting him without his borrowing imaginary troubles. He would get Mrs. Willy alone in the drawing-room later on and ask some questions.

BUT having come to this healthy conclusion, Waring had no opportunity to act upon it. The butler came to Sinsabaugh's side and said something softly.

"Absurd!" exclaimed Sinsabaugh. "There's some mistake."

"They are very insistent, sir," said the butler.

"What you been doing, Phil?" demanded Sinsabaugh. "Candace, here, says that two policemen, one in uniform, are in the front hall, and want to see you."

Waring was on his feet in a moment. What the police wanted with him he could not know for certain, but it undoubtedly had to do with the abduction of Burton Conybear; the abduction was known; Waring had been seen with the financier. And once in the hands of the police, Waring could be of no more aid to Claire, or to Conybear, for that matter, he was certain.

"This—this is an odd affair, Billy," he said. "Come with me, will you?"

"Surely!" Sinsabaugh was on his feet.

So too was Miss Sorel, staring wildly at Waring. But he had no time to ponder on the meaning of her expression. He whispered swiftly to Sinsabaugh.

"Send Candace out to tell them that I'm not here; he is mistaken. Clear away my place at the table; say I haven't been here—"

"What's wrong, Phil?" demanded Sinsabaugh.

"Can't tell you now. Got to get away. Can you let me out the side door—quickly?"

"Wait here," snapped Sinsabaugh to the butler. The big man had not regained his lost fortune several times over by hemming and hawing. He was a big blunderer socially, but he was a steel trap when it came to action.

He led Waring to the side door. "Hustle," he said. "And—Phil, can't you give me a hint?"

"Not now, old man." Waring peered down the side-street. There were no policemen in sight.

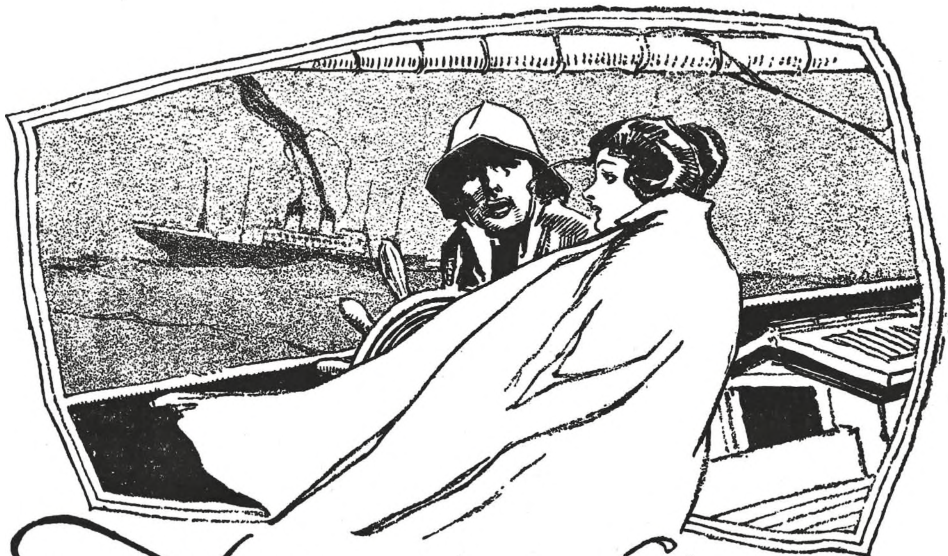
"Need anything? Money—*anything?*"

"Not a thing. I'll 'phone, or something, and—Billy, if you hear anything, it's—"

"Go on, man; if it should happen to be the truth, it'll be all right, because you did it. But I've a pull in this town, Phil, and—"

He didn't finish the sentence; Waring was gone. Sinsabaugh tugged at his mustache. He returned thoughtfully to the dining-room. Rather blood-and-thundery, this, he told himself. What the deuce had Phil been doing? But it didn't matter what; Phil Waring was his friend. He went to see the policemen in the front hall. Billy Sinsabaugh was loyal to the core.

The next installment of "*Ransom!*" will appear in the March BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale February 1st.



The Luck of the Lucy Lermond

by Newell O. Morse

CHAPTER I

THE topsail schooner *Lucy Lermond* was far down by the head and fighting for her life. Lurching feebly to starboard, she groaned inwardly as she tried to right herself. But the weight of the flooded decks was too much, and the next moment she lay back wearily, with her drowned scuppers flush with the green ocean alongside. The clank of pumps sounded in harsh rhythm through the sift of the falling snow, and the men who had labored for interminable hours stared hopelessly at the ever-narrowing freeboard.

The wind dropped to a calm. The sea flattened itself to a long, sinuous swell, and in the soft density of the snow the *Lucy Lermond* lay locked in a world no larger than her own radius.

Young Captain Southard and old Seth Kendal, his mate, stood in the stern of the schooner and peered keenly to starboard. From time to time they turned their heads as though trying to catch some sound from the sightless waste. The Mate grew restless in the wait, and took a few steps along the deck. Twice he looked furtively at the younger man, but stopped each time before he spoke.

The Captain suddenly stepped to the wheel, spun it over and thrusting his face close to the unlighted binnacle fixed his eyes on the compass. The needle swung uneasily off and on the lubbers-mark, but there was no change of course. A moment later he straightened up, gave the wheel a contemptuous shove and walked forward.

The Mate, who had watched every movement, knew that the *Lucy* no

longer answered her helm. But the Captain's face carried no change of expression as he resumed his position by the quarter-rail. For a long time the men stood still and erect, peering out across the waters, until the light faded and their figures were barely distinguishable in the snowy gloom.

Full darkness soon overtook the *Lucy.* The shift at the pumps was changed, and a boy walked aft and descended to the cabin. He returned a moment later with a lighted binnacle-lamp. For an instant its yellow rays flashed on Captain Southard's face, as he stood framed in a hood of snow. Not a word was said, but the clear-cut features of the Captain bespoke the last word of poise and determination.

THE Mate shuffled forward among the men. He returned immediately and approached close to the Captain as though afraid to speak out loud.

"It's no use, Josh."

"Very well, Seth," came the quick reply; "take the boat, draw lots with the men and go."

"Now look here, Josh," protested the gruff voice out of the darkness, "I know you are captain, but I am almost your guardeen, and I guess I have something to say. I don't forget what your father said to me as he lay dying. 'Seth,' says he, 'I've nothing to show for my life but my boy and the *Lucy Lermond.* Take care of my boy, Seth,' he says, 'and the luck of the *Lucy* will bless you.' Now I propose—"

"Never mind, Seth," the Captain interrupted respectfully. "The Lord knows you have done your part. But I am still counting on the luck. We've got it!" he exclaimed doggedly. "The *Lucy* still floats, and the sea is as still as a millpond."

The Mate stamped across the deck and spat angrily into the water.

"Fine!" he ejaculated, in his sarcastic ill-humor. "Afloat by the four-inch freeboard of the hatch-combings, fifty miles from the devil knows where, and the night as black as pitch."

He turned his eye gloomily inboard. Deckhouse and lifeline were mantled with a foot of snow, and the Captain's form bulked indistinctly from the rail.

"Did you tell the men they could go, Seth?" The voice of the Captain was cool and steady, but the Mate pretended that he did not hear, until the question was repeated. Then he shuffled his feet for a moment and answered in rank mutiny.

"No, I didn't, Josh. They can't go unless you go with them."

The Captain accepted this speech in silence, but started rapidly forward.

"That boy gets worse and worser," commented the Mate hopelessly. "Hello! What's up?"

A rushing sound of wind broke out of the gloom.

SUDDENLY the Captain turned and hurried back to the wheel. Down went the helm—hard. The main boom swung heavily to starboard, and the block fetched up with a yank. Captain Southard shifted to the weather side of the wheel and looked anxiously from the compass to the flapping mainsail. "Come on, old girl," he coaxed. "Bear up two points, and I'll have you on the beach, by daybreak."

The *Lucy* heeled deep under the stress of the sail, but head up she could not. The sunken bows plunged aimlessly into the swells, and the course veered hither and thither regardless of the rudder.

"The *Lucy* wont lay up to this breeze, Seth," admitted the Captain after several ineffectual attempts to come to. "Slack off the main sheet, and we'll run for it."

The Mate obeyed, and easing the rope, allowed the boom to swing far over. The stern backed slowly up; the bow paid off, and the *Lucy Lermond* started to run before the wind.

Before she had gone twice her length the sound of the pump ceased and the men came running aft. They stumbled over one another in a panic of fear; and several, working frantically, lifted the small boat to the rail. Another sprang to the main halyards. Before he could slack away the Mate jumped forward, seized the frightened man by the collar and threw him among the men who had already poised the small boat outward.

"Quitting cold, are you?" he roared

as he swept into the group of astonished men. "I'll give you something to quit about! Back to the pumps before I break your necks."

The man who held the balance of the boat as it rested on the rail ducked before the Mate's onslaught. The boat fell with a splash alongside; frantic hands grasped for it as it fell astern, but in that instant it was gone.

The crest of a wave curled clear above the forward bulwarks and swept aft to the Captain's feet.

"She's sailing herself under!" shrieked a sailor as he clambered into the rigging.

"Let go the main halyards!" The Captain gave his order sharp and incisive, but without leaving the wheel. "Get out of the rigging, you big skulk," he commanded. "Get that pump a-going, and we'll try to lift a fore staysail."

THE mainsail came down on the run. The *Lucy Lermond* summoned her last ounce of bouyancy and threw off with a wearied heave the wave that threatened to engulf her. The men stumbled forward. Instantly came the ratchety sound of the setting staysail, and once more the pump broke out in its terrifying clangor.

The men worked in desperation. The pull of the staysail tended to lift the bows; the pumps held their own; and once, with a lucky roll, the scuppers cleared.

Captain Southard was forward with the men. Catching the recurrence of the lifting roll, he plugged the scuppers tight. Four men could work the pump to its full capacity, and he put the others to bale the wash.

The *Lucy* gained bouyancy. The following sea boosted her along, and she made less water as she ran before the wind. Desperation gave way to hopefulness, but in the wake came weariness, and human fatigue threatened to sacrifice the battle of the night.

The endurance of the crew was on the ragged edge. Once the clank of the pump stopped as the man at the lever fell senseless from exhaustion; and Captain Southard himself felt a numbing weariness creep over him. The fight was well-nigh hopeless; then like a flash came the violent reaction of his will.

"Not yet—not yet," his will hammered insistently. Then "Why" came the insidious question of his wearied body. He shook his tired body into a semblance of life and rubbed his eyes that he might see clearly.

In that instant he read his answer. "I've got to live, because I have not yet begun to live."

"Not yet begun to live," he repeated to himself. He had known it well since the last voyage. All his previous years had been filled with simple monotonous memories of the sea. Old Seth, as sponsor and protector of his youth, had supplied the companionship of his narrow world. But two weeks on shore while the *Lucy* underwent repair had brought the great enlightenment. As plainly as a picture on the wall of snow he saw the girl who had entered into his life. She like himself was an orphan, and they had been linked together from the first in a bond of sympathy.

She had trusted and confided in him, he remembered in happiness of spirit. Even now she was awaiting his return. His determination aroused him to full wakefulness, but keenly alert to the weakness of his men, he sent half of them to the forecastle for an hour's rest.

WHEN Captain Southard descended to the cabin to look at the barometer, the snow had driven off. The falling glass held no promise, save the assurance of wind and more wind; and on his return to the deck he saw the black surface of the ocean flecked here and there with ragged white.

The sea was beginning to break!

Captain Southard now determined to set the mainsail. If the *Lucy* could hold up her bows, she might race ahead of the breaking waves and save herself from being swamped. As an added precaution he ordered boards and canvas fastened along the rail. This added to the height of the protecting bulwark and kept out the first swashes that otherwise would have swept inboard.

The *Lucy* woke up under the thrust

of additional canvas and floundered off through the night as though fleeing from the wrath to come. It was obvious that the schooner made less water as she ran free, and Captain Southard determined to hold her off until daylight. For two days he had been shut in by fog and snow, while he drifted about at the mercy of wind and tide. His position was largely conjecture, and he knew that blind luck only could lead them clear of the fang-like rocks that snagged the coast to leeward.

When the second relief at the pumps was called, the men responded with new life, and the young Captain ordered the Mate below for an hour's rest. Old Seth grumbled at the command, and before turning below, went up forward. Instantly he returned, and seizing the Captain excitedly by the arm, led him to the bow.

"Listen!" he said.

The Captain turned his head; only the white crests of the crashing waves broke the surrounding gloom, but somewhere out of that black void beyond burst a weird, unearthly shriek. Both men strained their ears to get the bearing of the sound, but riding wildly on the gale, the fiendish echoes swept from all points of the compass. Nearer, then far away, flitting like a wraith of the storm, the shriek sounded. Then the wind dropped in a sudden lull, and this time there was no mistake. Loud and terrible it screamed out of the murk—dead ahead.

"The whistling-buoy on the Devil's Kitchen," shouted Seth as the *Lucy* plunged on into the smother. "And we're getting there mighty fast."

Even as he spoke, the crackling boom of a heavy surf bore up sullenly against the wind.

Instinctively the Mate laid hold of the staysail sheet and the Captain started aft, shouting as he ran.

"Hard down the helm."

Up came the *Lucy*. The main boom was hauled in close, and the Mate called for help to draw over the staysail.

By pure luck and momentum the *Lucy* came up without shipping a sea. For a moment she lay to, quietly, but deep in the water and by the head; she could not make way. Captain Southard felt the drag of the broadside drift, and counted the distance to the surf in minutes.

CAPTAIN SOUTHARD tried every trick of his skill and experience to gain a single point to windward. From the first minute, however, the feel of the wheel told him he was losing ground. The schooner yawed widely, and the Captain brought her up sharply with the rudder. At the same moment a huge sea smashed green over the rail. The men at the pump were knocked off their feet and barely saved themselves by clutching wildly at the lifelines. The crushing flood rimmed the bulwarks, and under its weight the *Lucy* lay like a dead thing.

The helm was useless now, and Captain Southard went forward to the men. They had turned gamely to the pumps, but the depth of the water on the decks told plainly that the last blow had opened a leak that would not be denied until the *Lucy* rested on the bottom. It was nearing the end, but not yet. A ragged ledge broke out of the drift so close at hand that the men felt the spouting foam on their faces, but the backwash of the breakers swerved them on. In that instant they passed the first barrier, and lurching, diving and sidestepping, the *Lucy Lermond*, unmanageable and running wild, lunged into the labyrinth of the Devil's Kitchen.

Old Seth groped aft along the lifeline. His voice was indistinguishable above the roar of the wind and surf, but he pointed to leeward.

Suddenly in the midst of a demoniacal scream, the whistle cut off abruptly.

The two men looked at each other. The *Lucy* had swung wide under the pressure of the forward sail and was now running with a strong current. The situation was obvious to both men.

"We've passed into the lee of the Devil's hump," shouted Captain Southard, and they saw a towering wall of granite loom frightfully out of the morning mist, as they dashed past. It was that barrier which had cut off the sound of the whistling buoy.

The heave of the waves, now broken by innumerable breakwaters, grew perceptibly less; but it was too late for the *Lucy*. Her bow was buried beneath the level of the waves; the stern pointed high, and the rudder showed out of water—though the staysail was slacked so far off that it still pulled the *Lucy* along on her erratic course.

Once caught in a giant eddy, the helpless schooner spun like a top with her sunken bows for a pivot, drove to starboard for a hundred yards and then, catching the wind, staggered back for her last run. Then the fog closed in, and once more the *Lucy Lermond* was alone in her little world.

THE wrench and twist of the eddy had shattered the reserved bouyancy that had kept the *Lucy* afloat so long. The air compressed against the cabin bulkhead broke through, and the stern of the schooner settled slowly. The wind still filled the staysail, and its strong pull forced the *Lucy* along, more below than above the surface. The men took to the rigging, postponing the awful plunge to the last second.

Captain Southard remained on deck. He said nothing as the men clambered aloft, but stood by the wheel as the rising water swirled around his knees.

The water rose slowly to the Captain's hips. Once he looked toward the top of the deckhouse, now an island in the flooded deck. The cold water chilled his limbs to paralysis, but he stood steadfast in his tracks. So slowly did the *Lucy* drift that the ripples ceased to show along the break of the deckhouse. Old Seth noticed it first. Slowly the minutes passed, but he did not speak. Suddenly he splashed to the main rigging, and snatching an iron belaying-pin from the rail, attached it to the slack of the halyards and threw it overboard.

The weight slackened in his hand, and he hauled it in quickly. Once more he threw it far out from the schooner; and this time he let out a yell as he drew it in rapidly. It came up covered with mud.

"We're here!" he shouted. "Of course the *Lucy* wouldn't sink until she found a good safe bottom; and I'm a sinner," he continued, "if she hasn't drifted clean through the Devil's Kitchen, and crossed Black Water Channel to the flats."

Captain Southard waded across the deck and took the old Mate's hand in a long silent grip. They were both shivering from the cold, wet, hungry and miserable. But rising high above their physical ills was the transcendant joy of their unbroken faith—the luck of the *Lucy Lermond* was still their own.

CHAPTER II

THE fog lightened, and the falling tide revealed the *Lucy* resting on a bottom of soft mud which stretched in broad flats from the mainland. But so close had been her call that a scant three lengths separated her from the deep waters of the channel. However, mud-borne is next to waterborne; and mud-borne, the *Lucy* rose triumphant from the tide.

The leak was located and temporarily repaired. And on the second high water, a strong pull brought the *Lucy* to the deep channel, where with her own sail-power she beat up the inside passage to the harbor. Temporary repairs gave way to permanent repairs, and ten days later the gallant *Lucy*, hiding her thirty years under a new coat of paint, was ready for another run.

On the evening the *Lucy* left the dry dock, Captain Southard, resplendent in a square-cut blue coat and a high starched collar that sawed murderously at his throat, appeared from the cabin and started for the gangway.

Old Seth was smoking disconsolately on the after bitts as the Captain passed. His gloom deepened still further when he noticed the bouyant expression on the young man's face.

The Captain was halfway down the gangway when the Mate hailed him.

"Captain Josh!"

"Yes, Seth?" queried the younger man, turning in respectful attention.

"You haven't forgotten that night in the Devil's Kitchen?"

"No, Seth."

"It looked mighty dubious?"

"A mighty close call, Seth."

"Well, don't tempt fate any further by committing matrimony."

Captain Southard's face flushed red, and he turned as though to make a hot retort. But Old Seth squared around on the bitts and held out a deprecating hand. "Remember, Josh, I'm almost your guardeen."

Josh did remember, and his face broke out in an indulgent smile.

AT midnight Old Seth was aroused by a loud whistling on the deck above, and a moment later Captain Southard descended to the cabin.

"It's all fixed, Seth," he shouted. "Next Wednesday."

"No!" snorted Seth incredulously. "Next Wednesday we will be loading lumber up the river, and a week later we will be off to Kingston."

"But Seth," returned the Captain, "I am going to let you take the *Lucy* up the river to get her load; then you can stop on the way back for me—and my wife. Isn't it great, Seth? Helene is going with us."

When the *Lucy* returned with her decks piled high with lumber, Captain Southard was waiting with his bride. And a day later they sailed with a strong and favoring breeze.

Old Seth thawed out thoroughly before they reached the Gulf Stream, and with all his tact and knowledge endeavored to widen for Helene the narrow world of the little schooner. In half earnestness he insisted that as a sailor's wife, she should acquire the knowledge of her husband. And hours were spent in mastering the intricacies of knots and splices. In pleasant weather he taught her how to box the compass, and how to steer "full and by" when the wind headed them.

But with the exception of the first voyage, there was no luck; instead, an unseen and intangible foreboding crept over the little schooner. Both the Captain and the Mate felt it plainly, but each in deference to the other said nothing.

The running-gear fouled, and had to be replaced. Sails blew out; and continual docking and repairs ate up the small margin of profit until Captain Southard was compelled to figure his year's labor at a loss.

Old Seth, as sensitive to the success of the *Lucy* as though she were his own flesh and blood, felt the burden keenly.

But not once were their difficulties mentioned to Helene. The Captain, still masterful and supreme in her affection, filled her little world, and if she sensed misfortune, she said nothing.

FINALLY came the inevitable time when Helene should have stayed at home. Winter was approaching, and Captain Southard feared that some accident or baffling storm might delay them beyond the time destined for the great event. But Helene clung to her husband when he suggested that she remain behind. "Just one more voyage," she pleaded. "I cannot stand the separation, and the luck of the *Lucy* calls me and tells me that I should go."

Reluctantly Captain Southard consented, but before the *Lucy* had taken a dozen dips in the open ocean he regretted his decision. The scales fell from his eyes, and he saw things in their awful possibility. Helene had not complained. Her husband knew that she had been happy; but he also knew that the fullness of her life was being wasted. He reflected poignantly on the pitiful attempts of his wife to make the dingy cabin homelike. Now the coming event of motherhood demanded the full measure of its worth.

Captain Southard wrestled for hours with himself. Once he was on the point of turning back. But so far this particular voyage had been auspicious. It promised the first real luck of the year. The wind was fair and blowing heavily. The favorable charter covering his cargo offered an opportunity to make good the shortage of the summer and begin the home which he was now determined to provide.

Under a sudden impulse he descended to the cabin and stepped noiselessly to his wife's room. She stirred uneasily under his gaze and opened her eyes. Her face was drawn and haggard from the weariness of those who cannot sleep.

"Helene," he whispered as he touched her hand, "at the end of the voyage, I

remain at home with you." The pressure of his hand was returned, and he sat silently on the edge of her berth as she fell into a restful slumber.

THAT night a council was called in the cabin. Captain Southard opened the subject abruptly.

"How many more years is the *Lucy Lermond* good for, Seth?" Both of his listeners looked up in surprise, but Seth spoke promptly in defense of the vessel.

"I figure she will last about as long as those who know how to take care of her."

"You know, Seth," replied the Captain, "that we are not making expenses these days. The steamers are cutting under our freight-rates; and the wear of the running-gear takes up all our earnings, and more too. The *Lucy Lermond* has just about reached her limit. Some day her seams will open in a seaway, and the whole works will drop through to the bottom. Now I propose that on our return trip we lay the *Lucy* up in the creek, and—"

An audible groan quivered throughout the schooner. Each one of the three looked with startled eyes, as though to ask the others if they had heard it.

Captain Southard jumped from his chair and started for the companionway. His wife clung to him in terror, and turning to reassure her, his eyes fell on the barometer. "There's a gale coming down with a whoop," he said as calmly as he could. "It often howls that way before a storm."

CHAPTER III

HELENE said nothing, but stepped quietly into her little room. For the first time in her life, the terror of the deep was upon her. Suddenly the *Lucy* swung dizzily and staggered. There was a grinding crash and a shudder, and the schooner heeled deeply to leeward. Then came a quick jerk, as the deck-load snapped its lashings, and tore through the bulwarks to the sea.

Captain Southard's voice rose in a startled shout as he luffed the *Lucy* into the wind.

His voice pealed like a trumpet above the gale. But no answer came from the forward deck, except the swash of the waves as they beat through the broken bulwarks.

"Seth!"

"Seth!" he called again despairingly.

"Here, Josh," the voice of the Mate came feebly from a pile of wreckage; "but I can't get up."

The roar and crash of the sea drowned out the sound of the old man's groan, and Captain Southard felt a sickening despair.

Where were the other men? Had they gone overboard with the deck-load, or were they bruised and senseless upon the deck?

The rudder bucked heavily in the cross-swells, and the Captain could not leave it for an instant. Once more the old man's voice rose in a painful appeal for help. Captain Southard stepped forward but was compelled to back hastily and steady the wheel. The horror of his drowned men rested on him fearfully, and in equal agony of spirit he realized the plight of the three survivors. He could not leave the wheel, and Seth might be dying among wreckage. His wife—

A shadow cut off the light from the cabin scuttle, and a small figure stepped out to the deck.

"I heard a voice," she said, "up forward. It's Seth," she exclaimed, "and he is hurt!"

Her face was not visible in the darkness, but the Captain's shown dimly in the yellow light of the binnacle. Helene read it as plain as day.

"Full and by?" she questioned, as she stepped behind her husband, and reaching forward, took the wheel.

"Watch out for the kick," he warned, "and lay her close up to the wind."

The kick of the rudder came promptly. But Helene held fast, steadying the schooner into the wind, while her husband, searching the forward deck, found his injured mate and bore him to the cabin.

SOMEHOW the night passed. The gale increased with the dawn. Captain Southard, haggard from his night's vigil at the wheel, looked blankly across

the heaving crests and thought fearfully of the two in the cabin, helpless in themselves, and dependent on him.

The schooner, lightened of her deck-load, made fair weather under the skillful guidance of her captain, but the *Lucy* was far from being a one-man boat, and the increasing storm was without pity.

The Captain could not take his hand from the wheel to hold the cup of coffee that his wife brought him at daybreak, but he sipped it gratefully as she held it to his lips. The kick of the rudder was now far beyond the strength of Helene, and Captain Southard stacked his endurance against the duration of the storm.

During the afternoon a strange hammering sound came up through the funnel-like companionway, and a moment later there came a series of double thumps on the stairs.

The rudder bucked violently. Captain Southard braced his feet, and summoning all his strength to meet it, fixed his eyes on the flutter of the mainsail as he held the *Lucy* close to the wind.

"Good morning, Captain Josh."

The Captain looked down to an apparition on improvised crutches that stood in the exit of the companionway.

"Real weather, this afternoon, aint it!" the apparition inquired cheerfully.

THE Captain saw that Helene had not told Seth of the disaster that had overtaken the crew when the deck-load had gone overboard. It was no time for sentiment, and Captain Southard told him quickly.

Old Seth took a long breath and looked forward across the swimming wreckage. Then, bracing his crutches on the leaping deck, he started to edge along the rail.

"Give her a wipe into the wind, Josh, when I hold up my hand," he shouted over his shoulder.

"No," called Captain Southard unexpectedly. "We've no time to heave to—now."

Old Seth stopped in surprise—then looked dubiously around the heaving horizon.

"There's no telling where we are, Josh," he offered. "The currents are changing this time o' year, and the drift of the storm—land may be two hundred miles away—or fifty. It's an awful chance with night coming on."

Captain Southard did not answer, but looked doggedly into the binnacle.

Seth hesitated for a moment only. Then as though reading the Captain's thoughts, he stumped aft, and bracing himself with his good leg against the wheel-box, reached forward and took the wheel.

"Get a little rest, Josh," he pleaded as the Captain stepped to the companionway. "I'll call you if I can't hold her, and then we can heave to until morning."

Captain Southard stretched his stiffened limbs.

Rest!

The demand was peremptory. But before seeking his bunk he stepped to his wife's room and looked through the open door.

She lay in her berth sleeping uneasily. Once she stirred and he backed away hastily. But he crept back fascinated. The bond of their affection was so true that he read her message as plain as day. The woman's hour of trial was near at hand.

CAPTAIN SOUTHARD turned to look at the barometer and bent over the chart on the table. The cabin was perfectly still for a moment as the *Lucy* slid down a long green roller. And Captain Southard, straightening up, looked toward the little stateroom as though he could not leave it. Then, gripping himself in sudden resolution, he strode upward to the deck.

Night was at hand. The tumbling masses of green creamed white in the falling dusk, while the wind, breaking recurrently into violent gusts, told plainly that the tempest would hound them for another night. Stepping to the compass, he mentally figured a course. The wind had hauled two points. And as he raised his face, he felt the air grow cold.

"That settles it," he announced with finality. "The wind is shifting to a freezing blow. In a few hours we will begin to ice up. Then it is either Cape

Cod or the Gulf Stream—and I am going to try Cape Cod. Help me slack off the sheet—I'm going to drive her."

"It's an awful chance—" began Seth.

"Come on," interrupted the Captain. "I'm sure the *Lucy* has her bearings, and I have half a mind to give her the helm and let her find her own way home."

"The *Lucy* may find a different home than you think," mumbled Seth, as he sat down stubbornly in the lee of the deckhouse.

"What's the matter, Seth?" questioned Captain Southard, astounded. "Have you lost faith in the *Lucy* or in me?"

"I am not saying that I have lost faith in anyone," came the dogged response. "But you know what you said about the *Lucy*. Don't you suppose she heard it?" he continued, his voice rising. "You talk about faith—what do you expect the *Lucy* to do, when you have lost faith in her?"

Captain Southard would have told you that he was not superstitious. But like all men who have followed the sea he had not escaped the spell of its unexplainable solitude, its omens, its countless incidents of disaster, forewarned to those for whom the sea had spoken.

For some reason he felt angry. Old Seth remained silent. The Captain did not undervalue the older man's judgment; rather he felt there was an uncanny reasoning in his reckoning. "We've *got* to get into port," was his only answer. And with a voice that trembled through the gale he told Seth of the approaching crisis in the cabin.

Further orders were unnecessary. The two men together succeeded in slacking off the sheet, and Captain Southard took the wheel.

THE *Lucy* took up the fight bravely. The heavy seas tore through her battered bulwarks as she crashed on; and then the remnant of the lee rail would bury itself for whole minutes in the smother.

Old Seth's form was barely distinguishable in the darkness, as he sat propped up against the house. The two men had spent many nights of storm together, but in this darkness they were strangely silent. Sailor's superstition, if you call it so, or intuition, told them both that this was to be the last night of such companionship.

Ice formed in the forward rigging, and the weather showed no abatement, but as dawn drew near, Captain Southard grew confident that if he could hold the *Lucy* to her course the morning light would show land to which he could run down for a haven.

The *Lucy* would not fail, he insisted to himself. She would ride the very teeth of the gale for her master. This time, just once, to save her master's wife—and son. He knew it would be a son.

The waves had now grown to mountains, and the *Lucy* plunged down the sliding green as though headed for the pit. The faintness of sudden descent sickened him for a moment, and he gripped the wheel for support.

A numbing yielding to fate crept over the Captain's spirit. The fatalism of the sea was storming the last barrier; his arms swung dully to meet the shifting helm. He closed his eyes in resignation. The tearing crash of the sea shut out, it was strangely still and calm to him. Then out of the stillness he heard his name.

"Josh—Josh," the voice repeated, "you called me?"

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN SOUTHARD started into sudden wakefulness. Helene was standing by his side. He had not called her, he knew, beyond the calling of his spirit. Both searched for each other's eyes in the driving darkness. While they still looked, a long parabola of light seared the sky to leeward. Two more followed in quick succession.

The Captain gripped the wheel and held the *Lucy* to the wind. But his wife clutched his arm. "See! a ship in distress," she exclaimed, as she pointed into the darkness.

Her husband busied himself with the wheel as though he did not see.

"Another rocket!" she cried ex-

citedly. "We must help them, we must stand by—"

"Go to your room," commanded the Captain in a strange voice that carried sharply above the gale.

"But the ship—the people—what can we do?"

"Nothing!" The Captain's voice was blunt and gruff, and he pushed her from him. "Go to your cabin," he repeated.

"You must stand by until daybreak," she pleaded. "My dream—I thought—"

"If I stand by until daybreak," the Captain interrupted, "you—"

"I will go to my room," completed his wife as she hurried down the stairs.

Captain Southard looked moodily into the darkness and argued that he had not promised. But as he looked, another rocket flashed, this time not only far to leeward but astern.

"What help could the *Lucy* offer to a ship in distress?" he argued. Her own hold was half full of water, and she rode on the buoyancy of her lumber cargo.

A brief lull dropped out of the storm, and an indistinct grayness jumbled from the clouds to eastward. The gale would be no worse. He was winning. He could hold the *Lucy* to her course. His wife would remain quietly in the cabin, confident that he had gone to the assistance of the distressed vessel. In the morning she would be safe.

He thumped his feet, and beat his body until the increased circulation restored the full faculties of his mind.

Helene was safe in the cabin, he repeated to himself. She knew the approaching hour as well as he; and yet she made him promise. No, he argued moodily, he had not promised.

The *Lucy Lermond* plunged on recklessly; she would not fail him now; he knew it.

He had not promised, he repeated.

But his wife believed that he had,—believed in him,—and the day of judgment must not alter that belief.

"Bear a hand forward, Matt," called the Captain as he roused the Mate from the shelter of the house. "We are going to stand by that vessel until daylight."

"I knew you'd do it, Josh," answered the older man as he scrambled to his feet. "But—I dunno."

THE rack of the sea lessened with the approach of dawn, and the morning light revealed the distressed vessel to be a large steamer, heavily laden. No passengers were visible on the decks, but several figures clung to the swaying bridge as the big hulk wallowed in the trough of the waves.

"It is an A. & O. steamer," announced Captain Southard, as he lay down the binoculars, "and she has lost her rudder."

Cautiously the *Lucy* worked up under the lee of the steamer.

Suddenly a sharp report broke from the bridge, and a small projectile carrying a lifeline shot across the deck of the schooner. Old Seth grasped the rope, and held it with a turn about the windlass, until Captain Southard could lash the wheel and come to his assistance. The steamer immediately began to pay off a large cable, which they had attached to the end of the lifeline; their scheme was obvious.

If the two men on the *Lucy* could heave in a heavy enough cable to serve as a tow-line, the steamer could use the schooner for a drag and head up into the wind. Then, with the propeller in motion, a line running from the cable to port and starboard would serve as a rudder sufficient for the steamer to direct her course.

The men on the steamer worked in frantic haste and the two men on the schooner took the cable to the windlass and hove in. A moment later two blasts from the steamer's whistle warned them to hold fast. The propeller churned; the slack of the hawser took up; and the steamer swung around head to the sea.

Immediately the decks became lined with people.

The two men on the *Lucy* now lowered the sails, and Captain Southard went back to the wheel. Before he could reach the stern, there came a violent yank on the hawser which nearly threw him off his feet and shook the *Lucy* to her marrowbones. The Captain shook his head doubtfully, but

took the helm and swung the *Lucy* directly in the wake of the now rapidly moving steamer.

IN spite of his skill, the *Lucy* suffered. The drag of the heavy hawser tended to pull her bows under, and the wrenchings and turnings threatened to tear the ancient windlass from the deck. Old Seth hobbled forward and bent the slack end of the hawser around the mast. It was the last resort. The hawser, unless broken, would save the steamer or tear the *Lucy* to bits as it dragged her over the lumpy swells.

The steamer turned straight for the open ocean. The wall of morning mist was breaking, but as yet revealed nothing but the two vessels and the heaving sea. Captain Southard stared at Seth in consternation. The steamer tore on, and the *Lucy* followed, trembling in the wake that threatened every moment to engulf her.

"That fresh-water Captain is scared to death," shouted Seth as he started down the companion. He reappeared a moment later, holding in his hands two small flags that appeared like the wigwag-signals used in the Navy. "And if I haven't forgotten all I know," he mumbled as he dragged himself into the rigging, "and if they have a real sailor aboard, I'll talk to them in a way they wont forget."

Captain Southard looked anxiously at the compass. According to his reckoning, there was no port in that direction for a hundred miles.

Seth finally descended from the rigging in disgust. The steamer had paid no attention to his signals, but he divined their purpose.

"They are afraid of salvage," he grumbled loudly as he walked aft. "They plan to take us all the way around the Cape until they pick up the Company's tugs. They don't care if we rack to pieces in the meanwhile."

"But I do," exclaimed the young Captain. "Take the wheel, Seth, while I show you how quick I can cut that hawser."

SOUTHARD seized an ax as Matt took the wheel. A wild rage against the steamer welled up within him. He had offered his all to save them. Now they, for the sake of a few dollars, were deliberately tearing the *Lucy* to kindling wood. And in the wreck, his wife—

"Josh!"

His wife's voice halted him, and he turned harshly, forgetting himself in his anger toward the steamer. "Get below," he commanded roughly. "The *Lucy* is a wreck. I am going to cut that cable before they drown us."

"No!"

He turned in amazement, the ax raised to his shoulder.

"You shall not," she repeated. "That steamer—I know—the luck of the *Lucy* was to find it. See!" She pointed excitedly.

The sullen haze that had dogged them since daybreak, now broke off raggedly to starboard, and Captain Southard, turning as his wife pointed, saw a mass of spume-covered rocks close aboard to leeward.

The ax fell from his hand, and he slipped one arm around his wife to support her. The sudden shock to find that death had been at their shoulder made them both weak; and with a shudder they turned their eyes from the seething rocks that would have splintered the *Lucy* to bits had her master persisted in the course of the night.

He looked ahead at the steamer. Black clouds of smoke were pouring from her funnels, and she forged steadily ahead. A wooded promontory broke out of the haze two points off the port bow. It was evidently the objective point of the steamer, for as he looked, she changed her course.

"She's shaving mighty close, for this kind of steering-gear," grumbled Seth, as he met the changed course with the rudder. "She'll have us ashore yet. What in thunder—"

The steamer had swung in close to the precipitous wall and had slackened her speed. Three short blasts sounded from her siren. A bell answered from the promontory, and while those on the schooner watched, a string of signals broke from the steamer's gaff.

"They have signaled the lighthouse to telegraph for help," read Seth wrath-

fully. "Why in thunder couldn't they have answered my signals?"

"Because, Seth," answered the Captain bitterly, as the steamer picked up her speed, "they don't care what becomes of us."

Captain Southard felt a tremor sweep through his wife's body. Her face was deathly white, and she could not repress a groan.

They had rounded the wooded point and were now running parallel to a rocky coast. Captain Southard scanned its ragged base for a sheltering cove. There were none and soon it would be too late. The *Lucy* was visibly weakening, and the big steamer plowed on mercilessly.

His wife was limp and fainting in his arms, and the sea broke angrily as it rebounded from the shore. The young Captain took a long look at the light of day, and with his wife in his arms stepped down to the dim light of the cabin.

He heard the clump of Seth's footsteps on the deck, and felt the schooner yaw wildly from the abandoned wheel. The rending and tearing sounds from the interior of the hold were terrifying, but a thousand times worse was the sickening fear that his wife's hour had come, and that her husband in whom she trusted, was helpless to save her. Once he thought he heard Seth's voice from up forward, but it trailed off into the wind in an indescribable tone of warning or encouragement.

The air of the cabin was stifling, and he fought for a long breath. His wife clung to him despairingly. Suddenly he gathered her in his arms and hurried to the deck.

THE rocks were dangerously close. But looking seaward, he saw that they had passed into the lee of a barren island where there was a space of comparative calm. The steamer had lost her headway, and on her rail stood a man waving a flag in the steady sweep of the wigwag code.

"I've got 'em!" Seth's voice rang triumphantly from above.

Looking up, the young Captain saw his Mate high in the fore rigging, waving frantically with his crude signal.

A moment later a boat lowered from the steamer's davit and swept down toward the schooner. As it came alongside, Captain Southard carried his wife to the battered bulwarks. He did not heed the gruff command of the officer in the stern sheets, to "Be quick about it," but handed his wife tenderly to the man in the bow, who he knew was the ship's doctor.

Captain Southard did not attempt to enter the boat. But he watched it longingly as it pushed off. He knew that his duty was at the wheel of the *Lucy*.

"I'll take back what I said about those fellows," grunted Seth, as he descended to the deck. "They're real sailors—every one of 'em, or I'm a sinner."

As the little boat neared the steamer, the propeller started, the hawser tautened and the iron prow swung around to the sea. Captain Southard saw the little boat hook onto the davit and rise quickly from the water as it was hoisted aboard.

He also noticed as the big steamer swung wide, that she was listed heavily, and that streams of water were pouring from her sides.

"Good heavens, Seth, do you see that!" he exclaimed; "she's leaking badly, and wont float for many hours. They had a mighty good reason for snaking us off at top speed the way they did. And yet, thank God—"

"Real sailors, every one of 'em," repeated Seth. This time it was noticeable that there was no exception.

Captain Southard knew that the steamer was in great peril, and that on her fate hung the fate of the *Lucy*, of himself and his wife. His head reeled as he thought of his wife alone among strangers, and in her hour of trouble. She was safe, however,—of course she was safe.

Captain Southard looked about; the strain of the hawser about the mast was terrible. The gallant vessel, already cruelly beaten and battered by the storm, was now being literally torn apart by the yanks of the relentless towline. Seams gaped along the deck, and where the after portion was raised in semblance of a quarterdeck, there was a jagged opening through which the water poured with every lunging sea.

SETH abandoned the wheel for a moment, and the two men unfastened the lashings of the boat that was bottom-side up on the house. Taking it to the rail, they placed it ready for instant launching.

The steamer whistled shrilly.

Seth raised his eyes—then shaded them with his hand and with a startled exclamation sprang into the rigging. Halfway to the crosstrees he stopped and waved his hat in an answering code.

Captain Southard reeled weakly across the deck, and clutched the house for support. His eyes rested in fearful anxiety on the sailor who had mounted the quarter-rail of the steamer and, in quick, snappy movements, was sending down his wigwag message.

The Captain looked aloft, but Seth's face was turned from him. Again he looked ahead, fascinated by the waving flags. Suddenly they ceased.

Old Seth let out a yell.

"It's a boy!"

The young Captain leaped forward as though to prevent Seth's descent from the rigging.

"Ask them — Helene?" he commanded brokenly.

"Fine," announced Seth, as he descended to the deck.

The old man cast his eyes about the sickening wreckage of the once sprightly *Lucy*. Unspoken emotion dimmed his eyes, and he turned away that his younger friend might not know.

"Can the *Lucy* hold together for another hour, Josh?" he asked, with despair in his voice.

"She will!" declared the young Captain. "Of course she will! I see smoke on the horizon now." But Seth's wearied shoulders slumped in unspeakable despair as he made his way aft.

Not until the big tugs were fast to the steamer did Captain Southard relinquish his task. Then wading across the deck, he seized an ax, and with one blow severed the connecting cable.

The *Lucy Lermond* was free. She was sea-worn and weary. She had served her master for the last time, and the cold depth of the winter ocean yawned to receive her.

Seth descended for the last time to the cabin. Heavy ax-like strokes sounded from below, deadened by the depth of the hold and the swirling water. A moment later he appeared, and the two men without a word launched the little boat.

Bewildered, and dazed with emotion, Captain Southard mounted the big steamer's gangway. The fight had passed out of his hands. Back across the angry waters was the abandoned *Lucy*. Old Seth was leaning on him heavily.

A HUGE red-faced man reached out to grasp his hand. On the man's hat was the insignia of Captain; his voice, as gruff as a Cape Horn gale, came heartily.

"Allow me to congratulate you!" he roared, and clasping the young Captain's hand in a grip of iron, he pointed to a certain stateroom along the deck. "Moreover," he continued in his rich nautical bellow, "the president of the A. & O. is aboard this ship, and he says they need a young captain for their new steamer."

Captain Southard for a moment stood abashed and bewildered before the big captain and the crowd of passengers. Then, as he caught the full meaning of their looks, his face broke into his youthful, buoyant smile. He started aft, when old Seth clasped his arm and pointed seaward.

"As captain of a steamer, Josh," he began brokenly, "you wont miss the *Lucy*, but I—"

A voice broke raucously from one of the tugs alongside.

"Suppose we send back one of our boats to salvage that schooner."

Seth stopped suddenly, startled beyond expression. Then his face grew strangely calm.

"No," he said so softly that only those near at hand heard him, "I knocked out the last bulkhead before we abandoned ship—and thank God, the *Lucy Lermond* is going home."

Reel Graft

By Ellis Parker Butler

IT was breakfast-time at Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house, and Grandpa Jabez Bunker had adjusted his gold-rimmed spectacles on his nubbin of a nose and was peering into his dish of prunes with his baby-blue eyes before eating them (the prunes, not his eyes). Dear old Grandma Bunker, who took all things on trust, had already dipped into her prunes, and from all parts of the dining-room came the clatter of silver and china and the morning babble of tongues. It was a cool and exhilarating morning, and everyone felt fine, even the thin, yellow Miss Minchin, who began her day with a goblet of hot water—and you know what that means.

Everyone felt fine, but especially young Mr. Bibble. He came into the dining-room glowing with smiles and saluted everyone cheerily and dropped into the chair opposite Mr. Bunker.

"Well, folks, this is the great day!" he exclaimed.

It was evident that he did not mean his wedding-day. He was too untrammeled in his gladness. On his wedding-day a young man may be joyously happy, but he is apt to have an air of reserve. It is difficult to think of any occasion on which a young man could be as unreservedly happy as young Mr. Bibble was this morning, except the one occasion that caused Mr. Bibble's joy. He was an amateur scenario-writer, and was this day to see on the screen the first showing of his first accepted five-reel scenario.

For two months young Mr. Bibble had been quite another man from the one Mr. Bunker had first known when he came to Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house. Young Mr. Bibble had been a boarder at that select establishment for a year before Mr. Bunker arrived there, and at the time of Mr. Bunker's arrival Mr. Bibble had been in a state of depression beyond description. Among the first things Mrs. Wimmer had said to dear old Grandma Bunker after they reached the confidential stage of friendship (which was soon after Mrs. Wimmer discovered that the Bunkers were able to pay their board on the dot) was:

"So the Coolings will have to go. I am a poor woman, Mrs. Bunker, and cannot afford to room and feed anyone free of charge, and the Coolings have reached the end of their string. Mr. Cooling is always ready enough to promise to pay me as soon as he puts through a deal, but three hundred dollars is more than any boarding-house-keeper ought to trust anyone for. The price of meat—awful! But young Mr. Bibble is different."

"He's a right nice-spoken young gentleman," agreed Mrs. Bunker.

"None more so," said Mrs. Wimmer; "and I must say he works as hard as any man I know. From early morning to late at night he pounds that typewriter of his, and never once has he asked Maggie for a second cup of coffee or anything. I may be only a poor boarding-house-keeper, Mrs. Bunker, but I hope I appreciate genius as much as any person, and although my bank-account is nothing to speak of to such a person as you, I said to Mr. Bibble: 'Mr. Bibble, I know the ways of literature are slow and rocky, and it takes time to get going right. Ten weeks at eight dollars a week you owe me now, and never a dun have I dunned you, nor wont. One hundred dollars is a lot of money to a poor widow,' I said to him, 'but one hundred dollars I am willing to gamble on genius, and until your bill comes to that amount, just go right ahead and pursue the path of genius and don't worry.'"

"Nobody couldn't be kinder spoken than that," said Mrs. Bunker.

"No boarding-house on this street could," said Mrs. Wimmer. "Nor am I complaining now, Mrs. Bunker. Don't think it! An agreement is an agreement, and one hundred dollars was the amount I mentioned to Mr. Bibble as the limit of his credit, but I am not pressing him hard, although his bill is now one hundred and twenty-five. Nor I wont. I hope I can do as much for genius as anyone, although my means aint as great as those of some."

If Mrs. Wimmer pretended she did not worry over Mr. Bibble's bill, there is no denying that Mr. Bibble worried. You will find that many authors and artists are socialistically inclined, and the reason is that under the present capitalistic system they have all had weeks when the fire of creative genius has smoldered and smoked sullenly on account of worry over unpaid bills. Such folk would welcome a system that gave them bare food and lodging and permitted them to create without worrying over where to-morrow's food is to come from and how yesterday's food is to be paid for. Mr. Bibble worried and became depressed.

SUDDENLY, however, Mr. Bibble burst into joy like a bud that blooms overnight. He paid to Mrs. Wimmer every cent he owed her, and kissed her into the bargain, the kiss being chaste and humorously meant and taken in the same spirit. He bought a brand-new sixteen-dollar suit and three new collars and a new toothbrush and felt riotously spend-thrifty. He had sold his five-reel photoplay, "The Daughter of Despard," to the Agony Photoplay Company for five hundred dollars, outright. It made no difference to Mr. Bibble that the Agony Photoplay Company believed they had made a splendid bargain.

At that moment of his career five hundred dollars looked as big to Mr. Bibble as a Pike's Peak of ice-cream served on a butter-dish. After his riot of debt-paying and expenditure he had three hundred dollars left on hand, and he felt like J. P. Morgan. He was so uplifted that he was able to dash off a five-reel scenario in one day, and it was so utterly and hopelessly poor that he could not have sold it in a million years if every scenario-editor were an idiot. And they are not. Sometimes we think they are, but we could not prove it to the satisfaction of a jury of twelve honest men and true.

The case of Mr. Cooling was far different, poor man! He was a small, gray man with an anxious expression and a small, gray, anxious wife. They were the most inoffensive people in the world, and if Mr. Cooling had been able to pay his debts and have three hundred dollars always in the bank, there is little doubt that they would have been the best loved couple in Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house. A course of hard luck in his business and the knowledge that he owed Mrs. Wimmer a large sum and that everyone in the place knew it had made Mr. Cooling shamedly apologetic, and he and his wife were despised in an uninterested, slighting way by most of the more fortunate boarders.

Mrs. Wimmer, who would have treated the Coolings better if Mr. Cooling had bluffed more, shifted them from table to table at will and finally marooned them at a small table in a far corner, where Maggie often neglected them. Mr. Cooling would grow red in

the face with anger at the slights put upon his wife, but his spunk was not equal to the occasion, and he would bend low over his prunes and swallow prunes with humility sauce, and when he spoke to Maggie, it was in the gentlest tone.

The poor man was, as he felt, at the end of his string. He knew that Mrs. Wimmer was only allowing him to stay because he owed so large a bill, and he did not dare to leave, because he might not be able to get into another boarding-house, having no money whatever. To this was added the fact that he had boarded with Mrs. Wimmer many years and Mrs. Wimmer's was "home" to him and to his wife. He felt toward the boarding-house, up the stairs of which came at times the odor of fried onions, as the farmer feels toward the old homestead in which he has been born and where the odor of new-mown hay sweetens the evening air.

MR. COOLING, in his desperate straits, now did something he had never done before. He went up to Mr. Bunker's room, tapped on the door and, entering, closed the door softly behind him. Dear old Grandpa Bunker—then just arrived from Oroduna, Iowa, to enter the profession of bunco-steerer and confidence-man in New York—was reading his favorite work, "The Confessions of the King of Grafters," and he put the book on the bed at his side and welcomed Mr. Cooling.

"Well, now, neighbor," he said, "I take it right kindly that you should come a-callin' like this. Seat yourself. Ma, this is the *Mr.* Cooling we met down to the dining-room."

Mr. Cooling talked awhile on various subjects, leading up to his own affairs and telling Mr. Bunker about the business in which he was engaged. He was a free-lance real-estate broker, handling only big deals, and with but one or two clients. In other words, he was an accelerator of reluctant sellers and buyers.

When Mr. Cooling had first undertaken the business, he had done well. He had been "nervy" then, and he would spend weeks going back and forth between a possible buyer and a possible seller, working them into the mood necessary to close a transaction; and while he did not put through many deals, those he did put through were large and his commission was proportionately large. He often lived a year on his share of one transaction. Unfortunately, he told Mr. Bunker, business had been poor, and also unfortunately,—but he did not tell Mr. Bunker,—his sad position in the boarding-house had weakened his "nerve" and he was not the chipper, insistent little fellow he had once been. He did tell Mr. Bunker that he now had on hand a deal that, if it went through, would net him a couple of thousand dollars, and that he was working on it and had good hope of success.

All this led up to a shamefaced, faltered plea that Mr. Bunker would lend him three hundred dollars. Mr. Bunker beamed at Mr. Cooling as he listened, his babylike pink face all smiles, and when Mr. Cooling had ended, Mr. Bunker went to his bureau-drawer, took from it five hundred dollars and gave the money to Mr. Cooling. The little man was overwhelmed. He actually wept, and Mr. Bunker patted him on the shoulder and said it was all right, that money was nothing if a man couldn't do what he pleased with it.

"Jabez," said dear old Grandma Bunker when Mr. Cooling had left the room, "I do say you're the best man in the world, and I'm right down glad you gave that Mr. Cooling the money he needed so much."

"'Taint nothing, Ma," Mr. Bunker replied. "This here bunco-business I'm into looks like it was goin' to pay right good, and five hundred dollars aint goin' to break us, anyhow. I feel like when money comes as easy as it comes when a man is into the business of bunkin' New Yorkers, he had ought to give some in a sort of charitable way now and again."

"Well, Jabez," said Mrs. Bunker, "the idee does you credit, but it aint as if bunco-business was dishonest and you had to square yourself with your Maker for bunkin' folks. I wouldn't allow you to be into the business if I thought it wasn't honest and nice."

"And you needn't be scared I'd stay

into it if I didn't think it was honest and nice," said Mr. Bunker firmly.

Mrs. Bunker, her eyes filled with tears of blessed joy, reached out her hand and pressed Jabez's hand, and for a minute or two she let her sewing lie idly in her lap while she looked out of the window with an absent gaze.

"What you thinkin' about, Ma?" he asked.

"I was just wonderin'," she said, "if maybe the money you loaned to Mr. Cooling mightn't be bread cast upon the waters after all. Who was that gentleman he said he figgered on sellin' that propputty to? Wasn't it John D. Bargus, Pa?"

"'Twas so," agreed Mr. Bunker. "John D. Bargus, the rubber-king."

"I thought likely it might be him, though I didn't catch the name right clear. The famous big millionaire, aint he, Pa?"

"Well, I reckon that outside of The'-dore Roosevelt and Andy Carnegie, and maybe Emperor William, there aint no better known man in the world, Ma."

"Jess so!" said Mrs. Bunker placidly. "Well, I was wonderin' if—by gettin' an introduction from Mr. Cooling—you couldn't maybe sell John D. Bargus a gold brick, or bunk him some way or other."

Mr. Bunker arose and kissed Mrs. Bunker a loud, smacking kiss.

"Ma," he said, "the' aint another wife like you in the whole world—taking an interest in your husband's business like you do. I don't know but what, some day, I'll remember what you say and have a try at John D. Bargus."

"And sting him with some sort of good, honest bunco-business, Pa," said Mrs. Bunker. "Sting him hard, for there aint no multiple-millionaire ever got his money in a more similar way than what John D. Bargus did."

IT so happened, however, that Mr. Bunker found his time well filled with other bunco affairs, and at heart he was loth to attempt a raid on the cash-account of the world-famous millionaire. He knew very well that Mr. Bargus could not be sold a gold brick, for the old man was wise in his generation. Another difficulty was that Mr. Bunker was still a mere amateur at bunco and did not have the confidence that comes with longer experience. He did not forget Mr. Bargus, however, for he thought of him every time he saw Mr. Cooling.

Oddly enough, it was not through young Mr. Bibble that Mr. Bunker became interested in motion-pictures but through the policeman at the corner. On pleasant evenings Mr. Bunker liked to stroll down to the corner and chat with the policeman, who was full of that infantile sophistication that New Yorkers imagine is the complete worldly wisdom of all ages. You can hear thousands of New Yorkers say, as the policeman said to Mr. Bunker:

"Say, just look at the crowd going into that motion-picture place over there! Honest, there aint anything can take the place of the movies, is there? Big show for ten cents; that's what does it. Aint it wonderful to think of the number of men that has became millionaires just from a thin peeling peeled off of those dimes? But it's getting to be a regular graft-game."

Mr. Bunker pricked up his ears. Graft—honest graft, bunco—was his business.

"You don't mean to say!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't think folks would rush so to spend their dimes if they was gettin' bunked."

"Oh! the dimes!" said the policeman. "It aint the dimes. I guess most of them get a dime's worth for their money, all right; it's the high finance end of the game, the high finance is where the graft comes in. Cookin' up a billion-dollar company and sellin' the stock to suckers—that's where the bunco-game is."

The policeman may have been right or he may have been wrong, but Mr. Bunker, as an honest bunco-man should, became interested in the movies from that moment. He fell into the habit of dropping into the little motion-picture theater, and finding nothing objectionable there, he induced Mrs. Bunker to accompany him. They became, in a mild way, movie fans—at least to the extent of being able to talk about Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin and tell one from the other.

WHEN Mr. Bunker discovered that young Mr. Bibble was a writer of scenarios, he turned to him as an elucidator of motion-picture mysteries, and young Mr. Bibble explained as well as he could the entire process, from the creation of the scenario to the projection of the picture on the screen, and thus it happened that on the happy morning when Mr. Bibble was to see the first fruits of his scenario-writing shown at the studio, he turned to Mr. Bunker.

"I say, Grandpa," he said, "how would you like to run over to Rockcliff with me and see just how movies are made? Come along! I was going alone, and I'd be glad to have you."

"Well, I dunno as I've got any real strong objection," said Mr. Bunker.

"Aint I heard you say the studio is over in New Jersey, young man?" asked Mrs. Bunker.

"Yes ma'am. You cross the ferry at—"

"Well, now, Jabez," said Mrs. Bunker, "I aint a mite of objection to your going with Mr. Bibble, but I do want you should be careful. Be right careful you don't let none of them Jersey mosquitoes bite you, for I've heard tell they give the malaria. And the first thing when you go aboard the ferry-boat, you look to see where the life-preservers are kept. Maybe you'd better get one down and have it on you in case of accident. And Jabez—"

"Yes, Ma?"

"If a thunderstorm comes up, be right sure to git into a safe place. I've heard tell how Jersey lightning is something awful."

"Well, Ma, it looks like to-day was goin' to be a clear day, so I reckon I'll be safe from Jersey lightning," chuckled Mr. Bunker, and so he went to New Jersey, daring the perils of the ferry-trip and reaching the studio in good time with Mr. Bibble.

TO tell the truth, the experience was one of the most interesting Mr. Bunker had ever undergone. While the studio was not as large as some, it was very complete. An hour was to pass before Mr. Bibble could see his pictures, and the director showed Mr. Bunker and Mr. Bibble through the place. The small stages where the pictures were enacted, the complicated systems of lights needed, the dressing-rooms, the wardrobes and property-rooms were all interesting; but far more interesting was the part of the studio devoted to the making of the reels of film. The strips of film seemed endless, and were indeed probably a thousand feet in length.

Mr. Bunker saw—or partly saw—how the negatives were developed, for this is done in a dark-room but dimly illuminated by red lights. He saw how the developing was done, how the long strips of film were dipped in one chemical and then in another and washed in vats of clear water and dried on great skeleton drums on which the films were coiled like flat snakes. He saw the printing-machines, on which the "positive" films were printed from the single negative film, a light flashing as each little picture came opposite it. He saw the whole process, down to the dyeing-vats where the films are given the blue of moonlight and the red of sunset and the soft yellow that is not noticed on the screen but gives a grateful softness of color to the picture when it is displayed in the theater.

All of this Mr. Bunker observed through his gold-rimmed spectacles with intense interest. The machine for printing the positive films from the negative film particularly fascinated him, and he stood before it as if hypnotized by the little flashes of light that transformed the blank strip of film into a story that would thrill some audience, or many audiences, in no one knew what parts of the world. He was standing thus when Mr. Bibble touched him on the shoulder.

"Come on," said Mr. Bibble. "Wacker is going to show me the 'Daughter of Despard' in the demonstration-room."

Mr. Wacker was waiting for them in the office, and he had under his arm the five reels of the "Daughter of Despard," each reel a skeleton-steel spool on which the film was wound. It was evident that there was too much film for each spool, for, tightly wound as it was, the film extended at least an inch beyond the

edge of each reel. Mr. Wacker was a big, good-natured man.

"Bib," he said, for he was the sort of man who instinctively seeks a nickname and uses it, "we've got a hummer in this five-reeler of yours—a Jim J. Hummer! I broke my poor neck giving it the best that was in little me. Wait till you see Mabel May as *Despard's* daughter. A peach! But I've got to cut out about fifteen hundred feet—two thousand would be better. I like a nine-hundred-foot reel, and I've got sixty-five hundred feet here."

"I hope you don't have to cut out anything important," said Bibble nervously.

"Oh, no! I always film more than I'm going to use—better to have too much and then cut than to have too little and have to rig up the sets again and make more film after the whole thing is over. I know my biz, Bib. —Ready, Bill?"

Bill was the projector-man, who ran the machine that threw the pictures on the screen. He was ready, and the four men entered the small, hot demonstrating-room. The room was a box with metal walls and ceiling, longer than broad. A white screen covered the entire farther end of the room. Near the door by which the men entered was a bench and two chairs. Behind the bench and well above it was a hole, and out of the hole extended the lens of the projector.

"All right, Bill!" said Mr. Wacker when he was seated. "Let her go!"

THE title and the picture of the author appeared. Mr. Bibble saw himself seated in an elegant library such as he had little hope of ever owning. He leaned his head on his hand and thought, and then grasped a pencil and wrote feverishly. It is the way authors always do in the movies.

"Good, hey?" said Wacker, and he continued his observations all through the five reels, sometimes to Bibble, sometimes to Bill and sometimes to Mr. Bunker. "Can cut a yard off there, Bill," he would say—or: "Have to take that leader again, Bill—got *finish* spelled with two *n's*." Many of the scenes ran a few feet longer than need be. "We can cut that where she opens the door," Wacker would say. The day was damp and muggy, and the film did not run off the reels well, and there were stops, while Bill swore in a low but earnest tone. "It wont do that when the film seasons," Wacker said; "we're running it pretty fresh."

"Well, what do you think of it?" Wacker asked while Bill was taking the first reel from the projector and preparing the second. Bibble said he liked it.

"That's a lot for an author to say," said Wacker. "They generally howl like a bee-stung steer. Hurry up there, Bill; it's hot."

"Aw! shut up! you aint got no kick. You ought to be up here for a while," said Bill with that sweet informality that obtains around photoplay studios.

"Now, right here," said Wacker when the second reel began to show on the screen, "is something you hadn't ought to have written in and that I had ought to have cut out when I doped up the action. I'm going to cut out four full scenes—here it is, right here!"

There was utter silence in the room, except for the clicking of the projector, as the four scenes were thrown on the screen.

"Stop!" said Wacker, and the fleeting pictures stopped. Wacker turned his face toward Bibble. "Well, what have you got to say?"

For a moment Bibble was silent.

"What—what do you want to cut that out for?" he asked. "That's the best thing in the scenario. You can't cut it out without making the wind-up mean nothing at all. Why, that's the meat of the plot! If you cut that, there is no reason for *Despard's* daughter killing *Despard*—no reason for anything!"

"Yes, there is, Bibby!" said Wacker. "I looked out for that. I wrote in a scene or two later on—you'll see—that fixes that up as neat as pie. These four scenes have to be cut."

"But why?"

"Look here, now, Bib," said Wacker, "every man, woman and child in the United States knows that story of how John D. Bargus wrecked the Perkioma Rubber Company and then discarded his wife because she tried to make him

hand back his gains, and how Phil Stelling killed himself because he had everything in Perkioma. That's all plain public knowledge. The minute anybody sees those four scenes they know you mean John D. Bargus."

"You mean you are afraid of libel?"

"I aint afraid of nothing!" said Wacker elegantly. "No, son, I mean that old John D. Bargus has just bought the control of this film company, and if I let those four acts go out, I'd be bounced so high I'd come down spattered with star-dust. They've got to come out. Go ahead, Bill."

Wacker was burly and uncouth, but he was an experienced photoplay-maker, and as the reels unwound, Bibble had to admit that he had substituted scenes that took the place of the four objectionable ones fairly well.

"Well, it is fine, Mr. Wacker," he said when the last reel was run. "I'm proud of it. It is well acted and well staged."

"And the photography is a pippin," said Mr. Wacker. "We've got a big hit in it—a whale of a hit. What time is it? Hang around a bit and we'll go over to Mike's and have a bite of lunch."

AT this, they all went into the office. Before one of the windows, on what might be called an extra wide window-sill, were two affairs like axles. They were set a foot or so apart. Mr. Wacker deposited the five reels of film on the window-sill and pulled a large wastebasket to him. He then placed one of the reels on one of the axles and attached a small crank to the other and began winding the film from the full reel onto an empty one, holding his left forefinger under the film and watching the little pictures closely. Every now and then he stopped turning the crank, tore a foot or a yard or so of the film from the strip, dropped it into the wastebasket and pinned the raw edges of the film together. So he went through the reel, editing it, cutting out the superfluous parts, reducing it to the nine hundred feet he considered a proper length. Mr. Bunker stood watching him.

"Interesting, aint it? But this is one job I hate," said Mr. Wacker as he put the second reel on the axle. He wound a few yards onto the empty reel and ripped the film across. From the full reel he unwound foot after foot, stopped, ripped the film across again and pinned the raw edges together. What he had torn out he dropped into the wastebasket, a curling, tumbled mass. Mr. Bunker watched him edit the five reels. Then Mr. Wacker drew on his coat.

"What do you do with this?" asked Mr. Bunker, meaning the discarded film in the basket.

"Oh, we take it over in the lot and burn it," said Wacker. "It's bad stuff to leave around; a cigar-butt might set it off, and it burns like powder."

"I wonder if I might have a piece or two of this to show to my wife," asked Mr. Bunker. "I reckon Ma aint ever seen a piece of photoplay in her born days. It would be real interestin' to Ma."

"Why, sure!" said Mr. Wacker. "That discard stuff is worth just about as much as a snowflake at the North Pole. Help yourself. I'll be with you in a minute."

He left the office, and Mr. Bunker, his kindly eyes beaming with innocent good-nature, dug his plump hand into the wastebasket and rummaged in the odds and ends until he found the long strip that represented the unfortunate scene in the life of John D. Bargus. He held it to the light to make sure he had the right piece and then rolled it quickly and slipped it into his coat pocket. He beamed his gratitude when Mr. Wacker returned.

"Ma'll be right pleased," he said. "If you'll let me know when this photoplay is goin' to be showed, me and Ma will make a point to see it and tell the folks at our boardin'-house to go and see it too."

"Say, Bib," said Mr. Wacker as he seated himself at the table in Mike's while Mr. Bunker went to wash his hands, "your plump friend ought to be put into the movies. He ought to be an idea for you. Innocent old infant wanderin' around New York and every sharp guy takin' money away from him, hey? Honest, Bib, he's the innocentest

old party! It wouldn't be right to let him go around alone. Why don't you make a five-reeler of him? We're looking for a five-reel comedy."

"He's a good old soul, just the same, for all his innocence," said Mr. Bibble. "Of course, if I do work him into a comedy, I'll have to make him a little less simple-minded. I'll think it over."

THE simple-minded old innocent came back to the table with his pink face beaming good will to all men, and his face still beamed when he reached Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house. He hummed a little tune of joy as he pawed over the ancient magazines on Mrs. Wimmer's bookshelves. The one he desired met his hand at last, and he carried it to his room. It was a copy of *The Monthly Meteor,* and it contained the fifth installment of "The Life of John D. Bargus," which ran serially for twelve months in that magazine. Mr. Bunker read the installment of the old life-story as he sat in his easy-chair, his carpet slipper dangling from one toe of his left foot.

The next morning Mr. Bunker, the roll of film in his pocket, sallied forth bright and early. He sat in the anteroom of *The Monthly Meteor* a full hour before the managing editor arrived, but when that gentleman did appear, it did not take Mr. Bunker long to conclude the business he had on hand, for the managing editor happened to be the author of "The Life of John D. Bargus."

"My name is Jabez Bunker, from Oroduna, Iowa," said Mr. Bunker, "and I been interested in these movie-picture photoplays quite some time. Me and Ma been goin' to see them off and on for some spell."

"Just so!" said the managing editor. "I'm a busy man, Mr. Bunker, and this is a busy day—"

"I don't cal'late to take up no more of your time than I have to," said Mr. Bunker soothingly. "I been sort of thinkin' over things, and readin' some of this article your magazine had about John D. Bargus, and I shouldn't wonder if a series of photoplay movies about great men mightn't make some money for somebody. I sort of wondered if you'd sell the right to movie the article?"

The managing editor was immediately deeply interested. He mentioned twenty thousand dollars, with ten per cent of the gross proceeds of the sales, as a proper figure. Mr. Bunker said he reckoned that would be about right.

"Of course," he said, "I've got to figger round some and see if I can raise the money. I got a thousand—"

The managing editor smiled.

"The thing you want, in that case," he said graciously, "is an option. It's like this: you pay me the thousand dollars, and I give you an option—a right to purchase the motion-picture rights—for one month. That will give you time to make your arrangements. If you can raise the other nineteen thousand dollars, you pay me at the end of the month and the thousand you give me now applies to make up the full twenty thousand. If you don't raise the nineteen thousand—"

"Oh, I guess I can manage it somehow," said Mr. Bunker, and so the option was made out and Mr. Bunker paid the thousand dollars. He thanked the managing editor and carried the option away with him.

IN one of the big buildings in Wall Street the rubber-king, John D. Bargus, sat and fumed. He was growing old, and he hated coming to New York in the hot weather, but a kink in the European rubber situation had made his presence necessary. He was waiting for his secretary to put before him the details of the kink, when one of the assistant secretaries entered.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Mr. Bargus, but there is a man wishes to see you a moment. He says he understands you are interesting yourself in motion pictures—"

"Send him away! I am interested as I mean to be."

"Yes! I told him his matter would have to go through the usual routine, Mr. Bargus, but he was very insistent. He has purchased the motion-picture rights to *The Monthly Meteor's* 'Life,' and he has a part of the film he proposes to use that I really think you ought to see."

The assistant secretary was properly reluctant in saying this. John D. Bargus pricked up his ears.

"Show him in!" he said.

Mr. Bunker entered the presence of the nation-famous rubber-king as he entered all presences, royal or plebeian. His blue eyes beamed good will as he seated himself as far back on a chair as his short legs permitted.

"You be Mr. Bargus?" he asked as he fumbled in his pocket. "I'm right glad to make your acquaintance. Seems like I knowed you already, I been thinkin' so much about you. I guess maybe I'd ought to feel sort of related to you, seein' as I've spent a thousand dollars gettin' an option on that 'Life' of yours that was printed into *The Monthly Meteor*. But I aint kickin'. I reckon I'll make quite a bit of money out of it before I'm through."

"What do you want?" asked Mr. Bargus crossly.

"Well, I got an option on this here 'Life' of yours," said Mr. Bunker pleasantly, "and I figger to make a movie of it. Of course, nothin' like that has been did yet, and we'll have to make it sort of spicy—amuse the masses, as you might say. I got a piece of film here that sort of gives my idee of how she ought to be did."

HE handed Mr. Bargus the discarded strip of film, and the great rubber-king ran it through his hands, holding it against the light. A slight tinge of color showed on his leathery face.

"H'm!" he ejaculated.

"I've got to pay the writer-fellow nineteen thousand dollars more," said Mr. Bunker, "and I aint got it to spare, as you might say; so, hearin' you was interested in movie-businesses, I thought maybe you'd like to come into the company—financially, so to speak."

"You have an option on the 'Life?' For one month? And you paid one thousand for the option? My friend," said Mr. Bargus, "you are going to lose every cent you put into this idiotic scheme! Your masses, as you call them, want drama. They want melodrama. They don't want life-historics of business men. I wouldn't put a cent into the scheme!"

Mr. Bunker took up the strip of discarded film that Mr. Bargus had put down. He remained placid and beaming.

"I guess you know more about business than what I do," he said. "But maybe I can get somebody to go into this."

"You wont get a living soul to go into it!" declared Mr. Bargus. "No, sir! But I should dislike to have my 'Life' peddled about and proven an unwanted commodity."

"I reckon that, the way we figger to film it, it might not be so eternal a fizzle as you've got a notion," said Mr. Bunker.

Mr. Bargus ignored this.

"It would be a source of annoyance to my family to have my 'Life' filmed and peddled and a failure," he said. He turned to his desk and opened a small drawer and shut it again. Then he turned sharply to Mr. Bunker. "I'll give you five thousand dollars for that option," he declared, "—not a cent more, not a cent less!"

"Did!" said Mr. Bunker instantly, and he tossed the strip of discarded film on Mr. Bargus' desk and drew the option from his pocket.

"JABEZ," said Mrs. Bunker to her husband that evening, "if so be you got that piece of movie-picture in your pocket, I'd like to show it to Mis' Wimmer. I been tellin' her about it, and she's right interested."

"Well, now, Ma," said Mr. Bunker regretfully, "I'm sorry you didn't say so sooner. I went and got rid of it."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Bunker. "I dare say you throwed it away!"

Mr. Bunker chuckled.

"Well, putty near, Ma, putty near, considerin' how anxious the feller was to have it," he said.

There will be another of the joyous adventures of *Jabez Bunker* in the March BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale February 1st.

Home to the Hills

by Hapsburg Liebe

MORGANSVILLE, in upper eastern Tennessee, is a very little and old-fashioned town. There is but one street that is really used as such: the cross-streets serve more as entranceways than as thoroughfares. Just over the creek from the old courthouse stands the honeysuckle-covered brick home of the sheriff; and behind it, in the same lot, is the strong brick-and-stone jail.

To be sheriff here meant that one was held in high esteem; it meant that one was a man of many kinds of strength. For these were the days, not so long gone, when tobacco-barns were burned—days when gentlemen who called themselves Blue Bills, and gentlemen who called themselves White Caps, rode in the night on missions of their own; and all this brought difficulties that demanded in the Morgansville sheriff quick calculation, shrewdness of judgment, hair-splitting diplomacy and a nerve of iron.

Tom Metford had been a resident of Morgansville for fifteen years, and for almost half of that time he had occupied the honeysuckle-covered brick house that stood across the creek from the courthouse. Metford had come to Morgansville from Knoxville. He was a very tall, raw-boned, sad-eyed man of forty-six, and a man whose bravery and whose integrity stood as unquestioned as that of Stonewall Jackson.

Metford was strangely, peculiarly quiet; more imaginative or more romantic communities doubtless would have tagged the word *Silent* to his name. Much of his spare time he spent in staring longingly through his office window and toward the great blue mountains in the east. His wife knew why he stared toward the hills so much; she herself looked just as longingly in the same direction sometimes—and especially when the laurels and the wild honeysuckles and the redbuds were in bloom, or when the never-failing hand of Autumn painted the leaves of the sumachs and the hardwoods in colors of crimson and gold. But his son didn't know. He meant that his son should never know—not, mind you, that Tom Metford hadn't left a clean trail behind him! Remember that. His son—

Ulysses Metford was twenty-four, bigger than his father and almost as tall, and he had the blue-black hair and the very dark-blue eyes that made up the most striking physical characteristic of

his father's people. He had graduated from a medical school in Nashville, and he had but recently hung his physician's sign out from a window over the post office.

THE summer day was warm. Lyss Metford had thrown aside his coat and rolled his shirt-sleeves to his elbows. He entered his father's office whistling gayly, sat down and crossed his long, strong legs. Tom Metford sat at his desk with a legal document spread out before him, and his interest in that which he was reading was so great that he had not noticed his son's entrance.

"How are you this morning, Sheriff Metford?"—smilingly.

"Good morning—ah, it's you, Lyss!" And Metford the elder grinned a trifle sheepishly as he turned in his chair. "What are you so tickled about, my son? Your high spirits are fairly popping out of your face, which is a sure sign of either youth or idiocy—or both. I hope you're not going to tell me you're marrying that smart Bristol girl you've been running over town with! She's as pretty as a speckled pup with a ring around its neck, maybe, but—she spreads on too much."

"Spreads on!" echoed Lyss. "She does! A few minutes ago she wanted to tell the preacher she was dead broke, and she said this: 'Really, Mr. Byerly, I must cawnfess that I'm *bursted!*' Now, *busted* is a good, handy American word, Dad. No, I haven't thought of marrying. I've decided to sweeten my starving period by taking a little outing. I'm going camping—going alone back into those big hills there,"—pointing eastward,—"where, I'm told, the speckled trout are weeping for the sight of a fly. Seriously, Father, I've wanted to go to those mountains since I can remember. Those mountains have beckoned to me, and beckoned to me, to come and fathom their beautiful, silent mysteries—I have dreamed of them a thousand nights—it's almost queer! And now I'm going to satisfy myself."

Sheriff Metford rose and stood very straight. With one hand he absently turned over an old revolver-cylinder that he used as a weight for papers. His sad eyes, sadder than ever now, were turned toward the rugged peak of White Rock Mountain, which ran up into the ether majestically, an everlasting monument to the power and the glory of its Builder.

"Not to *those* hills, Lyss," he forbade quietly but flatly. "If you want to go trout-fishing, go to Johnsville, take the C. C. & O. and get off at Toecane; in the vicinity of Toecane you'll find all the trout-streams you'll want, and fine ones, too."

NOW, the boy Lyss, and the young man Lyss, had seen many of the longing looks his father and his mother had given to White Rock Mountain; and both the boy Lyss and the young man Lyss had wondered about it. He asked bluntly:

"Is there any danger in *those* hills for me?"

Tom Metford turned his gaze to the eyes of his son, and his gaze was very steady. "Yes," he answered, "there is danger in your going to the White Rock country." The words slipped on, heavily: "You have no idea how much danger there is in your going to the White Rock country."

Through the younger man's mind there suddenly ran a sentence he had read somewhere. He uttered it vaguely, not to his father, but to himself: " 'Something lost behind the ranges.' "

The officer drew back as though each word had been a bullet, and he was pale. His son had, by the merest accident, touched the sweetest, saddest, tenderest chord in his heart. He stepped to his son and put both hands on the big, square shoulders.

"Yes," he said, his voice shaking in spite of all his iron nerve, "there is a great deal 'lost behind the ranges.' But you can never find it, and I can never find it, because it is lost for all time. My boy, listen to me:

"You and I have always been a little more than father and son. We have been pals too, mighty good pals, always trusting each other to the limit. So let's go on trusting each other! Now, I want to tell you this, and I want you to believe me: There is nothing, absolutely nothing,"—but somehow desperately—"in our lives that we have rea-

son to be in the least ashamed of. . . . . I want you to forget about the ranges. Let the ranges go. The ranges are things apart from you. . . . . Yes, it's dangerous to go there. You see, you're all I've got, and you're all your mother's got. We have neither father nor mother, neither sister nor brother, neither uncle, aunt nor cousin. Upon you lies the responsibility"—and here his very dark-blue eyes twinkled as though he were half joking—"of perpetuating the good name Metford! . . . . . Forget all this, I ask as a special favor, my pal, and go to Toecane—and be sure you take a lancewood rod for fly-fishing!"

It was one of the longest speeches his son had ever heard him make, and his son knew, as he watched the pale smile that hovered over the smoothly shaven, raw-boned face, that he regretted saying some of the things he had said. Instead of handling the matter, whatever it was, with his usual almost cunning diplomacy, Tom Metford had aroused in his son a burning curiosity; something had suddenly run wild inside of Tom Metford, and for the moment shattered his judgment.

EARLY the following morning the Sheriff's son unloaded his camping-outfit, in which were a gun, fishing-tackle and a medicine-case, from a train at Johnsville; then he hastened to a convenient liveryman. The fellow was accommodating. Yes, there was a road to the White Rock country, but the last third of it was as rough as a cliff. The distance was more than thirty miles, but he was reasonably sure that he could land a fare there by nightfall. No, he certainly wouldn't say anything to anybody about having sent anybody out there. A few minutes later Lyss Metford and his luggage were in a surrey behind two fast young horses and moving toward the hills at a rapid gait.

It was the first time that he had disobeyed the man who had been more than father to him; it was the first time that he had dared to disobey, or wanted to disobey, that tall, sad-eyed and silent man. But he had never been so tempted before. A small voice somewhere in him had called insistently, and would not be denied: "Go and find it!"

Not one cordial word did the garrulous driver receive as the miles rolled by. Lyss Metford's conscience was lashing him, lashing him furiously; he was much ashamed of himself; he called himself an ingrate, and other and worse names—and yet he did not turn back. Lyss Metford was young; his blood was red and hot, and his curiosity was high.

LYSS rose before daybreak the next morning, built a fire and got a breakfast for himself and the driver; and the driver, when his horses had finished eating, left as rapidly as he could safely go. It was no place for a civilized man, he said. Young Metford was glad when the rumble of the surrey's wheels had died away; he was glad to be alone. The incessant weird and melancholy cries of many owls and the shrill scream of a nighthawk and the soft pattering of a wildcat's feet on dead leaves had been as music to him during the black hours just gone. Were not these sounds a part of that country he had longed and longed to see?

He had pitched his little tent on the bank of a dashing, sparkling creek, which divides the great valley that lies between the White Rock and the Balsam. Around him was a sea of waxen-white laurel bloom, which was starred here and there with the golden yellow of the wild honeysuckle and the royal purple of the redbud. There were many giant hemlocks and poplars, virgin timber, on the branches of which jewel-eyed birds sat twittering and gray squirrels ran chattering. Metford laughed out of the fullness of his youthful heart. He whistled, and he sang. He waded in the creek with his shoes on to prove to himself that he was no mollycoddle. It was all so strangely delightful! He might well have been a man of the hills who had just returned to his beloved land after a long exile.

All that day he fished and shot squirrels, and many were the pairs of curious and cautious eyes that peered toward him from the sheltering laurels. That evening, as he sat smoking and thinking beside his brushwood fire, a tall, lanky, bearded man, with his left hand in his left hip-pocket, walked as silently as a

panther out of the still darkness, and drawled:

"Hi, neighbor."

It was more than a greeting: it was a question too. The man at the fire put down his pipe and answered readily: "My name is Metford, and I'm a doctor; I'm out here to rest up from a long, hard spell of doing nothing, and I don't know when I'm going back."

Without taking his hand from his hip-pocket, the mountaineer sat down on a gray stone not far from the brushwood fire.

"Metford, ye say?" he muttered, with drawn brows.

"Yes, Metford."

"No, yore name haint Metford," the hill man disputed, somehow mysteriously.

"I ought to know my own name!" declared the camper.

"Maybe ye ought," said the hill man, as though he disliked to argue. "Well,"—and he rose, still with his hand in his pocket,—"well, I reckon I'll be a-goin' home. I've done talked too much now. Many a man has hung hisself by his durned mouth. So long, Doctor!"

"Hold on!" demanded Metford, rising to his feet. The other had piqued his curiosity. "You don't think I'm a revenue man, do you?"

"Oh, no, Doctor,"—quickly. "I know you haint no revenuer man. We know revenuer men when we see 'em, and you haint none. So long!"

He was gone. Lyss Metford lay awake until midnight, thinking over the thing. What *had* the fellow meant? And why had he kept his left hand in his left hip-pocket? It was provoking, to say the least.

WHEN he had had his breakfast of broiled trout and broiled squirrel and fried corncakes, Metford took a book of flies and his lancewood rod and went up the creek a mile, much farther than he had gone the day before. He found a swirling pool, and had just landed a fine speckled fish when suddenly the water came down filled with sediment. Half angry, he reeled in his line and went up the stream to see what had spoiled his fishing.

His resentment faded when he saw. A barefoot young woman was wading in the creek to her knees, with her faded calico skirts held barely out of the water. Her hair, which was brown and full of sunlight, was tied at the back of her neck with a faded blue ribbon. Her eyes too were brown, and such eyes Lyss Metford had never before seen. Her face was a little sunburned and thoughtfully, dreamily beautiful; the lines of her figure were roundish and perfect. A wild and romantic fancy flitted into young Metford's brain: she was some willful angel or goddess come down to this flower-filled fairyland of earth to play. He had read that somewhere.

Then Metford, himself unseen, saw her wade out of the water and sit down on the grass of the other bank and begin to gather wild violets. He crossed the creek on dry stones, went straight up to her and bared his head.

"Good morning," he said easily.

"Howdy do, Doctor," she smiled up at him, and her voice was rich and full.

"How do you know I am a doctor?"

"Everybody here knows it."

"My hip-pocket friend of last night," thought Metford. Aloud he asked: "Do you know my name too?"

"Yes," she answered. "Everybody here knows it. But it aint Metford!" She rose, dropped her violets, turned into a dim trail that led off through the blooming laurels, and ran from him.

"Wait!" cried the Doctor. "If my name isn't Metford, what is it?"

One word came back to him after the doelike figure was out of sight:

"Brian!" ..... And it had slipped.

"Brian!" he repeated wonderingly.

He stooped and picked up the violets she had dropped, went back to his camping-place and moped for the rest of the day. When he saw his hip-pocket friend again he would choke the secret from him. He would find out *why* his father had forbidden him to go to the White Rock country. .... Brian—she had said his name was *Brian!* ..... A few words of his father's came back to him forcefully, and he knew his father was one who loved God, feared no man, kept his word and told the truth. "There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in our

lives that we have reason to be ashamed of," his father had said.

TWO days passed. Metford had seen a score of mountainfolk, and most of them appeared to be trying to avoid him—there were some of them who even refused to speak to him. Early in the evening of the next day something happened. A big and stalwart young fellow, a man who, Metford remembered, had not responded to his greeting of the day before, rushed to the tent.

"You say you're a doctor!" he panted, wild-eyed, his countenance showing some fear that was far, far greater than the fear of death to him—for this was a man who held death lightly. "If you *are* a doctor, you're needed—bad! *Quick* —do ye onderstand? Come wi' me!"

They stood face to face there in the deepening shadows of the mountain evening. They were both big men in more ways than one, and when each man saw into the other's eyes he knew it; and each felt instinctively that the other was an enemy in the heart of him—but a worthy enemy. Metford took up his little medicine-case and flung the flaps of his tent down. The mountaineer impatiently seized him hard by the arm.

"Come on!" he ordered. "Needn't to mind a-tyin' yore tent—people don't steal here in the White Rock country!"

When they had crossed the creek, moving swiftly, Metford spoke: "Who is it that—" And the hill man interrupted sharply: "No time to talk—move!"

They entered an old trail and hurried along between the snowy laurels. They were more than a mile from the camping-place, and a quarter of a mile from the creek, when night overtook them. Then a shaft of yellow light cut the darkness ahead of them, and Metford made out the dim outlines of a long and rambling log cabin with a huge stone chimney at each end. The yard was filled with silent figures, men and women. A dog barked savagely. The hill man kicked the dog and led the Doctor on. A tall, gaunt, bearded, iron-gray mountaineer stepped back out of the doorway, and the Doctor made his way inside.

Metford jerked off his hat and threw it to the floor, and put his medicine-case down beside a glass lamp on a home-made pine table. Then he looked and saw, lying on an old high-posted, carved black-walnut bed, the pain-racked form of the girl he had met at the creek! An old woman was on her knees at the bedside; she was holding tightly around the girl's wrist a tourniquet that had been made of a closed pocket-knife and a red bandanna.

"Rattlesnake," said the old woman, the girl's mother, "—thar on the back of her hand!"

Doctor Metford believed he knew just what to do. He opened his little medicine-case and took out a bottle of permanganate of potash and a small, bright lance. The gaunt, iron-gray man, the girl's father, took up the glass lamp and held it for him. Metford sat down beside the suffering girl and hastily examined the swollen and discolored hand.

"Be game, little girl!" he said, poising the lance.

She tried to smile at him, and couldn't for the pain.

The old hill man growled out low: "It's foolish to tell a Lester to be game: they're borned game."

Metford split the fang-marks and with his mouth drew out some of the poison; then he filled the wound with moistened permanganate, loosened the tourniquet a little and gave the girl something to allay her suffering.

The night ran on, and Metford's eyes scarcely left his patient, for she was not yet out of danger. At midnight there was a low, insistent tapping at one of the open windows. Metford crossed the room silently. Beyond the window-ledge stood the stalwart young fellow who had brought him, and in one hand he held a big-bored, long-barreled repeating rifle.

"If she dies," he muttered, choking, his eyes as bright as gold in the oil-lamp's yellow light, "you'll die too. I'll kill you."

He stepped back into the darkness. Metford gave his patient a glance and stole across the room to where Jackson Lester and his wife sat beside the big, dark stone fireplace.

"Who was it that brought me here?" he asked.

The old mountaineer answered in a low voice: "Forks Tom, Sadie's sweetheart."

"What is his other name?" inquired the Doctor.

Jackson Lester fingered his iron-gray beard. "I'll say no more about it," he frowned. "Many man's durned mouth has hung him."

Metford went back to the carved black-walnut bed and sat down. He sat there for hours, almost without moving, watching, watching. The anxious face of the fellow they called Forks Tom appeared at the little window a dozen times.

WHEN the day began to break, Metford saw that there were still many people, chiefly menfolk, in the cabin yard, and among them was the man who carried his left hand in his left hip-pocket. Evidently the girl was one well loved in the community, which was not to be wondered at. But the fellow who carried his left hand in his hip-pocket—why did he do that? Again that wee mystery assailed Lyss Metford. He called old Lester to him and asked the hip-pocket man's name.

"That's Bill Metford," answered Jackson Lester. He turned, as though he did not wish to talk about it, and would have walked off had not the Doctor caught his arm.

"I wonder if he's a relative of mine?" asked Metford.

"No,"—quickly,—"he haint no kin at all to you—not a bit. He carries his hand in his pocket acause it's sore; he ketched it in a steel-trap, a-settin' it. Yore name haint Metford, nohow—but many a man has been hung ontel dead by his durned mouth, and I'll hush. Ef ye can leave the gyurl safe, breakfast is ready."

The Doctor followed his host into a big, log-walled room that served as both kitchen and dining-room, where he found a long table laid with linen that had been woven on hand-looms before the War, and which was burdened with the best the country afforded. Jackson Lester and six neighbor women sat down to eat with him, and Jackson Lester said grace and mentioned his name in it.

When Metford went back to the girl, Forks Tom was at the window.

"She's out of danger," said Metford.

Forks Tom turned and passed the good word on; then he went off down the mountain and the others followed him. The strain was over. Metford gave some instructions, put on his hat, took up his medicine-case and left the house.

METFORD went to see Sadie that afternoon and found her still improving. The next morning she walked with him down a laurel-lined trail and to the top of a rugged gray cliff that formed one side of the creek for a hundred yards, where they sat down. He believed that if he got the secret he wanted so much, he would get it from her when there were no others present to overhear.

"You said my name was Brian," he began. "I want to know all about it, and I want you to tell me. I will respect your confidence."

"It was a little ways up the creek that the snake bit me," said Sadie, utterly ignoring his words.

He looked a trifle hard at her. "Wont you tell me what I want to know?" he begged.

She smiled very bewitchingly, and a little saucily. "I put my hand in some brush to break off some vi'lets," she said, "and that's how I come to be bit. The creek it made so much noise—"

"My dear young lady," broke in Metford, "you're very exasperating!"

"—so much noise I couldn't hear the rattle," went on Sadie, still smiling.

Metford shrugged his shoulders. Well, he would quit worrying over his secret; perhaps it would work itself to light of its own force, as most secrets did.

"Why do they call your sweetheart 'Forks Tom,' Miss Lester?" he asked presently.

"To tell him apart from another Tom o' the same name," answered Sadie. "He lives up in the forks o' the creek, and the other Tom lives up on the side o' White Rock. But Forks Tom is no sweetheart o' mine."

"Your father told me he was," muttered Metford.

"Oh, he jest claims me," murmured Sadie. "He's claimed me thataway sence we was children and made playhouses together out o' moss and pieces o' dishes. Look here, Doctor! I oughtn't to be down here a-talkin' to you thisaway! Ef Forks Tom was to see us he would raise trouble for you. Tom, he's a good young man, but he's bad to fight, like all o' his people, and—you see, he's jealous about me, Doctor."

In Metford something began to boil. It was something fine and primitive, something strange and strong.

"Do you think I'm afraid of him?" asked Metford, in a level voice.

"Haint you?" smiled Sadie. "'Most everybody around here looks up to him."

"Oh,"—just a trifle sneeringly in spite of himself,—"he's playing the king game, is he?"

"You haint been here long." And the girl looked away.

Metford leaned toward her and took up one of her hands, the sound hand. He loved her, and he had realized it. She was beautiful and she was strong, and she was a patrician among her people; true, she was illiterate, but that could be cured, for she was quick-witted and very, very intelligent. She blushed faintly, but she did not try to take her hand from him. He looked into her quite wonderful brown eyes and knew that she reciprocated his tender feeling—she too was red-blooded and romantic. But he did not tell her then. He did not have time to tell her. There was the crushing of dead leaves and brush, and Forks Tom, in high boots and blue trousers, blue shirt and broad-rimmed felt hat, strode out of the blooming laurels and confronted them.

"You go to the house, Sadie," he ordered in dangerously quiet tones.

THE couple rose. The girl stood between the two men, whose eyes met just over her sunny brown head.

"I'll not go to the house, Tom," declared Sadie.

With one long arm the mountaineer gently but firmly swept her from between him and Metford. "Le's you and me have a onderstandin', Doctor," he said in his dangerously quiet voice. "You leave this country to-day, afore the sun goes down, and stop trouble."

Metford had turned pale. "I'll leave this country when I like," he growled.

The hill man frowned savagely. Ordinarily he was a fair-minded man—remember that! But now he was wildly, deeply in love with the most charming young woman in the White Rock country.

"You'll leave it to-day!" he cried hotly.

"Tom!" Sadie reproached him. She went between them again.

With more force than he knew, Forks Tom swept her out of the way. Metford caught his arm and threw it back hard.

"Don't handle her like that, you brute!" he said—and then the maddened young hill man struck him a blinding blow in the face.

Sadie Lester, scared white and trembling and speechless, stood and watched them fight, powerless to stop it. Neither man uttered a word as it went on, and soon the faces of both were streaming with blood. For fifteen minutes they hammered each other unmercifully and terribly, and had it not been for Metford's skill as a boxer he would have gone down in early defeat before the mighty Forks Tom.

Then the mountaineer, fearing that he would be worsted unless the tactics were changed, watched for an opening and rushed in for a clinch, and the two powerful bodies clung together and writhed and swayed, breathing fast and hoarsely. It had become a wrestling match, and it lasted for two full minutes as such. Forks Tom tripped the Doctor, quite by accident, and they fell, still locked in each other's arms, from the brink of the cliff head-first to the rushing creek thirty feet below!

The water was not deep enough to break the force of the fall. The hill man loosed his hold as the current swept them into a pool of greater depth, and Doctor Metford, dazed, his lungs filled with water, struggled to the lower bank and dragged himself out. The fall had given him a deep gash above his fore-

head, and the blood ran down into his eyes and blinded him. The frightened voice of Sadie came down to him from the cliff:

"You've killed him, Doctor—you've killed him!"

"He began it—he struck me first!" gurgled Metford. "I'm glad—if I killed him—I'm glad!"

He sat up suddenly and wiped the blood from his eyes. He saw a dark form turning over and over under the water, running with the swirl of the pool. The sight broke his hate and brought his better self, and his physician's instinct, to the surface. He plunged weakly into the water and succeeded in dragging the unconscious mountaineer out. With difficulty he turned the big, limp body face-downward over a log; then he stood across it and began to raise and lower the limp arms.

The minutes went by, and still he pumped the arms up and down. He was a doctor; he had to forget his own miseries and minister to another; he had to save that human life. The blood ran down into his eyes repeatedly, but he wiped it away and worked on.

Sadie came running up to him; she had gone below the line of cliffs and waded the stream; she was wet to the waist. Metford gave Tom's arms to Sadie; she raised and lowered them as he had done, while he held the unconscious man's tongue forward.

When at last the mountaineer showed unmistakable signs of returning life, Doctor Metford collapsed, completely exhausted.

METFORD found himself lying under blankets on a carved black-walnut bed when he came to, and it was a bed he had never seen before. Sadie Lester was bending over him, and behind her stood a very old and kind-faced woman and a very old and sad-eyed man. A dozen other men and women were in the room.

"Where am I?" asked Metford.

"At Tom's home," smiled Sadie. "He lives with his grandparents—this is them." And she indicated the old couple. "Do you feel better now, Doctor?"

"Yes. Where is Tom?"

"In another room. He got an awful lick on the head, same as you, and he is a-tryin' hard not to complain o' pains in his breast."

Metford put a hand weakly to his forehead and felt a bandage there. He scented the odor of turpentine. Then he rose, staggering, and went to the man who had fought him so hard, and whom he had fought so hard. Inflammation was setting up in Forks Tom's lungs. Doctor Ulysses Metford began forthwith one of the hardest physician's battles of his life.

He was many days in doing it, but he won it! And he won also every human heart on the White Rock and the Balsam. The day the tide turned in Forks Tom's favor found Metford hollow-eyed and gaunt. He had slept but little, and that little in a chair. He wondered what he would have done without Sadie! Sadie had changed her place of abode temporarily, and she had watched over him as faithfully as he had watched over Tom. Tom's grandparents, too, had shown Metford a remarkable devotion.

"And now you must sleep, Doctor, and sleep and sleep!" smiled Sadie.

"Not until you tell me how it happens that my name is not Metford but Brian!" stoutly declared the Doctor.

"All right," the girl agreed readily. "They told me I could tell you."

SHE led him to the honeysuckle-covered front porch and to a great old home-made rocker that was lined with untanned sheepskin, and sat down on the floor at his feet. It was late in the day; the sun had long hidden its golden face behind the rugged crest of the western mountain; the snowy bloom

"THE FIXING KID"

WALTER JONES, whose "Pembina" stories made such a hit, has struck another vein that promises to be a bonanza. Next month we will publish "The Fixing Kid," a darky story that is just about the funniest yarn you ever read.

of the laurels was beginning to look ghostly.

"A long time ago," began Sadie, "another Forks Tom lived in this house. He was the oldest son of these old people, and he was as big and strong as the Forks Tom you know. This other Tom, he fell in love with a gyurl named Mollie Allison, who was the daughter of a man Tom's father had hated for years and years. So this other Tom's father, which is the old man who lives in this house, says to Tom this:

"'Ef you marry Mollie Allison,' he says, 'you caint never come home no more. Take yore choice,' he says, 'atween us and Mollie Allison!'

"This other Forks Tom, he had the same metal in him his father had. So he says this: 'I'll choose Mollie Allison, and I'll never come home no more, and I'll not even claim kin with you! And,' he says, 'you know I'm as much a man o' my word as you!'

"So he married Mollie Allison, and they was turned out-o'-doors by both sides. They changed their name to Metford, and went to a town to live—the name Metford, it's a common name hereabouts. Doctor, this other Forks Tom Brian was yore own father, who has kept his word these twenty-six years; and the Forks Tom in the house is yore own cousin, and the two old people is yore grandparents! Hadn't you never noticed that all o' the younger Brians has got dark-blue eyes and blue-black hair like you?

"But pore old Gran'mother Brian. . . . . Lyss, honey, she has always believed her boy would come back home to her, *and for twenty-six years she has kept his place a-waitin' at the table and never let nobody set down at it!* . . . . . It's a God's pity that this other Forks Tom Brian would ruther break his mother's heart than to tell a lie!"

BEHIND a cedar-tree in the shadowy yard a tall, lean, sad-eyed man choked down a great sob. It was the man the county knew and admired as Sheriff Tom Metford, who loved God, feared no earthly thing, told the truth and kept his word. He had set out to look for his son, naturally, when his son had stayed away much longer than the time he had mentioned as the duration of his fishing trip.

Lyss Metford bent his head. Now he *knew* why his father and his mother had looked so longingly, so many times, toward the blue mountains that lay against the east. Now he *knew* why he himself had dreamed, so many times, of those blue mountains, and why they had beckoned to him and beckoned to him to come to them. It was the call of the hills to their own.

Suddenly he sat up and leaned forward. The upturned face of Sadie was close to his. How he loved her! She was one of his own kind.

"When Father knows, he will come back," said young Metford. "He's big enough to break his word. Tell me, Sadie, do you think enough of me to marry me?"

"Of course," answered Sadie, sweetly, and she rose to her knees to put her arms about his neck to kiss him.

SUPPER was announced presently, and they rose and went in to the big, log-walled dining-room. Lyss Metford—or Brian—looked with an understanding eye toward the vacant chair, the old cast-iron knife and fork, the old and cracked blue plate; he had noticed that vacant place before. And just as old Grandfather Torrey Brian bent his white head to ask the blessing, in walked Sheriff Tom Metford—or Brian—and sat down at his old place!

His son rose. "Dad, good old Dad! I knew you—"

The other Forks Tom's eyes shone like gold in the oil-lamp's yellow light.

"Be still, son, be still," he chided, smiling tremulously. "Many a man's mouth has hung him."

His Own Man

by Winona Godfrey

"HE'S a slave, so he thinks we're all slaves." Miss Kibby's remarks were valorous in emphasis but discreet in tone. She cast a glance equivalent to a sticking-out of tongue after Mr. Francis Kellam's retreating figure. That was the trouble with Mr. Kellam's rebukes: they were so mild that they merely stung the pride without inspiring any wholesome fear.

Especially did Miss Kibby dislike being "called down" before the new girl, Joyce Edwards. That new girl had appeared tactfully not to notice the "call-down," but as Mr. Kellam turned away, she glanced after him with some interest; so Miss Kibby with a toss of the head repeated herself: "He's a slave, so he thinks we're all slaves."

Joyce turned her hazel eyes to Miss Kibby. She had a peculiar way of looking at you, Miss Kibby noticed, not exactly an I've-got-your-number sort, but one of these I'm-pondering-what-I-see and I-can-see-a-good-deal. There was something about that look in Joyce's eyes that took a lot of bombast out of conversation.

"How do you mean—a slave?" she asked in a calm, throaty voice.

Miss Kibby rather picked her words. "Oh, well, it's just that Clermont's got his goat so."

Joyce's eyes duly turned to "Clermont," who was silhouetted against the golden-lettered CLERMONT of his own show-window. His name wasn't really the least like *Clermont*. Selected originally to give tone to his exclusive specialty shop, he had come to regard the name as a sort of title, like *prince* or *baron*. He was not *Mr.* Clermont—he was Clermont of Clermont's.

The new girl contemplated the well-groomed, suavely arrogant, harsh-faced old man with no hint of awe—rather with an appraising pensiveness.

"Has he?" she said. "Why?"

"Oh, I don't know." Miss Kibby shrugged. "Kellam is Clermont's nephew, you know, but he seems to think he only holds his job by the grace of God, just the same."

"Is he so afraid of losing his job?" Joyce queried in that meditative tempo that seemed her usual one.

"Acts like it, anyway," Miss Kibby threw back over her shoulder as she advanced to meet a customer.

Joyce, refolding delicately hued blouses into their rosewood niches, con-

tinued to observe and to ponder the meekness of Kellam. That young man wore, as ever, a wonderful suit of clothes befitting the tone of Clermont's, and an air of polite weariness. He was a big young man (Joyce liked big young men when they weren't mere hulks of flesh), but somehow he seemed to lack *punch*. He looked as if he ought to have a lot of horsepower, but that somebody had killed his engine, Joyce reflected—not that he was indifferent to his duties; on the contrary, he was almost unnecessarily watchful for any little matter requiring his attention. Perhaps Miss Kibby's comment helped Joyce's analysis: Mr. Kellam certainly lacked spirit. His eagerness to serve was not the enthusiasm of the man who enjoys his job; it was the strained attentiveness of the man who doesn't want to lose that job.

Perhaps young Mr. Kellam felt her mental scalpel, for presently he caught her glance—and held it just a second.

When she came back from lunch he chanced to be standing near. "Are you beginning to feel at home?" he asked a little hesitatingly. His eyes were kind and his smile friendly.

"Oh, yes, thank you." Her tone was not enthusiastic, and she did not linger.

"Gee, you must be a hit with Francis," Miss Kibby commented.

"Why?"

"Well, he generally acts like he thought a girl would eat him if he looked at her, much less offer 'It's a nice day.' "

"Oh, I guess I look harmless," said Joyce.

But it did seem as if Mr. Francis Kellam was looking at her a good deal more than merely keeping "an eye on the new one" demanded. And it was only a week before he asked her to dine with him. She acquiesced without even looking surprised.

THEY got on beautifully together. Joyce had never met a fellow like him, and a girl with eyes and mouth and hair like Joyce's doesn't work in the city for any eight years without meeting a good many—fellows. He wasn't fresh or facetious or insinuating. Joyce had heard of—and read of—a wonderful being called a gentleman; could it be that she had really met one!

Francis might be Sir Galahad and *sans reproche,* but unfortunately he didn't seem to be *sans peur*. It amused Joyce, though she didn't put it just that way—never having heard of Sir Galahad.

It was the second time they looked at each other across the table that he revealed that fact.

"It seems silly," he said; "but I hope you wont mention going out with me to the girls at the shop."

"I wont," said Joyce. "Why should I?"

"Say," cried Francis, "but you have a straight way of looking at a fellow! Do you know it?"

"People always say I have a funny way of looking at them. I don't mean to. But a lot of girls get the idea that the only way to look at a man is on the bias."

Francis laughed.

"Look here," said Joyce: "I don't want to tell anybody I've been out with you, but why not? Is it a secret?"

Young Mr. Kellam looked down at his plate. "My uncle doesn't like me to go out with the girls in the shop."

"Oh, that's it," said Joyce. "Well, then, should you do it?"

"I've never wanted to, till you came."

"Thanks. I sha'n't need any dessert now." Her tone was only lightly ironical, but Francis looked a little unhappy.

"Suppose he finds it out anyway," Joyce suggested. "What then?"

Francis looked distinctly unhappy. "Oh, I guess he wont."

"But if he should?" she insisted.

"Oh, look here, Miss—Joyce, you're thinking me an awful stick, but—but you don't understand."

"I know I don't. I want to. That's why I'm supposing."

"Well—my uncle's rather a queer sort, and—and I can't really afford to offend him, you know. I'd be very likely to lose my place, and that would be bad for me."

"You so fond of the women's-wear business?"

"I hate it," exclaimed Francis with sudden and surprising fervor.

"I'm afraid I don't get you," said Joyce. "You don't like the job, but you don't want to lose it. You know my idea is that if you hate a job, you can't afford to keep it."

"Say, you're the funniest little girl I ever saw!"

"Am I? Well, I've lost a lot of jobs I couldn't afford to lose, and I've lost a lot more that I couldn't afford to keep."

It was as if she pointed out to the thoughtfully frowning young man a picture of herself—a slender girl with a red mouth set gravely in a shop-pale face, and hazel eyes that seemed to hold in a sort of concentration all the mystery and the struggle, the subtle undercurrents and the resistless torrents of a woman's war with life. Francis could not see these elements, but he felt them vaguely and was stirred.

"You see, the trouble with me," he began lamely, "is that I can't feel that I'm just my own man, if you know what I mean."

"I know," she nodded. "But why?"

"You know how some fellows seem just born to whisky and can't get away from it? Or maybe it's gambling—or even different things, like music. Seems like some people are sort of born into slavery to some kind of thing. It isn't just that with me, but Joyce, there's something that keeps me from breaking away and being myself and doing what I'd like to do—"

"Tell me," said Joyce.

"I'm afraid," said Francis simply. "I guess it's that. You'll think I'm a poor thing, a big boob like me, but it's there just the same. I don't dare just get out and be up against life. I hate this business—and d'you think I enjoy being treated like a ten-year-old by Uncle Clermont? If it was just me—sometimes I hope it isn't just me; maybe it's mostly Mother."

JOYCE had heard him mention his mother before, always in that gentle, cautious, half-weary way. She waited now, knowing no question was needed to draw the rest.

"It was like this," he went on slowly. "My mother was a pretty girl, not very strong, and kind of sensitive, I guess. And my father—well, he wasn't much. My uncle was dead set against the match—you can imagine how he'd be; and my mother was scared to death of him. But my father persuaded her, and she ran off with him. And my uncle wouldn't see her or hear of her or anything. I guess that's old stuff, but it was like that, anyway. And then I was born, and my father got tired and skipped out. She had an awful time." His low voice trailed off, and he sat staring at his coffee-cup.

"Sick and starved and all alone with a baby. She had an awful time," he repeated in a hushed way. "But she lived through it—sewed and scrubbed and scraped along somehow—for ten years. And I got kicked around a good deal, places where she worked. Then at last my uncle took us, and it's been all right since as far as—as—*living* goes. But my mother—she was sort of crushed; her spirit was broken. She's afraid, all the time—afraid, you know, that we'll get kicked out and be up against it like we were. When I was a kid, she made me knuckle down to my uncle all the time. And now, she—she's sort of scared that *I* might get up against it some time. It's—kind of pitiful—"

"I'm awful sorry," murmured Joyce.

"And you know, it kind of got into *me*. You think it's queer for a big fellow like me not to want to—well, buck things, sort of—live my own way. But—but that thing's just *in* me. When I see these poor bums, these down-and-outers, maybe on a cold night when I'm going home from the shop, I just kind of shiver *inside*. And—and I don't *sass* anybody."

He tried to finish off lightly, to feign an easy self-derision, but his smooth young face was drawn with the tragedy of his fear.

THEY were silent awhile. He looked at her half-ashamed and half-pleadingly, as if he felt in her a soul more venturous and unafraid. Still, they seemed to have drawn closer together. What had seemed perhaps only an idle liking was suddenly warmed into a deeper something, speechless but

sweet. They sat there a long time, not saying much.

At last, on the way home, he went back to it. "You know when I was telling you that, I was afraid of what you'd think of me. But you were sweet about it, Joyce. Thanks."

They were at her door. "Oh, that's all right," she said in that slow, thoughtful way. "I guess I understand. Good night."

They began to see a great deal of each other—the movies, the beach, moonlight excursions; but they did not go back to that early confession. Nothing more was said about any caution in the matter of their comings and goings.

Then one night at the beach they ran into Miss Kibby, and the next Sunday they saw her again in the park. Francis did not say anything, but he frowned; and Joyce did not say anything, but she thought of her old question: "Suppose he finds it out—what then?"

Miss Kibby began, the first thing Monday morning. "Say, two bull's-eyes for me! You're getting kind of reckless, aren't you? Or is Francis?"

"What do you mean?" asked Joyce, patting the little hair-scallop over her ear.

"Better not let His Highness see you prancin' around with the Heir Apparent."

"Oh, I don't know," said Joyce. "Might do him good."

"That's all right, too. But remember, Little Boy Blue has a weak heart. Jokin' aside, though, kid—you'll get yourself canned."

"Maybe that's my idea," suggested Joyce.

"You're the cool one, all right, but don't string me like that," scoffed Miss Kibby.

FRANCIS came that night,—it was almost every evening now,—and they took a 'bus-ride and sat in the park awhile and went into a little shop for ice-cream. They hadn't much to say; they seemed to talk less and less as their intimacy grew. Francis looked troubled, but Joyce did not ask why. She kept glancing at him, though, with questioning, speculative, enigmatic eyes.

The touch of her hand in the shadow of her boarding-house doorway broke the barrier at last. He seized her in his arms.

"Joyce!" His low voice shook. "I love you! Say, don't you know it, little girl? I'm crazy about you." He kissed her.

Just a moment she lay quietly against him, eyes closed, feeling his heart pounding against her breast, listening to his broken phrases—"Do you like me a little? Do you? Joyce! do you?"

"A little," she murmured. Then she drew away. "Good night."

"Wait—aw, wait just a minute!" He clung to her hand. "Joyce!"

"Good night," she whispered, and slipped inside the door.

There seemed to be portent in the very air at Clermont's next morning. Francis was not to be seen. Joyce knew what had happened the moment she felt Clermont's cold stare of appraisal. And she knew, almost as if she had been regarding herself in a mirror, what he saw—a cool, slender girl who somehow managed to emerge from her eight-by-ten room with the neatness if not the expensiveness of Fifth Avenue. Not by an eyelash-quiver or a nervously bitten lip did she betray how that arrogant scrutiny stung. She went on serving a fussy shopper courteously and capably.

When, presently, Francis came out of the office, she could see in the very back of his perfect coat—made by Clermont's own tailor—that his peace of mind had been shattered. He smiled a good morning, did not try to speak further—and went to lunch with his uncle.

AS she drank her milk in a dairy lunch-room, Joyce glanced over the help-wanted column. She had an idea that her present connection with Clermont's would be severed in about six more hours.

That blow did not fall, however. What she received was a note from Francis:

Sorry not to see you to-night, but Uncle insisted on my going with him. You understand, don't you? Thinking always of last night. F.

She twisted the paper, smiling a little. He had not mentioned—what she had guessed.

She spent the evening alone in her room—on the floor by her one window, her arms on the sill and her cheek against them. She was not really thinking of Clermont's—she was picturing a country she had read of lately; way out West somewhere,—where that big star hung low in the sky,—where you'd be sitting on the wistaria-draped porch of your bungalow, maybe in the middle of an orange-grove or something like that—where maybe you'd be hearing a mocking-bird instead of the elevated—where you needn't be hired or fired—where you'd just belong to yourself!

And then maybe she thought a little about Francis.

HE came to her the next night, and it was she who broached the subject.

"So Uncle found out, did he?" She wasn't at all vehement about it.

Francis winced. "Yes," he said.

"Well, did he ultimate?"

"Oh, yes. Of course he would. I don't know whether he saw us, or some meddler told him."

"What did he say?"

"He warned me not to let it happen again—let off with a reprimand for a first offense." Francis laughed harshly.

"Yet here you are," said Joyce.

"I tried to argue with him, but you might as well bang your head against a stone wall. Pig-headed old tyrant!" Francis snapped out the epithet with fervor.

"I guess we'd better quit, then," said Joyce in a careful tone.

Francis went white. "You mean that?"

"Why not? If we don't, I'll lose my job first, and then—you might lose yours."

"You—you've forgotten what I said the other night?"

"No, I haven't forgotten."

"Joyce,"—and his voice was dull with despair,—"what can I do? I love you—I want to marry you, but I'd have nothing. You know the kind of fellow I am—"

"I'm just wondering," said Joyce, "if you *are* the kind of fellow you think you are."

He hung his head.

"Francis,"—her eyes were full of dreams,—"I was reading the other day about people with little homes of their own—out West somewhere—not worrying about anything much but the size of their oranges or olives, maybe. I was thinking it must be pretty nice to belong to yourself—not to have somebody hire you if they happened to want to, or fire you if they took a notion to."

"What do you mean, dear?"

"Oh, nothing. I said I was just thinking that would be nice." She drew a long breath. "Well—are we to quit?"

"Of course not," he cried.

"What we going to do? Kind of meet around on the quiet and—dodge folks?"

"Don't say it like that, Joyce! I just want you to wait a little while until—"

"Until what?"

"Maybe Uncle will get reasonable, or—"

"You know what I'm going to do, Francis? I'm going to quit Clermont's."

"Joyce!"

"It's one of those jobs I can't afford to keep."

He stared at her. "Why should you do that? Why, that's the one compromise I got out of Uncle, that he'd keep you on. Why, kid, jobs are scarce now—"

"Are they?" She was looking at him steadily. "That's too bad. Because I'm going to quit Clermont's. And I'm not going to meet you on the quiet, anywhere, either."

He did not meet her eyes.

"I guess I'm not going to see you at all, Francis, until you're—your own man."

"I suppose I deserve that," he said. "But honey-girl, I do love you—wont you believe me?"

"No, I don't believe you," said Joyce sadly. "Look here, Francis: you're not the first man that's said 'I love you' to me. But none of them was very anxious to *prove* it. I mean what they called love didn't seem to be anything very wonderful. Maybe they wanted

just a kiss, or maybe they'd take all they could get. And those that said 'Marry me' weren't thinking about what *I* was going to get out of that marriage—"

"Oh, Joyce—"

"You talk about being up against life! What do you think it means to a *girl* in a town like this? I think I've got something to give the man I love, Francis, but he's got to be worth it. And I don't care how much I love you, I wont take you till you're strong enough to want me *right!*"

There was a thrill in her low voice that should be wine in the veins of a man. She rose, taking up her gloves and little black purse.

"I'm going now. Don't come with me. When you want me—enough, come and find me."

He sat still, white and shaken, while she sped across the corner of the little square and was out of his sight.

He did not follow her. Perhaps that was why the infrequent tears of a girl who had been up against life a pretty long time wet her pillow that night.

EARLY the next morning Joyce packed her few possessions and moved to a remote section of the city where she was almost as unlikely to meet her acquaintances of another district as if she had moved to Australia. If you wish, it is not so hard to lose yourself in the maze of a great city.

It did not occur to Joyce that she had done an extraordinary thing. It did not at all occur to her that she was refining her own gold in the crucible of her love for Francis. The way of passive yielding was not the easy way to this girl; it was the hard way, the way desperately obstructed by some fine pride of soul that would not be bought cheaply, that would not, indeed, be bought at all.

I repeat the platitude that it is the habit of women to sacrifice themselves upon the altar of love while the world duly applauds. When the heroine cries, "I care not what you are; I will go with you, and your lot shall be my lot!" there is a great clapping of hands.

What this strange Joyce said in effect was: "I will not come down to you! Climb to me!" The first is the easy, applauded, idiotic, haloed way which helps make the world what it is. The second is the valiant way, popularly condemned as a sort of highbrow-ism of the soul. Climbing is so tiresome.

And Joyce began her peculiar vigil. Before her savings were gone, she managed to get a place in the small neighborhood shop of Mr. Flumerfelt at a barely living wage. Through dull, hot days and long, lonely nights she waited, sometimes in high hope and sometimes in despair, for her lover to be victor or vanquished. For Francis, too, was the easy and the hard way. She had taken herself out of his path—he could let it remain so if he wished.

The summer passed. Bright, bracing autumn days and cool, starry nights succeeded—and no word, no sign, from Francis.

Joyce had lost. She had played, deliberately, valorously and patiently, for the greatest stakes she knew—and she had lost. She said it at last to herself one evening as she stood looking into her own eyes in her cheap mirror; she drummed slowly on the dresser-top with steady fingers. She had lost. What was to be done? Nothing. It was as if she closed a book. In some vague way she felt that the forces of her being had been bent all these years to this, that within she had held herself trained and poised for some climax that was now reached—that had ended in nothing—in emptiness. That was what she felt—not wild grief or cynicism or rebellion—emptiness. But how she put it was only that she had banked on a man—and he hadn't "panned."

But even in the strength of the bravest woman's heart, there must be a softer strain—else she is not just a woman. Joyce, having said finally "I have lost," sought a telephone and called Clermont's.

"CLERMONT'S." The word in Mabel's indolent and well-remembered tones thrilled the pale girl across the city. But her own voice was steady, non-committal.

"Is Mr. Francis Kellam in?"

Mabel's drone answered: "Mr. Kellam is no longer connected with Clermont's."

"Thank you." She hung up the receiver, trembling. Color leaped to her cheeks. He was gone! What did it mean? What did it mean? *He was gone!* Did it mean victory? or did it perhaps mean only his whole defeat?

Over and over she asked herself which. She had secretly believed in his strength—she had wished to force him out into the current to prove it to himself. Suppose after all he had been a weakling— And then the fact remained that he had never come for her. Couldn't he have found her easily enough if he had tried? It was three months since she left Clermont's—a very great deal can happen in three months.

At dusk she was alone in the front of the little shop. Behind the ground-glass of his tiny "office" little Mr. Flumerfelt (at least it seemed so from his posture) was adding up columns of figures with his nose.

A big man suddenly opened the shop-door and came toward her. He was thinner and browner—and different; but it was Francis. He didn't say a word at first. He just came and stood before her with a little half-smile. And she for a moment just looked back; then she reached out to touch him—to put two yearning hands on his shoulders.

"You've come!" she whispered. "You've come back!"

"Did you think I wouldn't?" he asked wistfully, after the kiss.

"I knew you would," she said.

Then the story came.

"AFTER you went," said Francis simply, "I sat on there a long time, I guess. I knew I'd come to the place where you've got to choose. I'd got to the place where you've got to look yourself in the eye. I don't know why I say *choose*. There wasn't any choice—it *had* to be *you*. You shamed me, honey—nothing could turn you from going the straight, right way.

"Well, I got home; and there was Uncle waiting up for me mad as a hatter. He knew where I'd been. He said: 'What do you mean by disobeying me?' And I said: 'I'm twenty-six years old; why should I obey you?' And he said: 'Be careful, or I'll put you out where I found you.'

"I tried to reason with him. I told him I wanted to do the right thing by him, that I wanted to please him where it was reasonable and possible. I told him I knew he's always played on my weak spot. It wasn't that he really cared what I did—he was just bound to have his own way. Finally he said would I go his way or my own? And I said I'd go my own. And he said: 'Get out, then.' Mother was the hardest—poor Mother! But I got out, just the same."

"Why didn't you come to me then?" Joyce asked softly.

"Because I hadn't proved anything yet. I was scared a little, though, when I found you'd left the old place. And you'd said to come when I was my own man, and I wasn't sure about that. But I remembered what you said about out West, so I took my money and went—to California."

"Ah!" breathed Joyce, her fingers twining in his.

"Kid, I've won, in a way. It's only a little bit of a place, and I didn't have much to pay down, but it'll be all ours some day, and nobody can fire us. There's a little bungalow with pepper-trees in front—and a mocking-bird sings there every night! Say, you want to go back with me? You do, don't you, honey? If you don't—"

"Do I want to go! Oh, Francis! Only—only—"

"What?"

"You're not to be just your own man—"

"No?" His eyes were tender and brave and sure now. "Whose?"

"Mine," she whispered.

A Complete Résumé of the First Installment

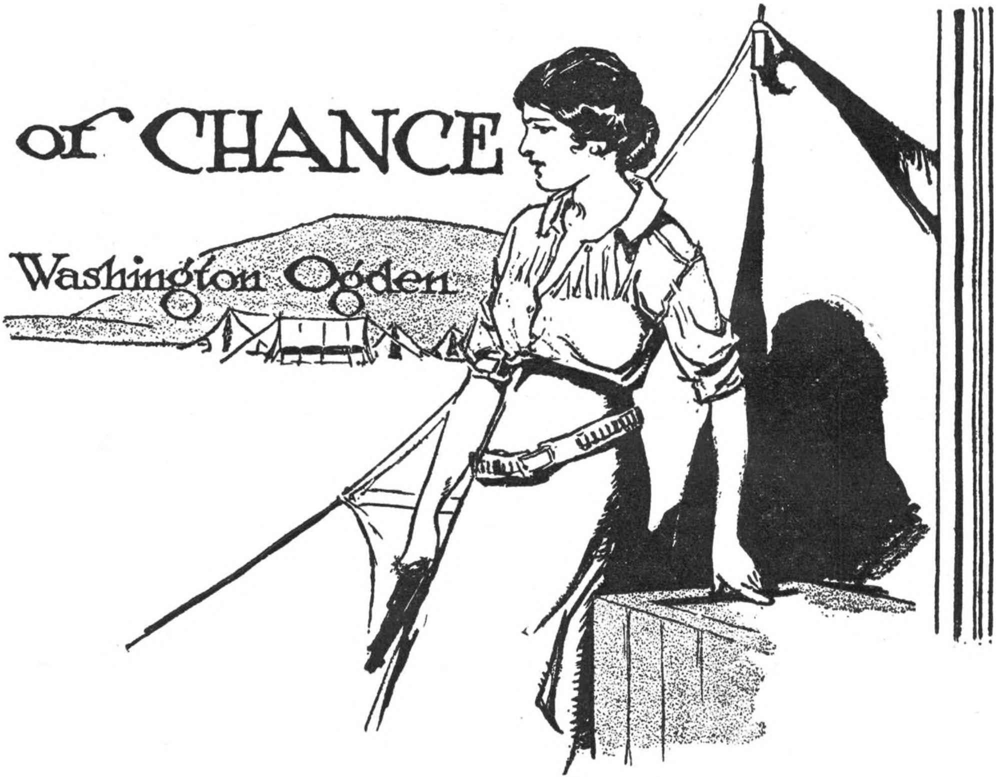
THE opening for settlement of the fertile land of Oklahoma was a dramatic—almost an epic—affair. The government appointed a day for the opening, and then homeseekers were allowed to rush across the boundary and race for the choice locations—first come first served. For days before the appointed time, would-be settlers gathered at the boundary, and only the presence of a military patrol prevented some of them from rushing in ahead of time. Indeed, a few of them—"sooners," they were called—did succeed in slipping through and gaining an unfair advantage in this way.

Notable among the homeseekers was Captain Kay, a fine old frontiersman who had been a sheriff in Kansas, but whose high principles had brought him little of this world's goods. So he sought a new home, and, with a swift saddle-horse ready, planned to race to a certain fertile valley he had once visited years before. With Kay was his daughter Marion, who would follow more slowly, driving the wagon which contained their bulkier effects.

J. Bliss, a well-driller; A. F. Noss, an undertaker who saw a fine chance for business as a result of the tumultuous events he foresaw in Oklahoma; John O'Brien, a clever ne'er-do-well newspaper man who hoped to make his fortune by publishing the first journal in the new land; a "mover" named Jim Timberlake—these are some of the other picturesque people who are prominent in the story.

AT last the signal was given; Captain Kay raced ahead of the throng and after some hours of hard riding reached the valley of his dreams—only to find it preëmpted by a "sooner"—and a woman, at that, against whom he was too chivalrous to fight.

Sick at heart, he went on to Victory, the townsite appointed by the government, and to which a railway had already been built. The first trainload of settlers had just arrived when Kay rode in, and there was a wild scramble for the choice lots, but this time Kay was a bit more successful, and contrived to drive his stakes in a good location. He was, however, anxious about Marion; what had become of her in that rushing crowd, and would she be able to find him?



O'BRIEN had stopped at the tent on the lot adjoining on his way back from breakfast. The woman holding down that property was having difficulty with her fire, which had burned out before her coffee-pot was more than warm. Her only fuel had been part of a light box which she had picked up, and now O'Brien, with the gallantry of his race, was lending a hand. He contributed one of the boxes in which his machinery had been packed, and when he had her fire going properly he sat down beside it, just as though the business of the world had been begun and finished.

Timberlake looked across at the pair of them, his smile turning into a laugh.

"That Irish feller's settin' up to that sooner girl already, and makin' headway like a house afire," he said.

"How do you know she's a sooner, Jim?" Kay inquired quickly.

"Neighbors all say so, and a soldier told me last night he saw her come out of the brush down by the crick before noon. He advised me to jump her lot; but shucks! I aint around snatchin' a little piece of dirt from no woman, sooner or no sooner."

"Of course not," said Kay. Then, reflectively: "But she was there when I arrived, and I remember that I wondered at the time how she made it, afoot and alone, and why she hadn't taken the corner lot."

"Maybe she flew, and couldn't see the stakes," said Jim.

"For all that either you or I care, she flew," Kay granted.

"Well, if he wants me to haul over that press and stuff, b'jigs, he'd better be kickin' the grass," said Jim. "Pretended to be in the all-nation of a sweat before he went to breakfast, and me up at daylight to git an early start."

As if he remembered the matter of the press, or Jim's words had carried to

Copyrighted, 1916-17, by George Washington Ogden. All rights reserved.

him and roused him, O'Brien cut short his pleasant visit with the sooner girl, gave her a courtly bow, hat in hand, and left her to her breakfast. He sent Jim to the station after the rest of the machinery and plunged into the business of getting ready for his next issue.

O'Brien had come back from breakfast clean and refreshed. He explained that he had found a barber, who had opened a laundry in connection with his shop.

"I got his advertisement, and one from the bank, and a four-inch display from the grocery right up there," he said, up-ending a small box beside a big one and sitting down to write. "Captain, do you know our neighbor over there says you've got the laugh on her. She tells me she beat you here, and thought she was on the corner till you came along."

"I'm sorry, but I don't see how we can fix it now," said Kay.

"But it *is* quite a joke, you'll have to admit, to miss a fortune by fifty feet," said O'Brien, bending over his paper.

When O'Brien's pencil traveled over the paper, the right corner of his mouth began to elongate, as Kay had noted by the light of the lantern when he was setting lines of type. But the transformation of that homely organ was more rapid and alarming when the editor wrote on paper. The corner of his mouth reached around so far toward his ear that it seemed to threaten to swallow it, but on the completion of the line it resumed its normal shape.

AT that point in the history of Victory's second day, Noss, the modern undertaker, made his appearance before the open-air newspaper-office. He carried a copy of *The Bulletin* in his hand, and sweat was streaming down his face.

"Oh, here's where you're located, is it? Well, I've been lookin' for you," said he.

O'Brien looked up at his visitor curiously, and Kay introduced them. Noss drove directly to his business, in his short-cutting way. He wanted to put an advertisement in the paper, and he wanted it made big.

"How much space do you want?" O'Brien asked.

"I'll take a page," said Noss.

O'Brien rose in stiff dignity.

"There's nobody in this town rich enough or great enough to buy a page in *The Bulletin* to-day," said he. "You can have one inch, exactly one inch, fourteen agate lines, and it'll cost you fifty cents a line, in advance."

"One inch!" protested Noss, fetching up an engraver's plate out of his pocket. "Why, you couldn't get the coffin in an inch, let alone the hearse."

"You'll get neither coffin nor hearse in this paper to-day," said O'Brien, "and it's only with a view to your continued business in future that I consent to give you as much as a card. After I get squared around, Mr. Noss, and get my press up and ready to get out eight pages daily, you can have a page, or you can have two pages, if you want them, and run in coffin, hearse, pallbearers and a cut of the deceased. But not to-day, Mr. Noss, not to-day. Space in this paper to-day is as precious as water in Tophet."

"Well, then, just run my card," said Noss, presenting it, "and cut out the coffin and hearse. I'm located right across on the opposite corner," he explained to Kay. "Leased it from old General Taylor, of Newbrasky—you know him, I guess?"

"No, I never met him," said Kay.

"He's a big feller up there, and he'll be a big man here. He goes around in a Grand Army suit and a big gray beard that spreads out like a turkey-gobbler's tail when the wind hits him in front. Well, I'll be stirrin' along, and"—to O'Brien—"if anything happens around here, or anywhere that you're at, send 'em to me, will you?"

"If necessary to promote your business, Mr. Noss," said O'Brien, gravely, pausing half-bent as he was sitting down again, "I'll take my gun in hand."

Noss gave him a look which was half suspicious, half serious.

"You're a funny feller," he said.

NOSS hurried away, for the sound of hammers on the lot across the street told that the carpenters were at work on his building already. Kay looked

after him, not considering him, but thinking about Marion. In spite of her weapons of defense and her self-reliance, it was an uncertain place for a young woman to be thrown into alone. And perhaps the sooner had not told her where he had gone, and she had not come to Victory at all.

He believed that he could trust O'Brien to respect his claim to the lot and keep it clear of jumpers until either he or Timberlake returned. He spoke to the editor of his concern for his daughter's safety, an: O'Brien urged him to go at once and seek her.

"It will be a pleasure to take a shot at any marauder," said he, lifting his grave eyes.

Kay thanked him and turned away to saddle his horse. O'Brien called after him, apologetically.

"I hope you'll not take it as a breach of hospitality, or a spurning of a favor," he began, "but I've arranged with your neighbor—Miss Johnson, she tells me her name is—to put my press over there."

"Set up wherever you find the best terms and conditions," Kay advised.

"It isn't a matter of terms, but conditions," O'Brien explained. "I believe we didn't mention terms last night—I was in too much of a hurry and you were too much of a gentleman. The ground's level over there, and your lot slopes a good bit. I can set my press there without a foundation, and I'm not burdened with money right now."

"Go ahead, and good luck follow you, wherever you locate," said Kay, heartily.

A LITTLE crowd had gathered in front of the open-air newspaper-plant, and stood watching the editor at work. As Kay brought his horse up, saddled and ready to mount, a man pushed through.

"Captain Kay?" said he, more of a hail than a quest' in his voice.

"Yes sir," returned Kay, drawing himself up with unconscious dignity.

"Banks," said the man, offering his huge hand. Kay shook hands with him, in a hesitating, questioning way. "I've come to tell you that Miss Kay is safe and sound," said Banks.

A light of relief leaped into Kay's stern face at his words. He shook hands with Banks again, this time on his own initiative, thanked him warmly and asked for particulars.

"Miss Kay gave me a lift yesterday when my horse fell under me, and I owe much to her and to you," said Banks. "She camped across the railroad, on a claim that a man from Wisconsin took up. There were four jumpers on it before sundown, and he has retained me to defend his title in the courts."

So it came out, delicately and incidentally, that Banks was a lawyer. Kay said he was certain that the settler had displayed uncommon wisdom in his choice of an attorney, in which opinion Banks seemed to agree, without straining his modesty around the buttonholes.

Banks was a long-legged man in a black coat which struck almost to his knees. It was very tight across his shoulders, and much worn, the original dye having taken on a greenish shade in protected spots. The sleeves were far too tight and short for Banks' long arms. His immense cuffs, almost as big as stovepipes, protruded glaringly beyond his sleeves, and the wrists inside of them were raw and hairy, great-boned, strong.

He wore a little brown felt hat with round brim. which turned up like a clown's, and he was a hard-countenanced man, hard of cheek-bones, hard of forehead, hard of jaw-joint and chin. His face was weathered and brown, with a tough and wiry mustache which seemed made of the fiber of his hard skin. His nose was large; his ears appeared as big as his own broad hands under his ridiculous small hat. Banks looked like a man who had borne a great many sharp knocks, and who stood ready to give and take more, as they might come to him in the course of the day.

CAPTAIN KAY wasted neither time nor words on the matter. With Banks leading the way they left the editor at his work, as fresh and eager as if he had slept the night through, and went to find Marion, and bring her home.

It was a delicate task to pilot the wagon to Kay's lot through that confusion of tents, which every owner believed to be the seed of a stately mansion and the germ of his own fortunes, and guarded with a jealousy founded on such extravagant dreams. Their ropes stretched as thick as spiders' webs in the grass. Kay wondered how Jim Timberlake had passed through with his broad-gauge wagon, and how he ever expected to get back. It took Kay a good while to accomplish the trip, Banks proceeding ahead in ambassadorial capacity, or lingering behind to placate some new householder whose ropes had been wrenched by a passing wheel.

Neither O'Brien nor Timberlake was there when they arrived at the lot; but a stranger was busily sticking type at the editor's case. The man was bleary and battered, his black beard streaked with gray, his wavy eyelids purple, his nose veined with alcoholic congestion. He removed his hat when Marion descended from the wagon, and stepped forward, his printer's stick in his hand, smudges of ink on his bare arms.

"I was expecting you," he said. "Colonel O'Brien is out, and I am in charge of the office. I am his foreman," he announced with an importance beyond his position, it seemed, seeing that he had nobody but himself to supervise, "and my name is Akers, Charley Akers, from the Rio Grande to the Saskatchewan."

Charley Akers spoke in slow, soft words, a little whirring thickness in them, as if he might be asthmatic, or his inward channels had become obstructed by fat.

"We're all very glad to know you, Mr. Akers," said Marion, offering him her hand. When he hesitated, with a deprecating look at his own ink-stained paw, she laughed. "Don't mind the ink; I'm used to it; it makes me think I'm really home again."

Her cordial smile drove like a sunbeam directly to the old printer's heart. He tried to wipe the rough of it off on his thigh, before giving her his hand, but there was a light in his face which seemed to lift him, and make him proud of his art.

"Are you a newspaper man too?" he asked.

"Yes, a sort of one," said she. "This is my father, Captain Kay, and this is Mr. Banks, attorney, who has come to conquer Oklahoma."

Banks seemed embarrassed by her words which facetiously pretended to discover his intention. His bronzed face reddened, and he made a little clumsy gesture of deprecation with his big hands. Charley Akers shook hands with the men in ceremonious fashion, which had in it a suggestion of better days.

"You will pardon me if I fly at once back again to the call of duty?" he appealed to Marion. "The lady next door shot a man in the leg a few minutes before you arrived, and I am writing the story."

"Shot a man!" said Marion.

"He was trying to jump her lot—raised the question of her right of possession, called her a sooner in loud and insulting words, and she pegged him with her little bullet. No gentleman will blame her, Miss Kay; it's everybody for himself here to-day."

BACK again to the case he hurried. Marion turned and looked over to the scene of the shooting where a tall, handsome woman, little older in appearance than herself, was walking a determined beat across the front of her lot. She was dressed in a brown duck suit, short of skirt and adorned with those garish trappings such as squaws like to sew on their garments—glittering things of tinsel along the seams, fringes, little rosettes of red.

She was bareheaded, and the sun glinted on her rich, fair hair, and on the bright revolver which she swung uncovered in her hand. She was the first theatrical, unreal-looking figure that Marion had encountered in all that heaving throng. She had seen a woman dressed that way shooting glass balls in a circus once, but never before had met one at large in the open world.

A crowd had gathered, and stood back from her line a respectful distance, now, looking on silently, more interested in the woman's appearance, and the show that she was making of

herself, than in what she had done. The tail of the gathering reached over past the newspaper-office where Charley Akers was at work, but the claim-jumper who had felt her bullet was not among them.

Banks, seeing in the incident a case, went across to the young woman and introduced himself. She received him with eagerness, it appeared, and drew him back toward her tent, where they stood in earnest conference.

"Well, she's a sooner, all right," said a young man in the crowd. "She was there when I come, and I tell you I split the wind. The soldiers told me she was on that lot at a quarter past twelve, long before a train got here, or anybody could 'a' made it if he'd 'a' come by telegraph. If she aint a sooner, what is she?"

Nobody appeared to be able to define her standing in a better term.

"He had a right to jump the lot," said a dusty, lean man with a long neck, "but he made a mistake in takin' up a quarrel with a woman. Nobody wont take his part ag'in' her, no matter if she is a sooner, as plain as the nose in the middle of your face."

Banks came back from his conference with the sooner girl with his thumb in his vest pocket, a lively, eager look in his small black eyes. But for all that, it appeared like it would require a good deal of both feeling and feeding to lift the hollows out of his leathery cheeks, which seemed to stick to his teeth under the ridge of his hard cheek-bones.

Kay was putting up his tent, and Banks fell to with willing and capable hand. As he drove a peg here, tightened a rope there, he talked, his long coat put back as tenderly from contact with wheel or hub as if it were a sacerdotal garment.

"She's morally and legally justified in her vigorous defense of her lot," he said, "and I'll fight the case to the highest court if necessary to establish her."

"But they all say she's a sooner, Mr. Banks," protested Marion, with the stress of her lively feeling against that tribe.

"Let 'em go into court and swear she is," said Banks.

"It's not a matter for us to take sides on," said Kay, shaking his head in mild reproof for her heat in the question.

"After the experience we've had with sooners, I don't see where we've got any room for sympathy with them," said Marion indignantly.

"No, but we must leave other people's troubles to themselves, especially when they're next door to us," her father said.

"She's an honest, hard-working young woman," said Banks. "Her mother is on the way here now, and together they intend to open a restaurant in a tent until they can build. Any man that would try to rob a woman will get mighty little public sympathy, and less mercy at the hands of the courts. I'll fight it up to the last notch!"

The poor fool who had made the rash attempt to dispute possession with the sooner girl was not there to speak his intentions, and he did not appear to have any friends. Banks' talk was understood by Kay to be merely the sound and fury of a lawyer who felt the need of justifying a retaining fee in a case where there was not likely ever to be either prosecution or defense.

"You've come to a land of trouble; you'll have your hands full," said Kay.

"Yes," said Banks, looking about him with comprehensive eye, "and I must be prepared to take care of it. I must get a location and hang out my shingle. Now, you've settled on one of the best lots in Victory—central and conspicuous. It's going to be worth money at no distant day. I wonder if you'd allow me to pitch a tent to one side here and open a temporary office—at a rental consideration, of course?"

Kay could not see where any complication affecting his own title could arise through his conceding this favor to the hungry-cheeked lawyer. Banks was duly grateful, but not effusively so. He took a grain-sack out of the wagon with something in it bulky and oblong, showing corners like books, and placed it inside the tent.

"My library," said he with entire gravity. "I wonder if it will be in the way there for a little while?"

"It will be safe; we'll watch it," said Kay, a smile increasing the little wrinkles at the corners of his eyes.

BANKS said he would go and buy a tent and such other articles as he lacked to make him comfortable in that unfurnished city. As he disappeared in the passing stream, Marion laughed.

"There are three books in it," she said, touching the sack with her toe. "He told me the names of them yesterday, but I don't remember them now, but he said they were all any man needed to be a successful lawyer."

"Well, Mr. Banks doesn't appear to have gone very far on his way with them," her father said.

"Maybe there's one too many," she said.

"Or it might be one too few," suggested Kay, his grave face unbroken by a smile.

Marion knew that his thoughts were not on Banks, but that they were centered on what he had lost yesterday. And there they sat down and talked of the lost claim, and Marion recounted her experience with the surly sooner and his wife.

"I gave it to them good and plenty, too," she said, her eyes again reflecting the anger which had surged that day in her indignant breast. "I told him he was a sooner, and I had the biggest notion in the world to take a shot at him. I could have done it, too, and run them both off, for I had 'em before me like a couple of sheep."

"I should have hung around there in the brush somewhere and waited for you," smiled Kay, his eyes glad for the spirit he saw leaping in her hot young heart. "Never mind, Marion; I doubt if it's worth fighting for—or killing anybody for, anyhow."

"Maybe Mr. Banks could put them off," she suggested hopefully.

"I'm afraid not," he confessed. "The Department of the Interior has ruled that the person first making improvements on a claim will be considered above all other claimants, no matter who makes application to file, or when. That seems to shut us out of that place for good. That sooner will not be lacking in others of his stripe, officers of the law, maybe, to stand up and swear for him when the time comes. I'll just drop the claim, Marion. This beats it for a quick turn and easy money, anyhow."

He told her of Noss' offer for it, the news of which brightened her greatly. She began at once to compute from that basis what it would be worth, in proportionate increase, a month from that day. The prospect was more than dazzling: it was dazing.

She turned in a sort of arithmetical enchantment to arrange the tent which was to be her home. At last she came to Banks' library, which she had to move aside to make room for her little tin stove.

"Do you know, Father," she said, coming to the door with the mouth of the bag of knowledge in her hand, "I believe Mr. Banks is a sooner, too?"

"What makes you think that?" he smiled, glad to see her so rosy and fair, with the gleam of happy expectation again in her honest eyes.

"It was just after leaving that sooner outfit that I overtook him," she said, "and he was *so* draggled and tired, with this sack over his shoulder, and there wasn't a dead horse within a mile of him. I believe he'd slipped in the day before."

"Maybe he did," he agreed. "The gullies were full of sooners for days before the opening, they say."

"Well, anyway, he didn't look to me like a man that had been riding," she declared, "but I gave him a lift because he looked so comical."

"It was a queer reason for taking a man up," said he, "but not unjustified. Mr. Banks is considerable of a figure, any side you take him on."

O'BRIEN returned in the middle of the forenoon, sweating and on the jump. He came over to enlist Kay's assistance in setting up a tent which he had bought to shelter his outfit. The Captain called Marion from her household cares and presented her.

She was still wearing that soldierly blue serge with the brass buttons on it, for she had slept in it the past night. But there was such a freshness in her

face, and a warmth in her hair, and a look in her eyes which seemed to tell that she knew nothing at all of the guile which hid in the hearts of men, that John O'Brien caught his breath sharply when she came out, as if a wind had struck him.

He bowed over her hand when she gave it to him, his long locks sweeping forward over his eyes, and made his compliments and put away the business of his hurried day as if the world had nothing at all to do but stand by and wait his whim.

"Charley Akers told me there was another newspaper man on the ground," he said, "and I wonder—"

"Yes, I'm it," said she. "I used to work on a county-seat weekly up in Kansas, but I never was a great editor."

"I think I'll enlist you," said O'Brien half-seriously. "I'm buried in work already."

"If there's anything I can do to relieve the pressure, call me over," she said, ducking back into the tent.

Timberlake had navigated the sea of tent-ropes successfully several times, and O'Brien's press and engine were being set up on the sooner girl's lot, at the side farthest from Captain Kay's line.

O'Brien said it would be two days before he could get his plant in operation, and he begged permission, meanwhile, to scatter his traps around on Kay's lot.

"I guess you'll be glad that I didn't cumber your ground any more than this," said he, "for you're pretty well crowded with the disinherited without me." He nodded toward Timberlake's outfit on the back of the lot. Jim was there, unhitching his team.

"I've just taken in another one," Kay said. He told of Banks. "But they're welcome, as long as there's room for them," he said.

Even as they spoke of him, Banks came back. He carried a fresh signboard nailed to a stake, such as real-estate men use in announcing land for sale, with HENRY L. BANKS, LAWYER, painted in white against a green background. He had a tent in a bundle on his back, with his cooking-utensils wrapped in it. His pockets bulged with groceries, and the aroma of coffee followed him like a wind from Araby.

Kay gave him permission to set up his tent on the side of the lot next that of the sooner girl. Banks drove his stake into the ground in front of it and removed his library from Marion's care. For the want of a bookcase or box to lodge the three all-sufficient volumes in, he hung the sack on the forward tent-pole. Anybody with even a half-educated eye could see that it contained books, and books of consequence, from the weight of them in the sack.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGGAR MOUNTS

MRS. JOHNSON, mother of the sooner girl, arrived from Arkansas City on the noon train. She was a little wrinkled woman, about the color of a dried peach. She had a piratical hooked nose; her mouth was bent down at the corners as if it had been made with a biscuit-cutter. She wore no headgear, and very little hair. What there was of that was a coal-ash gray, pulled back as if she had a spite against her eyebrows and wanted to drag them back under it and hide them.

Her ears were weighted with big three-quarter moons of gold, and she followed about a rod behind her daughter, who had gone to the station to meet her, with a bundle done up in a turkey-red tablecloth across her back.

Marion was diverted by the appearance of this romantic-looking figure. She stood in front of the tent watching the little procession as it crossed her father's lot, wondering what kind of a noise the old lady would make when she talked and what kind of a neighbor she was going to be.

Mrs. Johnson put her bundle down on her daughter's lot and scraped her bent finger across her forehead to clear the sweat which was streaming down into her wrinkled old hawk eyes.

"Reno," said she, "it's hotter'n hell!"

Her voice was thin but penetrating, and so peculiarly pitched that it would assert itself above all the turmoil and

noise of Victory cooped into one small space. It sounded strained and hoarse, like a shouting Baptist preacher's at the end of his third hour, and it seemed an unaccountable thing to issue out of a little dry creature whom one expected to squawk like a parrot.

She said more after she had relieved herself of that observation, all of it audible across the fifty feet between her and Kay's tent. Reno, as she called the sooner girl, carried her part of the conversation, but in a low, subdued voice which did not betray her words at that distance. While the old woman unpacked her big bundle, Reno came over and engaged Jim Timberlake to go to the station and fetch over a shipment of goods which had come on the train with her mother.

This turned out to be a big tent, a stove, tables and chairs, and all the necessary equipment for opening an eating-house. Along with it came a little dark man with a boyish face, sharp and eager with great black eyebrows which he bunched in frowns and lifted in expostulations and used with as great and effective expression as he did his tongue.

He looked like a Mexican, the color of unsettled weak coffee, with thick black hair, long and upstanding, growing down on his low forehead. Marion smiled over the collection of curiosities on the adjoining lot, feeling that there would be something doing in that camp before many hours. The little man seemed to be a sort of factotum on springs. He bounced and bounded, leaped and tugged, rolled boxes, heaved at tables, and had a smoke going up out of the big range before Timberlake and two impressed assistants had the tent on its pegs.

ORDER came out of confusion on the sooner girl's premises very quickly, and through all the flurry and bustle she moved about in a sort of Wild West dignity, her hand on her hip, her low words on her lips, her pistol slung around her shapely waist. She was the big boss there; that was certain. At a word from her the little man leaped as if he were going to fetch her the moon.

As for the old lady, she seemed to belong with the stove. She put her pots on as soon as the fire was made, and brought cabbage out of a box and corned-beef out of a barrel, and soon had an advertisement of delectable vapors sweeping over Victory which must have tickled the ribs of the hungry for a mile.

Reno and the little man consulted over a spread of muslin which he unrolled upon a table. Presently he dived down into a box and came up with a paint-brush in hand. Meantime Jim Timberlake was fastening up the side-walls of the big tent. There stood the tables within it, all spread, cloths on them, cutlery in place to perform upon the beef and cabbage at the proper hour.

In a little while the factotum got on a barrel and fastened the sign across the front of the tent. The letters were red, with green trimmings, suggestive of corned-beef and cabbage, and they announced the establishment as:

THE SOONER GIRL CAFE
And
Restaurant

The "And Restaurant" was in small letters, and cramped a little into the corner, as if he had added them as an afterthought, by way of explanation of the capitals. Customers began to come immediately, and the little man served them, with a pistol buckled on him instead of an apron; and the sooner girl stood in front to take their money as they passed out.

That day's developments in Victory were swift in other quarters as well as in the neighborhood of Captain Kay. But things were not so peaceful elsewhere in the city as in that spot, where there had been no shooting save that done by the sooner girl early in the day.

CAPTAIN KAY had pictured the situation in a word when he told Banks that he had come to a land of trouble. Grafters were four-deep all over the new land of Oklahoma, and one of its chief plague-spots was the city of Victory, dust-red under the April sun.

Jumping claims and town lots had grown into an organized business. Gangs of armed desperadoes moved in twos and threes, taking possession of claims and lots in defiance of the rightful owners. In some cases they would announce their intention of fighting for the land in the courts, but usually they made a bold front and a display of force to accomplish their aim, which in most cases was that of frightening the settler to buy them off to save not alone his property, but his life.

In hundreds of cases the middle-States farmers who had rushed into Oklahoma hadn't much fight in them at the beginning, and their rough, strange surroundings quickly drained them of both courage and sense. Those who had money to buy the jumpers off, and considered the land or the lots worth the price, paid the rascals for peace; others surrendered and turned back to Kansas with their tails between their legs; a few put their backs against their wagons and disputed the right of the thieves like men.

Some lives were lost on both sides in that manner, but not many, considering the fertility of the ground for the seeds of trouble to take root in and grow. The saddest part of it was the breaking, in heart and spirit, of thousands who had come there in high hopes, and the virtual turning over to unlawful claimants a large part of the land.

Many of the dispossessed, who had no means to fight for their rights, and little inclination to remain in a land where the prospect of tranquillity seemed so far removed, trailed in a melancholy line back over the way that they had come so eager of heart but yesterday. They seemed too saddened by the disappointment, humiliation and peril which they had faced in Oklahoma to open their mouths and pronounce curses on it as they passed away.

Viewed from the hill upon which the land-office stood, Victory seemed a place of ten thousand shirts and hats moving among the tangled tents. Unshaved, unwashed, their eyes clouded with suspicion and distrust, men mingled in aimless gatherings, wondering where and how it was all going to come out, and what they were going to receive for their labors when some strong hand took hold of the confusion and set the new city in order upon its green plains.

TWO sets of speculators, calling themselves "town-site companies," had found some means of evading the regulations and had arrived hours ahead of everybody else upon the land where Victory now stood. They had surveyed lots and streets, and were first at the door of the land-office when it opened this second day, with plats of their town-sites to file.

Settlers had ignored these illegal surveys, as the land-office had refused to receive and file either of the plats. When the people rushed upon that land on the opening day, they had taken up not alone the lots, but the spaces reserved for streets as well, for every one of the ten thousand knew that his right was as good as that of the men who had made the survey.

Nobody knew where the squabble would end, for the two companies were making loud and boisterous claims. They were sending armed men through the clustering tents and attempting to force squatters out of the streets, but nobody yielded an inch.

The shirted, whiskered, crumpled, dusty men met by twos and fives and talked it over; they talked and tramped and raised the red dust from daybreak till midnight, but resolved nothing out of the situation but words. Organization was the one needful thing, about which they knew the least, for they were men of the farms, and laborers who now believed themselves suddenly transformed into capitalists by this great gift of Oklahoma. Every man of them suspected the other of some base design, some bloody intention.

The military authorities in charge of policing the country urged the people of Victory to organize a municipal government and take up the matter of law-enforcement and untangling their own claims and counter-claims themselves. There were but a few troops of cavalry to spread over the whole land, and crimes were multiplying every hour.

This suggestion sounded like a message from home in the ears of the poli-

ticians who had come in on the big wind, and the town-site promoters who saw their easy money in a way to gallop off and leave them without even an expectation in their pockets. They called meetings of their own kind, and laid ropes to ensnare the feet of the people, fast growing into a state of panic.

On the third day of Victory's history, Democrats and Republicans—a selected, if not a select few of each—met and placed candidates for city officers in the field. The candidate for mayor on one ticket was General Taylor, the notable from Nebraska in the whiskers and the Grand Army suit, from whom Noss had leased the corner. He was president of one of the town-site companies. The candidate at the head of the other ticket was a complacent banker from Kansas, with a red neck and a horse-head for a charm on his watch-chain. He was president of the other town-site company. So they had it all fixed to win, no matter who lost.

This was such a plain proceeding that the farmers who had so suddenly become townsmen, and the laborers who felt themselves to be capitalists, could see through it without any magical wisdom-lending glasses. They saw their dreams of sudden riches fading, and panic took hold of their hearts.

O'BRIEN and Banks had been together a great deal during the first two days of Victory's life. There seemed to be a bond of sympathy between the two which was unaccountable to Kay, for they were as different as poetry and prose. A little light had been cast on this strange and sudden friendship the night before, when O'Brien had remarked to Kay:

"We're a couple of vagabonds of chance, Banks and I."

O'Brien had sat in the light of his lantern at his box-desk then, with his large, poetic eyes boring out a vision in the desk which Kay, of course, could not share. Presently he seemed to wake out of his dream abruptly.

"But we're going to come into our own here," said he. "That man Banks is an elephant of undeveloped capabilities, a rugged, untrimmed force, wasted because the world never has presented his angle, just the same as with me, maybe. I look for great things from Banks when he gets his broad back under the world where he can grunt and lift."

From his place on Kay's fifty feet of frontage, Henry Banks surveyed this heaving, troubled, laboring movement of the people on the afternoon of Victory's third day. Clients had been consulting him since early morning; his thumb had been out of his roomy vest-pocket but seldom. The alert look in his small, heavily browed eyes was sharpened, for the tide of trouble was flecked with bank-notes as it came rolling to his tent.

There was a little clear space in the street in front of the sooner girl's lot which a man who had camped there and tried to hold for two days had given up, and in that breathing-room they were milling like cattle. The crowd reached over to Kay's lot and engulfed the front of it.

"They need a leader," said Banks, turning to Kay, who was studying the restless mob with grave face.

"Yes, they're headless as well as heartless," Kay said.

"The right man could take that crowd by the hand, so to speak, and lead it the way a mother leads her child," said Banks, looking over the shirts and hats with thoughtful eyes. "A strong man could split the vote and walk right into the mayor's chair."

"Well, I hope they don't pick up some grafter in their desperation and confusion and saddle him on their backs," Kay said.

"They're in the wilderness; they'll never get out alone; but the strength's on their side, and they don't know it."

"Trouble grows in that kind of sour ground," said Kay, shaking his grave head. "There'll be a flare-up that'll scorch somebody in that crowd before night unless something's done."

The *Bulletin* for that evening was out, and O'Brien was big with expectations for the next day, when the press would be ready to print a regular paper. He was at work around his machinery over beyond Reno Johnson's Sooner Girl Café. Carpenters were

finishing a house to shelter the press and engine, and in front of it O'Brien had set up a large tent to serve as composing-room, editorial and business offices. There Marion was at work at a desk contrived of boards on trestles, getting up some three-line telegraph bulletins for to-morrow out of a two-days-old Kansas City paper. She had joined O'Brien's force that day.

Banks walked slowly across the lot, his hands behind his back, his head bent in reflection. Kay saw him stop thrice on his slow progress to the *Bulletin* office and look the people over, as if he weighed them, shirts, hats, body and soul.

He joined O'Brien presently, and for a little while Kay saw them stand in conference. Presently O'Brien clapped Banks on the shoulder, as if moved by a sudden inspiration, and began to talk excitedly, turning his face this way and that as he followed the weaving crowd. Banks spread his hands, as if in expostulation, or disparagement of the matter broached. The next moment O'Brien was rolling out a big packing-case. On top of it he placed a smaller box, and this pyramid he motioned for Banks to mount.

BANKS hesitated, making again that little gesture of disparaging protest which looked to be such trifling work for his great, capable hands. The crowd noted the preparations and stood still, seeing that somebody was going to make a speech.

Banks mounted the boxes, his hat in his hand. His long and uneven black hair was blowing in picturesque disorder which only emphasized the cast of strength in his harsh, crude face. He stood before the leaderless throng—angular, tall, keen-eyed, forty—one hand raised in commanding gesture, his face lifted as if he meant to pray.

When he spoke, it was in slow, measured words, deep and far-carrying. He began by urging the importance of immediate organization to guard their rights against the grafters whose hands were heavy over them already, whose feet were on every claim. They warmed to the theme with him, and gave him cheers; and Banks, as if burning with the fire of his new championship, threw off his long coat and stood before them with the sweat-marks of his blue suspenders on his big, hard-breasted shirt.

Marion Kay put down her work and went to the front of the tent to hear him. Reno Johnson, in her barbaric dress, with her pistol strapped on her, was standing in front of the café among the pressing crowd, and the little dark man who carried the beef and cabbage to the board was at her side. The only one within eye-shot oblivious of Bank's powerful spell was old Madam Johnson, who was standing by her stove in the open, back of the café. Let the world end afterward, her cabbage must be cooked.

Banks told them of their power, making it plain to their confused senses that they were the balance between law and anarchy in that dusty canvas city. He urged them to unite, put their independent candidate in the field, split the forces of the grafters and put honest men in charge of the city government.

"That's the only way you can beat these land-sharks that are squabbling over who is entitled to take your money for what none of them own," said Banks. "Organize your city government; then you can file the town-site plat as a municipality and beat them all."

They leaned with open mouths to drink his advice, the first clear word that had been offered to them in their hour of despair. Banks led on.

"You arrived here, neighbors, to find this town all surveyed and staked out by one outfit, and another one running lines. Neither one of the so-called town-site companies that have locked horns over this site had, or has, any more right to it than they have to the air above it. Neighbors, I've got proof that the railroad officials were in on this big steal; I can prove that their private car stood on the sidetrack here three days before the opening, and that a gang of surveyors was at work.

"This other outfit from Kansas that claims title to the town-site was on the ground at ten o'clock on the day of the opening, three hours ahead of any honest man in this crowd. How did they get here? Who shut their eyes and let

'em slip by? Well, gentlemen, when the time comes for me to stand up in the United States Court in the name of my clients, I'll show who connived with these rascals to beat you out of your rights; I'll show who winked at this wholesale invasion of sooners, and I'll put some of 'em where they belong before I'm done!"

In that way Banks let it be known that he was a lawyer as he went along, and that he was already the champion of the people's rights. They took up his statements with whoops and yells which resounded among the tents and brought thousands crowding to hear.

"Don't be deceived by the show of a squabble between these two crowds," Banks warned them, "for thieves don't fall out very often when there's an honest man standing around ready to profit by the row. They'll get together in time to kick you out of the country if you don't head 'em off before they get their men in office."

"Hurrah for Banks!" somebody proposed, probably a client cheered by the lawyer's promises. They gave it readily, and Banks bent his head, as if modesty would not permit him even to look applause in the face.

WHEN they quieted and called on him to proceed, Banks let himself go in a general denunciation of sooners, claim-jumpers and grafters. In the heat of his peroration, when he had them yelling at every jump, O'Brien sprang to the box beside the orator, waved his frantic arms and shouted:

"I nominate Judge Henry L. Banks for mayor on the people's ticket!"

It was the favorable moment; at that second Henry L. Banks' long-delayed star came into the horizon, lighting the path of his ambition with happy gleam. The crowd endorsed the nomination, and Banks became the leader in the place which had stood empty for the want of the proper man.

The gathering quickly resolved itself into a nominating convention, with a great deal of yelling and hand-shaking, and thumping of backs. It was carried off with the gladness of a holiday, and the generosity and exuberance of men released from peril. Every lot-holder and doubtful contestant among them was hot with a new and definite purpose now. Banks had told them that he was from Missouri, and he had shown that he was a man who worked in his shirt-sleeves.

Three councilmen were nominated by various sponsors, and each nominee made a speech. It was decided that treasurer, clerk and chief of police would be better left to appointment by the mayor. Banks and O'Brien took charge of the campaign with competent hands. The next day was the date set for the election by the original movers in the matter of organizing a municipal government. There remained but the tapering end of an afternoon and one night for the people's ticket to make itself known.

Banks appointed committees to hold meetings in all parts of the town. He instructed the speakers to proclaim, in his name and on his authority, that if they elected him mayor he would do all in his power to secure every honest man in his holdings, and that a sudden and thorough cleaning-up of grafters would follow his assumption of office. He started out at once himself to carry this challenge into the camp of the opposition, and spread it with his unfaltering voice.

KAY had watched this sudden elevation of Banks with lively interest and considerable satisfaction. There was something about that crude man which seemed to promise well. He had come into that sullen lump of trouble and charged those dumb, despairing men with hope. Kay went to him and congratulated him on his nomination and offered his support.

But while the other two candidates were men of financial substantiality, and each had his followers from his own State to shout for him, nobody in all Oklahoma appeared to know Banks. He had sprung up like a whirlwind on a sunny afternoon, and he had nothing to recommend him but his homely appearance and his rousing argument, and the sweat-marks of his suspenders across his shirt, which seemed at once to fix his level in that new commonwealth of common men.

As he moved through the city that waning afternoon on his hard-hitting campaign, his big box carried along by his supporters, the speakers of the opposing factions followed him. They called attention to his obscurity and branded him as an adventurer; but to all of their noise Banks did not turn his ear.

He carried his campaign across the town and back; got his supper in the Sooner Girl Café and set out again. A man in a Salvation Army suit joined Banks' party with a cornet. He seemed to be master of but one profane tune, "Dixie," which he played jerkily, like a man carrying a hod up a ladder. Two volunteers brought along their gasoline torches and held them so that Banks was illuminated from toes to crown while he spoke.

Until midnight the notes of "Dixie" sounded among the tents. People in the remoter parts of the town turned out from their sleep to hear Banks speak. But as at last he flung himself down to rest, his chance seemed to him a desperate one. Next day was the election. That would decide who was to govern Victory. And that meant much to Mr. Kay and Marion, to Banks and O'Brien, and all those gallant hearts who had ventured this valiant hazard of new fortunes.

NEXT morning the press was ready, and Charley Akers and a printer whom he had picked up in the crowd had worked all night on an extra which O'Brien had on the streets before breakfast. The feature of the extra was a signed article by Captain David Kay, the "Father of Oklahoma," as O'Brien described him in big type.

Kay urged the election of Banks and the ticket of the people. The article was read by scores of Kay's old comrades in the long campaign for the opening of Oklahoma, every one of whom accepted Banks on its authority and became at once a lively and effective committee to further his candidacy.

The election was set for two o'clock that afternoon, that being the fourth day of Victory's existence. At that hour the three nominees for mayor stood in wagons, drawn up side by side. The voters favoring the ticket each man represented fell in behind the candidate's wagon, five abreast. The wagons were driven to the acre reserved by the Government, followed by the increasing lines, where tellers counted the living vote in blocks of five.

When the count was done, the Banks ticket was found to have carried the election by three hundred votes. So the man whose past was blanketed, and whose future was only a hopeful speculation at the best, was plucked suddenly from his obscurity and lifted to a high place.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISINHERITED

A DAY was a long time in Victory, a week an age, comparing its progress with that of other cities in more finished surroundings. Great strides had been made since Banks was elected mayor, although not many days had passed. When the municipal organization had been completed, the plat of the town had been filed, and the title was secure now in the citizens of Victory, their differences, claims and counter-claims being in the hands of their elected officials for adjustment.

With the filing on the town-site in the name of the municipality, everybody, it seemed, who had built a house appeared with his petition for a street to fit it. Mayor Banks was doing his best to oblige everybody, it appeared—at least everybody with influence or money behind him. While this willingness to oblige on the Mayor's part was exceedingly pleasant to those who owned business-houses and establishments of consequence, it was trying on the people who had to give up the ground to make their desired streets.

A city surveyor had been appointed and set to work within two days after the Mayor took his seat. In deference to the desires of the house-owners, the surveyor began tracing thoroughfares in that part of the city nearest the railroad, where business had its seat. As the survey progressed, the amazement of the inhabitants of Victory grew, until it began to voice itself in

grumblings and a deep undertone of dissatisfaction and threat.

For never since men built their houses along the cow-paths had such crooked streets been seen. Here the surveyor dodged to spare the grocery of one; there he jogged to miss the hardware-store of another; in order to escape throwing Smith into the street he went east, and to spare Jones he turned west. To bring the bank on a corner he put through a street in the middle of a block, and to save the square front of a clothing establishment, which had gone to the expense of a sign, he cut a diagonal traffic-way where there was no other excuse for it in the world.

When it came to the nests of tents where the farmer-townsmen and the laborer-capitalists waited their day, the surveyor struck his lines with unbending severity. Those not included in the benefits of these convenient streets were struck dumb by this outrageous proceeding. It was impossible to determine whether Banks, who was already the head and both hands of all municipal business, was just a plain grafter who was selling favors, or whether he was only an obliging fool.

As for Captain Kay, he had decided opinions in the matter. He waited on Editor O'Brien with the intention of squaring himself, as far as it lay in his power to do so, with the people whom he had induced to support Banks in the recent election.

It was but logical that *The Bulletin* should have the city printing, for it was the largest paper, and the best equipped, in the new country. On the sudden prosperity which this contract had brought to him, O'Brien had built one of those hasty up-and-down houses common to the town, in front of his press-room. It was a long, narrow building with a square front like a store, but it was luxury in comparison to a tent, and O'Brien was luxuriating in his partitioned part of it, with a cigarette under his mustache, when Kay made his call.

MARION was out on some reportorial errand, and O'Brien made a ceremony of the Captain's reception. He expressed his pleasure over the visit in his extravagantly poetic way. Kay thought that O'Brien could speak more and say less than any man he ever met.

Kay came up to the business which had brought him there without wasting any wind. He felt that he had been in a measure responsible for helping saddle a grafter and a bias-grained scoundrel on the people, he said, and he had come to ask *The Bulletin* to do as much for him in repudiation as it had done in support of Mayor Banks in his name.

O'Brien could not contain his amazement, his injured, shocked surprise. He got up, rolling his great eyes, flinging his long hair with his slender white fingers.

"Why, I am winded, positively winded, General!" said he. "It was one of his extravagances to magnify the Captain's military rank in this manner, just as he dignified Banks with the title of "Judge."

"I have it written out," said Kay, bringing forth a paper, "and it will not require much space. It's only just to myself that I make my position plain to the people who are being robbed right and left by this eminent grafter from the flint-hills of Missouri."

"Sir, I couldn't consider it," said O'Brien stiffly.

"I'll pay you the regular advertising rate, then, if you want it that way."

"General, sit down; let's talk this thing over," said O'Brien, placing a chair near his desk. "Now," said he, when Kay had seated himself, "I must tell you that you are making the mistake of your life when you set yourself up against Banks. This man Banks is the biggest material in this country today; he's going to be a top-notcher; he's going to make and unmake men by the crook of his thumb. General, get in the right boat when you set sail—don't make any mistake about that."

"Mr. O'Brien, I've been selecting my own associates some little time now, and I've done very well without advice up to the present," said Kay.

"No offense, General, no offense! I'm only giving you a straight steer."

"I've been around this town a good bit the past two days, investigating matters for myself," said Kay. "Banks is

a crook; I'm convinced of that. If he isn't accepting money outright for the favors he's dispensing, then he's expecting the equivalent in service, one way or another. You know it as well as I do, O'Brien."

THERE was a humorous, half-shamed smile on O'Brien's big, good-natured mouth as he turned to Kay with a deprecatory gesture.

"Oh, General, forget it," said he.

"Sir!" said Kay, throwing his shoulders back, pulling his brows down in a stern frown.

"I say forget it; let it pass. These things have to be, you know; a politician naturally helps his friends."

"But he doesn't naturally sell out to his constituents' enemies, and everybody knows that the officers of those two fake town-site companies are the biggest ducks in the puddle where Banks is doing his muddy paddling. I thought better of you, O'Brien, than to see you lined up with him in this outrageous deal."

"Now, look here, General,"—O'Brien leaned forward, his face serious,—"you can't reasonably come in here and ask me to cut my own throat with a golden knife. I'm face to face with more money, more real money, easy money, than I ever met before, and I'd be seven kinds of a fool to let it get away. Everybody's on the graft here; I told you that the first time I saw you, do you remember?"

Kay remembered; he signified it by a gloomy nod.

"Oh, cheer up," counseled O'Brien with comical sincerity, "and begin to look out for Number One. They'll be on the graft here for a while, but it can't last long, and a man'd just as well get his start while the pickin's good. Do you know they've got over ten thousand dollars in the city treasury already?"

"And you intend to get your share of it," said Kay with unmasked contempt.

"Why not?" O'Brien wanted to know with the sincerest affectation of surprise.

"You'll not get anywhere by it."

"General, the money in this town is on the grafters' side," argued O'Brien earnestly. "Poor honest men are the kind I've been training with all my life, and I'm through with that bunch. When the right time comes for me to turn reformer, I'll switch, but I'm not going to leave a comfortable bed to pallet with the pigs. I tell you, General, I've been out in the night enough. Don't worry about Banks; let him have his little rake-off if he's getting it, and I suppose he is. There's no salary in his office, you know."

"In the name of conscience, how far is this thing going, O'Brien?"

"Well, we landed here pretty thin, Banks and I," grinned the editor.

"Did you know him before?"

"Never even suspected him."

"I don't suppose there's any use, then, in pressing you to publish, as an advertisement, this little explanation I've written?"

"General, I'm doing you a bigger favor than anybody else in refusing to touch it. If there's anything else that I can do to favor you, I'll do it. If you want money, I'll go out and borrow it for you—I'll mortgage my plant; if you want office, the paper's at your command—columns, pages, unlimited space. But there isn't the space of one agate lead in it for a word against Judge Banks. I'm a man that stands by my friends."

"I see you are," said Kay; and with that he took his departure.

EACH new day brought its fresh developments of scandalous injustice. On the third day following the beginning of the survey, the chief of police rode through the newly designated streets and notified all who occupied the ground that they must vacate immediately.

That night the dispossessed held a mass-meeting. Many violent and purposeless speeches were made; resolutions for forwarding to Washington were drawn; threats of securing the indictment of the Mayor and council by a federal grand jury were uttered. The Mayor was denounced, openly and bitterly, as a grafter who was selling privileges to those who were base enough and rich enough to buy them.

Some were for marching in force that hour upon the council, then in session at the hotel—whither Banks had removed his office immediately after election—and driving Mayor and aldermen from the country.

In the midst of these wild denunciations the chief of police and United States marshal arrived, with armed men behind them, and dispersed the meeting, on the Mayor's order, as a menace to the public safety. If they had not fully understood it before, the citizens of Victory now realized that the strength of their Mayor was greater than their own. The delegated authority had become the supreme, from which there was no appeal.

Next morning the police began clearing out of the streets such dazed people as had not come to a realization that the survey had ousted them from their last hope in Oklahoma. Some stood to resist the officers, and some desperate ones, who had no further hope to sustain them, threw away their lives in a foolish defense of the ashes of their dreams.

The tent-pegs of those whom the survey had thrown into the street—so many of them unjustly—were pulled up by the officers, and the tents were brought down with sudden collapse on all that they contained—wives, children, make-shift furnishings. All after them the police left a wide avenue of these fallen castles, and the lamentations of the disinherited rose to the dusty skies.

As these people were driven out of their lodgment, having nowhere else to go, hundreds of them assembled their poor possessions along the railroad right of way until they could collect their bewildered senses and strike a direction to travel. A meeting grew out of this assemblage that afternoon, which drew to it hundreds who were trembling in the expectation of being ousted by a similar crooked survey on the morrow.

Speakers took their turn standing in a wagon-end to denounce everybody in authority in Oklahoma, and Mayor Banks with greater bitterness than anybody else. While these outbursts were comforting to the emotions of the orators, they did not clear the atmosphere for the dispossessed. The great question before these homeless hundreds was where to go.

Oklahoma was gorged with people. More than fifty thousand had rushed into it on the opening day, and there were homesteads for less than a fourth of that number. There was no place within its borders for these people, ousted from the streets of Victory, to set their feet.

They began to talk seriously, as the day drew on, of moving in a body to the Cherokee Strip, lying to the north of Oklahoma, and taking forcible possession of that land. The Government was responsible for their being there, they said; it had advertised Oklahoma in a manner to make people believe it was not only limitless, but a land of delights. The Government owed them homes; they would go to the Cherokee Strip, drive out the Indians and cattlemen who held leases, and take what was their due.

This proposed movement began to assume grave proportions. Men were beside themselves in their desperation and anger. They began to strap on their guns and hitch up their teams, getting ready for the march.

News of the movement spread quickly through the city. Others who felt that their foothold there was doubtful came flocking by hundreds to learn what the promises and outlook of the Strip might be. The United States marshal, Bass Kirk, began arming a strong posse, preparing to stretch out the arm of the law ahead of this wild undertaking.

But the one essential thing to make the movement anything more than a noisy demonstration was lacking. There was no head, no leader, no brains to the lashing, struggling body. A delegation of boomers, smoky, dusty, gray and wild-eyed, waited on Captain Kay and asked him to step into the lead.

KAY listened to the proposal gravely. He went with them to "Government Acre" then, where he stood in a wagon and waited, while the hot-brained mob pressed around him to hear what he had to say.

Perhaps there was nobody in Oklahoma who understood those people as thoroughly as Captain Kay. They were elemental, tempestuous, childish—close, very close to the soil. He pitied their plight, and sympathized with them keenly, and this he made plain to them in a few simple words. He knew that they did not comprehend the gravity of the thing which they were about to attempt, and so he told them, plainly, but with a persuasive kindness.

Such an expedition would only add to their discomfort and poverty, he said. The soldiers would round them up within a few days after their invasion of the Strip, and drive them on. It might result in bloodshed and sorrow, for which all the land in the Nation—so the Indian lands were called—could not compensate.

Their bronzed faces whitened as he talked to them; the heat of their indignant hearts died. United States Marshal Kirk, sitting on his horse a little to the right of Kay, on the thin edge of the packed crowd, waved his hand to the deputies at his back and sent them back to their stations. He remained there himself, listening.

Kirk was a scowling, dark man, with a big black sombrero pulled down upon his ears. His face was as smooth as an Indian's; he was armed with two revolvers and a rifle in a case under his thigh.

Kay told the dispossessed people that they were wrong in their charges against the Government. The Government had not misrepresented Oklahoma; anything that had been done in that way had been the work of calculative scoundrels whose one aim was to bring as many people there as could be crowded in, for the sole purpose of preying on their necessity. He counseled them to turn and leave Oklahoma, pointing out that they were only the first in the discard which was being made in Victory and other crowded centers like it. Hundreds would be ousted by the survey and the adjustment between claimants; each day would add to the hardship and the bitter outlook.

No doubt many of them had been robbed of their rights by Banks, in his crooked service to people whom he counted as of more consequence and worth than themselves, but from this injustice there seemed to be no appeal. He was on this theme when Mayor Banks himself, the chief of police at his elbow, rode up.

The Mayor reined his horse as close as possible to the wagon in which Kay stood, and a look of displeasure came into his homely face when he heard Kay speak of him in these plain and disrespectful terms. He leaned over toward the speaker, who was yet unaware of his arrival, and stretched out his hand in protest.

"We had to have streets, Captain Kay; you'll have to grant that we had to have streets."

"We could have had honest streets, straight ones," returned Kay sternly, facing the Mayor with his great, rugged frame erect.

THERE was some movement of appreciation in the crowd, a little murmur of applause. Banks frowned, looking around with corrective authority. The Mayor made quite a figure on his big bay horse. He had a new coat, just as long as the old one but of finer and blacker cloth than the cast-off garment, and a new hat, a large cream-colored felt with a leather belt around it, after the cowboy style.

"There was no excuse for the rank favoritism which you have shown, Mr. Mayor," continued Kay — glad, it seemed, of the opportunity that he had thus to speak his mind. "You could have been square with the man in the tent as well as the man in the house. It looks to me, Mr. Mayor, as if you've sold out, body and breeches, to the men with money in this town."

"Those are dangerous charges, dangerous words, Captain Kay," said Banks, his face growing white along his hard cheek-bones.

"Then I repeat them," said Kay, looking at him sternly.

"You may have to swallow them too!" said Banks.

"I've wanted an opportunity of announcing to the public my regret for having helped, even if only a little, to put you where you are," Kay told him. "I can't undo the damage that I've

done, but I can assure these robbed and kicked-out people that I was deceived in you. I thought you were an honest man, Mr. Banks, but I was wrong. You're a scoundrel, sir! You're a thief, and a servant of thieves!"

"I'll make you eat your words, by God! I'll make you eat them!"

Banks jerked his horse until it reared in his sudden passion. His face was white now, his eyes scowling. He made a movement as if he intended to dismount, and there the chief of police touched his shoulder and spoke to him in low voice. Banks straightened in his saddle, and sat holding Kay with a savage look.

Kay stood in the wagon in that rather clumsy, expectant attitude of his, left arm partly lifted in front of him, as if to guard a blow, right hand at his hip where his revolver used to hang, the place of which was empty now. For a little while the two big men sounded each other with their eyes; then Banks turned his horse with a little angry sound like a snort.

"Break up this crowd!" he ordered his officer sharply. "Drive 'em out of town; don't let them stay here another hour!"

With that he rode away, a threatening rumble rising in the crowd as he passed through. Banks did not appear to be armed, but he met savage scowl with one as fierce, hard word with a threat in his speaking eyes that made men quail and turn away.

The chief of police was a tall man with a sharp face which always looked cold. There was a blueness in it like winter-time, such a coldness in his thin, Roman nose that one looked to see it condense his breath and put out a little icicle. He began to move through the crowd and give his orders in a low voice of indisputable authority. Kay got down from the wagon and earnestly advised the people to comply with the edict at once.

It was impossible for everybody in that gathering to quit the town within the time set; and the chief of police was wise enough to see that. But he stood by, watching, and Kay helped the old and the slow, the widows, and those whom fright and desperation had almost palsied, to load their belongings and make the start.

It was a sad procession of the beaten and discouraged which wound northward out of Victory as the sun went down that evening. Here, indeed, were the vagabonds of chance, such as O'Brien was fond of calling himself and Banks. Their horizon was down; there was no vista into to-morrow.

Kay turned from watching them away, and went back saddened to his tent. Marion was standing before it, her face white and troubled. When she saw him coming, she hastened to meet him, and he made anxious inquiry into the cause of her disturbance.

"Banks is taking care of his sooner client," said she. "The surveyor has been here and put her on the corner."

"Do you mean the scoundrel has thrown us into the street?" Kay asked, coming to a stop as if he had met a wall.

"He's put that Reno outfit on the corner," she nodded, the tears springing, hard as she had fought to hold them back. "There are the stakes, and the police say we must get out of the street by nine o'clock to-night."

CHAPTER VIII

RED DUST

"WELL, Oklahoma has kicked us out," said Captain Kay.

"I'll not believe that of it yet, Father," protested Marion.

"The crooks have got the country by the throat; they're choking it to death in its infancy," said he.

"We'll drive them out, and give it to its rightful owners," said she, with the faith and firmness of one inspired.

"Who'll help—O'Brien?" he asked, with gloomy sarcasm.

"Yes, I look to him to help," she nodded.

"I had hope of him at first, but Banks has carried him off. Well, maybe it wasn't so very hard to do. Vagabonds of chance, he said they were. They're rascals, both of them."

"I think he'll come right," said she, with head bent in the thoughtful pose which seemed a family trait. "He

isn't really a *grafter*, you know, Father,"—she looked up, almost eagerly,—"for he's giving service for what the city pays him. If Mr. O'Brien didn't do the city printing they'd give it to that foolish little *Eagle Eye*—of all the ridiculous names for a paper!"

"I don't mind him having the city printing, Marion, even at three prices, for there's always more or less crookedness in such things, everywhere. But I believe the good element of this town, the business men who are building for the future, would support him if he'd cut loose from Banks and start out to clean out these grafters; I believe they'd do it."

She shook her head. "He says they wouldn't—not yet. I've talked that over with him, more than once. After a while they'll be ready for reform, he says, but not now."

"Well, I'd feel as if we'd reformed if you'd give up your place on *The Bulletin*, Marion."

She laughed. "Oh, it isn't as bad as that!"

"Of course, the money that he pays you is honest money, in a way; you earn it, but I'm afraid it comes to O'Brien too easy to be good."

"You're gloomy over the crooked deal we got on that corner lot," said she, laying her hand on his; "but that's all right; let the sooner outfit have it; we can live without a corner lot."

"And the street was a hundred feet wide along there before they took my fifty and added to it. It's got a pocket in it there now like a pelican's neck."

"Well,"—she sighed, comically,—"the Sooner Girl Café *and* Restaurant had to have a railroad exposure, like Mr. Noss' undertaking-place. What have you ever done for your country, anyhow, you old goose?" She stood behind him, her hand rumpling his thick gray hair.

Kay smiled, the gloom of his heart breaking.

"Oh, well, you may keep the job," said he.

"I like it, and it's the only place in town. Besides that, we need the money, as Mr. O'Brien says."

"Well, I'm going to see if I can get a piece of land to farm, around here somewhere," he announced. "There's no use counting up the money that we might have had for that lot. I wonder if they'd kicked Noss off if I'd sold it to him?"

"No telling; but I think, somehow, they would," said she.

IT was the morning following their eviction from the corner lot which had been thrown into the street to put the café on the corner. Peter Cook, the man who had stood with his back against Kay's wagon-wheel while they lay in camp on the border the night before the run, had given them a refuge. Cook had taken up an inside lot, with a gully across the back of it, two squares from the *Bulletin* office. It was not a piece of ground to move the covetousness of the jumpers, who sought only the best.

Cook was "afoot and alone," as he said. He had no family either to cheer or encumber him, and his purpose in taking up the lot in Victory was purely speculative. Now he turned it over to Kay and Timberlake, glad enough to have somebody to hold it for him upon whose stewardship he could depend. Before dawn that morning Cook had gone away to take a job on the new railroad which was building through.

During the week which followed Kay's removal to this new location, the discouraged boomer built a little two-roomed house to provide a more secure lodging for Marion than a tent, in provision against the time when he expected to leave her alone in Victory.

Meantime, the survey of streets had been finished, and Victory had disgorged its overflow out of the thoroughfares. There remained still to be disposed of the hundreds who contested for lots. This was a business which Banks and his council set about with expedition. A board of arbitration was appointed by the Mayor, which was empowered by ordinance to investigate all disputes over property and decide the ownership out of hand.

This was a valid procedure, for the title to the town-site was vested now in the municipality. The local government had been turned over to the municipal authorities by the military, and the sol-

diers recalled out of that district. Beyond the enforcement of the excise regulation which prohibited the introduction and sale of liquor in the new country, the United States marshal had nothing to do with Victory, its turmoil and discontent.

The arbitration-board was composed of three leading citizens, in whom everybody did not have confidence, in spite of their eminence. It soon became a matter of general knowledge that the board was out for the money, as Banks was said to be, and this was a condition which the unscrupulous had been looking forward to with greedy eyes.

It became a race between contestants for any particular lot to see which could get before the board first with his money in his hand. The poor man had no standing there, no matter how plain his proof or just his contention against one of means. He was uniformly discredited and precipitately ordered to vacate, on pain of fine as provided by the city ordinance for the misdemeanor of jumping another's lot.

Under this rule where money alone talked, jumpers began to show an alarming activity. They would appear on some desirable lot at night with a load of lumber and immediately begin raising a house. Women, and other timid and defenseless people, were the victims usually selected. Once in a while, only, the jumpers made a mistake and met hot lead.

When the original holder of a lot thus jumped in the night went before the arbitration-board next morning and complained, the interloper usually made a showing on the ground of superior improvements which satisfied that body that he was the more valuable citizen. Title was invested in the jumper, accordingly, who thereupon slipped the necessary salve to the board. It was understood by everybody that Mayor Banks received a large dividend out of this traffic, in consolation for the lack of salary in his office.

ALL this time an avalanche of protests and complaints was being pressed forward upon the Government officials in Washington, from the President downward. Complaints against United States Marshal Kirk were loudest of all, founded upon the manner in which his host of deputies had snatched up the best tracts of land throughout the country around Victory. A strong movement was on foot among the original boomers, many of whom had fared no better than their old leader, to have Captain Kay appointed United States marshal.

Kay had signified his willingness to accept the office, with a peculiar, indulgent smile, as one who yields assent to the impossible proposal of a child, to quiet its importunities. He would have expressed his willingness to accept the Presidency with the same feeling, believing one to be as well within his reach as the other.

Kay's double disappointment was bitter in his heart. All around him Victory was springing up into the permanency of a city. Before the place was two weeks old a company began laying water-pipes in the streets. Another had set up an electric-light plant, and was supplying the town. Telephones were in use; a street-car line was projected; preparations were being made to lay sidewalks and pavements. Even though people lived by graft in Victory, they *lived.*

On the same lot with the *Bulletin's* snub-nosed building, Fanny Johnson, better known as Reno, had completed a long, spacious structure after the hasty up-and-down architecture of that country. Her location now, thanks to the lucky shot which had made her a client of Banks, was one of the most valuable corners in the city. Her new building, painted a billiard-cloth green, even outranked that of Noss, the modern undertaker, in its prominence against the vista of the passing world.

Here the café did business behind the first plate-glass windows in Victory, and back of the café, on the *Bulletin* side of the building, she established a parlor club-room. This room was furnished with leather chairs and sofas, oak tables and other modern luxuries, including bottled beer. Membership in the exclusive circle which frequented this club was by card, and it was an unexpected oasis in that land of red dust and redder thirst.

Reno moved about café and club-room in a neat black dress now, with a little white apron in place of the gun. She was a handsome girl, with a still tongue in her mouth and a serious eye. Her earringed mother never appeared in the front of the establishment, but from the *Bulletin* office Marion could hear her swear sometimes, when things in the kitchen went wrong.

Army officers frequented the Sooner Girl café and club; Mayor Banks and his advisers transacted much of the city's business there; and the United States marshal was its patron and friend. Indeed, without his friendship the mainstay of the club-room must have been wanting. He was such a good friend to Reno and her business that other club-rooms in other parts of the town which set up on the same plan came quickly to an end.

The official and convivial life of the city soon centered at the Sooner Girl. Even Editor O'Brien was to be found there at night, usually the center of a merry company. His ready wit and unusual parts—for O'Brien had been educated by the Jesuits, and the foundation had been both permanent and broad—made him a man much sought. The vagabond of chance seemed to have come into his own.

In the front of the café, where the little Mexican presided,—his name was Lope de Vega Martinez,—the walls were covered with various drawings in colored chalk of local and national notables. Martinez himself was the artist. Some of his portraits were done on white wrapping-paper, some on cardboard and a few upon the plank walls themselves. Mayor Banks hung beside Frank James, the Missouri outlaw, now a citizen of Oklahoma. The notorious ex-bandit had taken dinner in the café one day, and sat for the portrait unconsciously. United States Marshal Bass Kirk, scowl, hat and all, hung nearest the door, in the most prominent place to be found, like a warrant of the establishment's standing.

ONE morning as Captain Kay brushed the brown mare's seal-fine coat after Marion had gone away to her work at *The Bulletin*, the homesteader from No Water Creek stopped to admire the animal's fine lines. The homesteader was an old man as lean as dried beef and as brown as bacon. His cheeks were pinched as if starvation had been squeezing him there with finger and thumb through many a long year, and he wore a great white mustache. His hat flapped over his hair-hidden ears; there was a bright blue patch on the shoulder of his faded shirt.

They struck up a conversation on easy and friendly terms, as men will do when one admires another's horse. Captain Kay stood with his foot on the homesteader's hub, in the friendly manner of the long-legged men of frontier days.

"Yes, it's mighty dry over there," said the settler, "and it looks like it might keep dry that way all summer. I aint turned a furrer, but all around me they're plowin' up red dust on their claims. It looks to me like a big fire had burnt for a thousand years all over this country and baked the natural ground-color out of it. You don't never see no black dirt but in the bottoms, and I tell you, friend, I've got my doubt about this red dust growin' anything when it does rain."

"It must have its use," said Kay.

"Maybe for makin' bricks out of," the old man allowed. "Well, if I'd 'a' knowed what I was a-comin' to, friend, you take my word I never would 'a' sold off my hogs up in Ioway and spent the money on this fool trip."

"You're not alone in your disappointment," Kay assured him. "There are thousands that would leave to-morrow if they had anywhere else to go."

"I'd find somewheres, by cracky, if I could git some feller to buy me out."

"You might regret it," said Kay.

"Then again, I might not," said the homesteader decisively. "Them people that knowed the country and got in here ahead of us, they're all right; they've got black dirt with trees on it that'll grow anything you put in it. Shucks, out there on my claim, the ground's as red as Bridget MacFadden's hair, a kind of a cow-colored, onery red that makes me cuss to look at it."

"It is a peculiar soil; I never saw any

like it anywhere I've ever been," said Kay. "But you can't tell what it'll do till you plant something and give it a trial."

"I'd just as lief stir a sand-bar in the Missouri River," said the old man feelingly. "I tell you, friend, us fellers that come in here tailin' the rush, we had to take the leavin's up on them red-dust pe-raries, and I wouldn't give one acre of Ioway land for all that's layin' outdoors down here. I'm ready to quit and git out. If you see any feller that wants to buy a cheap claim, send him over to me."

"What would you take?" Kay inquired slowly.

"Any man that'll give me a hundred dollars can git my relinquishment quicker'n he can bat his eye," the old man replied.

"I'll go out and look it over," said Kay, turning to saddle his mare.

That afternoon the discontented homesteader signed over his interest in the claim to Kay.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHADOW OF A ROCK

WHEN Captain Kay took possession of his claim, the exodus of the disillusioned was under way. The black-dirt people were trailing out to the borders, to become renters in the surrounding States. Some were too poor to leave, and unable to sell or trade their relinquishments; they remained out of necessity. Some had the courage and determination to stick and give it a trial before retreating and damning it, but the vast majority knew that the world's door was closed to them elsewhere, the free gifts all distributed. So it was Oklahoma or nothing for them, and surely it could not be worse than nothing at all.

Few who had been obliged to take the "red-dust" claims, as they were called, had any faith in the productive possibilities of that peculiar soil. They thought it was sand, for the nearest parallel to it in the Northern States from which they came was the river-bars. Captain Kay thought of the black mold in the little valley where the sooner had nested on his dream, as he turned the red earth of his new quarter-section with his boot, wondering what it would grow besides grass.

His homestead was in an upland meadow where deer had grazed but a few weeks before. They were serving venison steak with thirty-five-cent meals in Victory now, he reflected, wondering whether the people who had dispossessed the deer would be much better off than they at the end of a year.

He could look down into the valley of No Water Creek, where a widow from Arkansas had stopped on black dirt. She had a little triangular piece of that valued soil, enough to grow her tobacco and okra on, with a patch of corn. Then her land ran up the little slope, scrubbed over with sumac, and met his own boundaries where the ground was red under the grass-roots.

Mrs. Prater, the widow, was the envied owner of a spring. It issued from the bank a little way from Captain Kay's line, and made a moist strip in the bed of No Water Creek. Kay dug a large pit to conserve this overflow, and walled it with stone, for drouth brooded over the new land, and sweet water was becoming a precious thing.

June was at hand, with no promise of a crop. Fields had been plowed around the little board houses and tents with stovepipes in their roofs. They were brick-dust red now under the ardent sun, with no green showing in them, for the seed remained unsprouted in the drills. By day the wind blew, fretting the fields into clouds of dust which carried into the distances and gave the sky a burnished cast like a tornado-cloud, to change on the horizon at sundown to the crimson of cooling iron.

Added to this threat of hardship from drouth was the peril of claim-jumpers, who were growing bolder in their operations every day. Without those land-pirates there would have been trouble enough over the question of titles between earnest men and women who had come there with the legitimate purpose of making homes. Certain sooners, who had repudiated their contract with the powers who had placed them on the land, and had gone

bull-headedly to work to make themselves secure in their own right, uncovered a plot that was on foot. These sooners said that the jumpers were working in the employ of a syndicate of cattlemen who had grazed that country under lease from the Indians, and knew its agricultural possibilities. The headquarters of this outfit was said to be in Victory, the leader no less person than United States Marshal Kirk himself.

The desperadoes whom they hired to jump claims and drive the settlers out were cowboys and refugees from No Man's Land. The reformed sooners said that the purpose was to acquire a large tract of land in a body in that favored section, the title to which the sooners and jumpers would relinquish to their employers when they had stolen it.

MRS. PRATER feared that her spring would be an especial inducement to some band of jumpers. She had enlarged on this uneasiness as Kay was digging the well to hold the wasting water which ran down into the dry creek-bed. He had straightened his strong back from his task and looked straight into her eyes for a moment. There was something in his honest, rugged determined face which Mrs. Prater felt, although she did not entirely understand. Her heart leaped with new courage; she planted her last okra seeds with restored confidence.

Mrs. Prater was a tall, flat woman with cotton-white hair. Her skin was brown and muddy, from weather, tobacco and fried food; her face was sharp; her black eyes were bright. She told Captain Kay the simple story of the one eventful hegira of her life.

She had started from her hill in Arkansas with a poor team, a lean cow and a coop of chickens. When she joined the race from the border, she soon realized that the cow's horns were all of the beast that she could hope to arrive with if she went fast enough to hold her own in the rush. So she cut the creature loose.

The chicken-coop had jolted apart in the wild gallop over gullies and streams, and she had sown fowls all along the way. When she turned to her wagon after driving her stakes, there was one little pullet left in the corner of the coop. It could have escaped along with its mates, but fear doubtless had deprived it of its original small sense. Mrs. Prater believed that it was loyalty and not fright which had held the little chicken in the wagon, and she would have perished of starvation before she would have sacrificed the fowl to sustain her own life.

One of her horses had fallen on the land which she claimed as her homestead. If that calamity had not overtaken her, Mrs. Prater would have continued on to Victory, where she had hoped to become possessed of a ten-thousand-dollar lot.

Before laying his hand to breaking ground for a crop, Captain Kay had built himself a house. It was one of those lonesome-looking little plank-roofed shacks such as one still sees in the plains country, standing sun-baked and eloquent of discomfort against the glaring line of sky.

Although he had little confidence in the productiveness of the soil of his claim, Kay began to plow for planting it after he had built his shanty. He was thus engaged, it being the middle of the forenoon, a few days after taking possession, when Mrs. Prater came hurrying across his field. She was bareheaded; as she advanced she waved her arms in the gesticulation of despair. Kay stopped his team in the furrow and waited for her to approach.

"I knowed it, I knowed it!" said Mrs. Prater in the fatalistic voice of one who finds some long-expected disaster at length upon his heels.

She was panting from her run, her beautiful white hair all astray over her face.

"What's happened?" he inquired, knowing pretty well beforehand what her reply would be.

"Jumpers—they're down there now, two of 'em! They come drivin' up a little while ago and told me I didn't have no right to that claim, and said I must pick up and git out by noon."

"Did they disturb anything, take down your tent, or anything?"

"No, they made like they was goin'

to, but I grabbed the ax and stood 'em off. But a ax aint no use; I want to borry a gun."

"I expect it would be better if you didn't have a gun; there ought to be men enough in Oklahoma to use the guns," he told her.

"They started in plowin', like it belonged to 'em," she said, her anger blazing in her black eyes.

There was a little glimmer like a smile in Kay's eyes as he lifted his thoughtful head and looked her in the face.

"Let them go right ahead and plow," said he, "and we'll see about it after a while. You go back and stay there, and don't worry. I'll go over to the edge of the hill there and break a strip that I want for potatoes. I can see them from there. You go on back."

AT noon the jumpers turned out from their plowing. When they headed for the spring to water their famished horses, Kay went to his little house, strapped on his revolver and put his coat on over it.

One of the men was sloshing the horse-bucket in the spring, the other curbing the thirsty beasts with sharp words and curses, and a kick now and then. The fellows doubtless fancied themselves entirely secure against the efforts of an unarmed old woman, and were not keeping watch. Kay came deliberately down the slope. They saw him while he was several rods away, and faced him with suspicious alertness.

They were sinewy young men, of the type so common in the plains country at that time. The prairie and the saddle put their brand on a man who followed them, as distinct and unmistakable as the molding which the sailors of the old clipper days got from their ships and the sea. Both of them were armed with low-slung revolvers in chafed gear.

"Belong to this outfit?" asked the taller of the men, jerking his head toward the tent as Kay stopped on the other side of the spring.

"Just a neighbor," Kay returned.

"Then you better be cuttin' the dust out o' here, you old sooner!"

"I just thought I'd step over and see how you boys were getting along with the widow's plowing," said Kay mildly.

"Which plowin', pardner?" the other one wanted to know. He spoke with an ugly slewing of his mouth, and contemptuous stress.

Kay had fallen into his peculiar, defenseless-looking posture which made him appear to shrink and prepare to ward a blow. But put him in a saddle and pose him so, and it would be found that his raised left arm would be holding the reins above his high saddle-bow, and his right would be on the butt of his gun. He would look quite different there. But now, as he stood on the little mound of earth above the spring, he was just a grave, gray man with his coat buttoned around him on a hot day, and his arm crooked as if it might be crippled.

"It was right kind and neighborly of you boys to come over and plow the old lady's ground," said he. "She lost one of her horses and hasn't the means to hire the work done."

"If I couldn't make a better guess than that, stranger, I wouldn't put no money on the wheel," reproved the tall man, whose upper lip was split like a rabbit's by the scar of some old cut.

"We never plowed up that ground for no widder-woman, Gran'pap," the other put in. "We plowed it for two little orphant boys."

"You thought you were doing it for yourselves, maybe, but I say you were plowing it for her."

Kay's tone was as hard as the look which had come into his gray eyes. The hare-lipped man threw his hand to his gun. If a scowl could have withered a man, Kay must have turned to a cinder in his tracks, for the jumper was a master of that barroom threat.

"Who are you? Where'd *you* come from?" He jerked the words out at Kay as if he despised them for their menial office.

"Kay is my name; I'm from Kansas, but a stranger to this part of the country," answered the Captain.

The cowboy's hand slipped on down from the butt of his pistol; his arm hung loose at his side. A paleness spread over the faces of both the jump-

ers when Kay told them his name. The big one hung his head, and kicked the ground with his heel as if thinking the matter over.

"Well, I reckon we *was* plowin' that ground for the widder, Cap'n," he allowed.

"I guess you'd better let it go at what's done," Kay suggested kindly.

"Come on over and git them plows," said the hare-lipped man in his grunting voice, dragging his unsatisfied horses away from the spring.

As they hitched to the plows, they talked together in low and disjointed words, throwing quick, watchful glances in the direction of Kay, who had turned to watch them. There was a growing haste and anxiety in their movements as they threw the sod-plows into their wagon.

Mrs. Prater had come out of her tent and stood watching them, turning her wondering look from her nervous enemies to Captain Kay, who stood calm and dignified off to one side a little, in his waiting, expectant pose.

"I thought I knowed him when he come down that hill!" she heard the tall one say.

The jumpers hitched a team to the wagon, scrambled into it with furtive, sharp flashes of their eyes backward at Captain Kay. Then they drove out into the road and away, going faster as they went farther. Kay watched them until the little rise which the wagon mounted presently hid them. When they were out of sight, he turned and went back to his team.

Mrs. Prater had been so astonished by the unaccountable panic of the two jumpers that she had suffered a passing paralysis of the tongue. Before she could limber that usually ready organ to its accustomed duty, Kay was halfway up the slope.

"He never touched a gun—never *touched* a gun!" she marveled.

SEVERAL of the neighbors—for every quarter-section had its occupants—came to Mrs. Prater's spring for water. Women with sharp shoulder-blades came with troops of dusty children and their pails from a mile distant; some who were located farther away than that drove up with barrels in their wagons to cart off supplies of what the drouth had made the most valuable of all natural or artificial products in Oklahoma.

No matter how near or how far they came, Mrs. Prater went down to the spring and gave them welcome, and cheered them in their depression by giving them the news of her rescue from the rapacity of the two jumpers. She colored the scene between Kay and the men according to her varying moods, but always enlarged its dramatic incidents a bit as she repeated the story.

Women went away from the spring walking fast, color in their faded cheeks, new fire in their weary eyes; men whipped up their teams in their eagerness to carry the news of the single-handed man who had driven off two of the desperadoes who went around robbing the timid and defenseless. Here was somebody to stand up for them in their own hour of extremity, the threat of which hung constantly over them. In their hearts they vowed they would fly to Captain Kay for help on the evil day that the jumpers might descend upon their claims.

A few days after Kay had driven the jumpers from Mrs. Prater's claim, a delegation of homesteaders called on him. There were seven serious men in the committee, mostly patched and poor, for only the late-comers and the renters, the poorly equipped and the disinherited from other lands, had the strength of desperation in them to settle on the "leavin's," as they called that red ground. They stood off in a respectful circle, each man stepping forward and shaking hands with Kay, as the spokesman, a huge man in a shaggy red beard, introduced them.

Last of all he made himself known as Leavenworth Fisher, "from the southwest corner of Newbrasky." He said he was a blacksmith, and that he had set up his forge at the crossroads a few miles to the south.

"More or less we heard about you. one way or another, while we was waitin' up in Kansas, and after we got down to the Strip," said Fisher, his hat respectfully in his hand, his cropped hair standing like stubble on his hard,

small head, "but none of us didn't know you was our neighbor till we heard about you chasin' them two thieves off of that widder-woman's claim."

"I haven't been here long; I bought a relinquishment on this place," Kay explained.

"Well, I'll tell you, Captain Kay, what we come over here to see you about," said Fisher, driving to his point just as he hammered a hot horseshoe on his anvil. "We look to you, like 'most everybody down here in Oklahoma, as the man that give us this country, and now we've come to ask you to hold it for us, like a pack of children."

THEY had talked it over, Fisher explained, and had reached the conclusion that the law, such as it was, wouldn't give them relief from the conditions which were growing worse day by day. Until some kind of a local government could be organized to take the place of the Federal statutes which the United States marshal could not be depended on to enforce, the homesteaders would have to band together and enforce a few simple, home-made laws of their own. The only thing that was holding them back was the want of some man "with brains" to lead them, who could advise them how far they ought to go.

"We look up to you as that man," said he. "Them jumpers have killed four men in less than a day's ride in a circle from this place in the past week. It's gittin' commoner every day for some man that tries to stand up for his rights to be shot by them fellers. More than that, some of these here sooners that was put in here by United States Marshal Kirk as deputies have been killed by Kirk's men because they reneged on their contract. They refused to turn over the land to them men that put 'em in here ahead of honest people, and they've had to pay for it. Sooners that's turned their coats have told us the inside of that deal, Captain Kay. It's one of the biggest steals of land ever laid out by mortal man!"

"And them jumpers that's sent in here to do what the sooners failed on, or backed out on, or wiggled out of one way or other, they're comin' thicker every day," said one.

"Yes, they give a man thirty minutes to pull up stakes and light out—sometimes an hour," said Fisher. "These folks in here on this red dirt, they aint much on the fight, when it comes to one standin' up ag'in' two or three, for they've been beat and starved and bumped and cowed all their lives. Anyhow, if they did take up a gun, them fellers'd kill 'em, quicker'n a wink. They've done it, I tell you, Captain Kay, and they're doin' it 'most every day."

"They're a vicious, dangerous crowd of cattle-thieves and escaped convicts from No Man's Land," said Kay.

"The best thing a man can do is go when they tell him to," said Fisher, shaking his head. "But if we could clean them jumpers out of here, and git a rain—"

The possibilities of such a felicitous condition were too large for the blacksmith's vocabulary. His words hung suspended, leaving the rest to imagination and a wide spreading of his great forge-blackened hands.

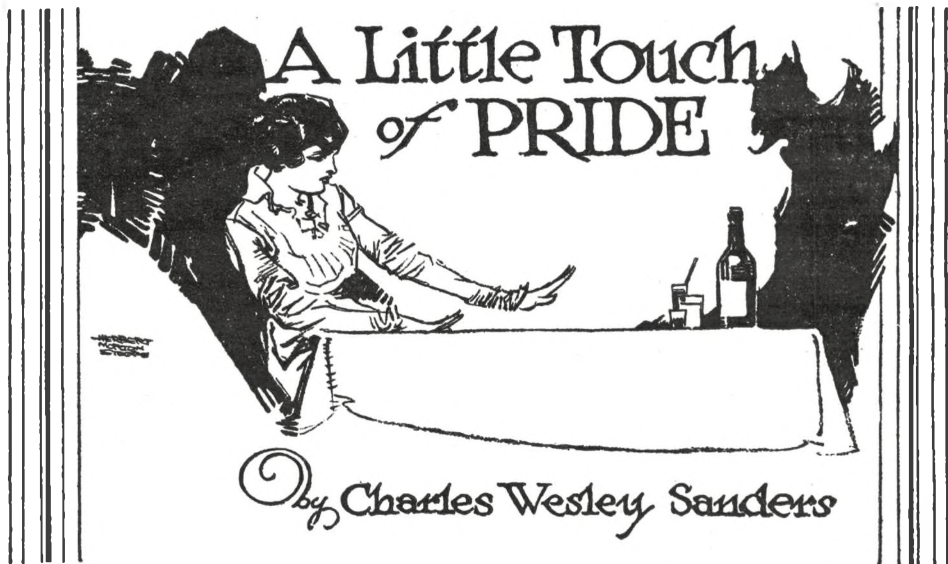
Kay was in full sympathy with them, and told them so in simple words. He related his own discouraging experiences.

"One way or another, they pulled everything out from under me that I set my foot on, till I bought out the old man that filed on this piece," he said. "Like you men, I've set my jaw to fight for this. We can defend ourselves and our neighbors, and still keep inside of the law."

Then and there those eight earnest men, standing on their last hope in Oklahoma, organized the Home Defenders' League. Kay was elected president, and every man of them rode home that night with a feeling of security and strength which none had enjoyed since the invasion of the murderous band of claim-jumpers.

None knew better than Captain Kay that troublous times were upon them, but he and his comrades were determined to fight for their homes to the last extremity. War was declared!

The next installment of "*Vagabonds of Chance*" will appear in the March BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale February 1st.



A Little Touch of PRIDE

By Charles Wesley Sanders

THEIR honeymoon of two weeks at an end, the Morgans had come home to their four-room flat to face the sterner realities of a workaday married life. To them, of course, those realities did not seem stern. They were by nature two joyous people. They never borrowed trouble, and it would have taken considerable of the real thing to give them any uneasiness. That is a kind gift from the hymenean gods; but such gods, as many have learned, are not to be trifled with. They may give abundantly, but they are swift and sure in their resentment.

There seemed to be just now no reason in the world why the Morgans should go into pawn to trouble. They both had perfect health. Henry had a good job—a mighty good job, in the eyes of a wife whose girlhood had never known plenty. His salary was thirty-five dollars a week. Within two years, at most, it would be forty dollars. There were only two of them now, and Milly Morgan had seen the time, when she was Milly Tribbey, when twelve dollars a week had supported her mother, herself and two younger children. As the years passed and the two younger children grew older, the days had become less lean; but those lean days had taught Milly just how almighty a dollar may be. In mental calculations which she had made many times, she figured that at the very least she would save fifteen dollars a week. Fifty-two times fifteen—seven hundred and eighty dollars a year! Well, make it an even number and call it seven hundred. Four times seven hundred—good gracious, in four years they could own their own home. It was a dream so sweet that Milly could scarcely keep the joy-tears from flooding her eyes.

And the dream was her very own. She had never spoken of it even to Henry. It would be a surprise—an overwhelming surprise—when she told him the home-building money was in the bank ready for its sacred use. For Milly had no notion—though she and Henry had not discussed financial matters largely—but that he would bring his weekly check to her of Saturday nights.

But there was a cloud on the domestic horizon—a cloud as yet so filmy that Milly had no eyes for it. Milly did not know that Henry Morgan had not found thirty-five dollars a week sufficient for his own bachelor needs. When he and Milly had suddenly fixed the wedding-date months ahead of the day

they had thought of,—why wait?—Henry had had to make a usurious loan to carry out his uxorious purpose. He signed the note for a hundred dollars with interest blithely enough, for he would change his ways when he was married. There'd be money enough.

That hundred dollars, together with a week's salary, had bought fuel enough to carry their ship of dreams down the golden stream for two weeks. But in Henry's pocket just now there reposed something less than a dollar. But that was all right. Before they had gone away, Henry had arranged for credit with the butcher, the baker and the illuminating company. The rent was paid for a month. The installments on the furniture—a dandy four-room outfit, as they were agreed—were not big. It was easy, easy!

AND so, having removed her hat, Milly came to her husband to be kissed and to kiss him in return. He folded her in his arms and said things to her that seemed to open heaven's own gates. Their courtship had been serene. Their honeymoon had been perfect. But there was something about this home-coming that was far sweeter than anything in those. They had sailed upon the seas of bliss, touching at enchanted isles, but this was a port of long rest. This was a place to abide in and be deeply content.

When Morgan released his young wife from his sturdy arms and looked down at her face, he found her cheeks had been tear-swept. He was startled. Was there something wrong, after all?

"Why, honey?" he gasped. "What's the matter? Have I done anything?"

She lifted her head and smiled that wonder-smile of woman, that smile which has no kinship with laughter provoked by mirth.

"Oh," she whispered, "I'm so happy it hurts me."

"Is that all?" he asked, and he kissed her again.

She laughed lightly then, the well-springs of her being closed by the practical things which even the newly wed must face.

"Well," she said, "it's 'most time for supper. You better take a walk for half an hour. But be back then, sure, for supper'll be ready right on the dot."

"All right," Morgan said, and he took up his hat and went out.

He walked slowly up the street, whistling a little air softly. It was nearly six o'clock of a summer evening—a time for an idler to stroll pleasantly among the wearied, home-going workers.

"Gee, but this married stuff is great," said Henry Morgan.

And then he thought he would have a little drink. That had been his way for five years now. He had always celebrated fortunate turns of the wheel by having a little drink. He liked to take one, lean on the bar, and while the alcohol speeded up his brain, dwell on his good fortune and dream of other good fortune to come. Whisky raised the mercury of his temperament.

TO-NIGHT the effect of the one drink was immediate. He seemed peculiarly susceptible to all influences, of late. He had a sudden desire to talk, to be friendly with some one, to be a good fellow with some other good fellow. He looked down the bar. A man much older than himself—a man upon whose face there was a vinous bloom become perennial through many years of cultivation—was at the other end. Toward him Morgan edged along.

"Will you have a little drink?" Morgan asked.

The man looked up quickly from the baseball-edition of a newspaper which he had seemed to be absorbed in. He smiled, and it mattered not at all to Henry that at first glance he was gross.

"Why, I don't care if I do," he answered.

So, the word of good-fellowship having been passed, they drank together. They drank together three times after that, and Henry's modest store of change was in the cash-register. The other man had apologized for being a little short just then, but he promised to make it up some other time. And Henry had assured him that that was perfectly all right.

Henry glanced at the clock and dis-

covered that he had been absent from home for nearly forty minutes.

"By George," he said, "I must be moving. Promised my little girl I'd be back before this. She's just getting supper. Maybe you're going my way. I live in the Barrows Apartment."

The other man glowed. Four drinks had made him genial. He put out his hand.

"I get you," he said. "Your name's Morgan. You're a neighbor of mine. I live right across the hall from you. Saw your name in the mail-box. My name is Hammer—Jim for short."

"Well, I'll be darned," said Henry, and they wrung each other's hands as if this were a reunion of brothers instead of a chance meeting. . . . . "Well, well, let's be moving along. Glad I met you. New neighborhood for me. Don't know anybody."

They walked briskly down the street, upon which the evening glow had descended. In that brief walk they became very well acquainted. They learned each other's business, each other's views on the baseball situation, each other's likes and dislikes in the matter of brands of whisky—all those things important and unimportant which fill the minds of men were touched upon.

They went upstairs together. At Hammer's door Henry laid a detaining hand on Hammer's arm.

"Say," he whispered, "I got a nice John-quart of Scotch in the sideboard and a bottle of seltzer. Think I could scare up a bite of bread and cheese, too. Drop over in about an hour, and we'll have a little sitting."

"Gosh, man," said Hammer with a wide grin, "it's your first night home."

"Oh, that's all right," Henry said. "We don't intend to be hermits, my wife and me. You come, and we'll see about this little matter."

"I'll be there," said Hammer.

HENRY walked into his sitting-room. The dining-room table was set. From the kitchen came savory odors and appetite-provoking sounds.

"Hello, Hon'," Henry called out. "I'm here. I'll wash up and be with you in a minute."

Milly, a big fork in one hand, thrust open the swinging kitchen-door with her dainty foot.

"You hurry, man," she ordered. "This dinner is just begging to be eaten."

Henry threw her a kiss and a lively smile and ran to the bathroom. In five minutes he placed his wife's chair and kissed her on the forehead as she sat down. He sat opposite her.

"Oh, say," he chuckled, as she started to serve the meal, "is this real or am I dreaming?"

"Are you awful happy?" the wife demanded.

"Happy?" he whispered. "I'm out of my mind."

But no mood could dull the sharp appetites which health gave them, and for a space they ate in silence. At last Morgan looked up.

"I've invited the man across the hall and his wife to drop in for the evening," he said, and he related his meeting with Hammer, though he changed the place of it from the saloon to the vestibule of the apartment-house.

"Oh, we'll have a party," said Milly. "It will be nice to get to know somebody."

Morgan looked at her again with adoration in his eyes. He somehow knew that all young wives would not have acquiesced like that on the first evening in a new home. He helped her with the dishes, and they prepared and left in the kitchen a tempting lunch.

The Hammers came shortly afterward. Hammer was jovial. He had a little jest for Milly which made her laugh, and he told Morgan he was a lucky man. Milly blushed at that, and turned to Mrs. Hammer. She found a sad-eyed, wistful little woman with gray hair and a face which care had lined before nature would have had the heart to do so. Milly felt sorry for her, though her mind quested in vain for a definite reason for her feeling.

They sat and talked a little awkwardly for a while. Then Morgan looked at Hammer and winked.

"Seems to me I'm forgetting something," Morgan said. "What do you suppose it is?"

Hammer puckered his brows and pre-

tended to think deeply. At last he shook his head.

"Seems to be something, but I'm sure I can't remember," he declared.

Morgan's face suddenly brightened.

"Well, I should think so," he exclaimed, and he rose and went to the sideboard and produced the Scotch.

"As I live," said Hammer, and there was no pretense in the brightening of his own face.

Milly laughed in Mrs. Hammer's direction, though her eyes were somewhat inquisitively on her husband.

"Aren't they terrible?" she asked.

"Terrible," Mrs. Hammer murmured, and there was in her voice a note which spoke of something akin to real terror in her heart.

But that was lost upon Milly. She watched her husband as he opened the bottle and set a little glass before Hammer and one for himself. He poured the top off the Scotch and extended the bottle to Hammer.

"Take a good one," he invited.

"You just leave that to me," Hammer said.

He filled the little glass, and Morgan brought tall glasses with ice, spoons and lemon-peel in them. They poured the Scotch into the big glasses, and Morgan let the seltzer sizzle into them. Hammer stirred and sipped.

"Man," he said huskily, "would you believe that money could buy a drink like that?"

It was quite a successful little sitting, though Mrs. Hammer was like a ghost—a wan, gray, doomed ghost—in contrast with the others. As the Scotch in the bottle dwindled, Morgan and Hammer became hilarious. In a night their acquaintance became as much a fact as if they had known each other for years. Hammer was naturally clever, and was by way of being a raconteur. His mind was not unclean and his tongue dripped nothing vile, so that Milly laughed at his stories till tears shone in her eyes.

The hours fled swiftly, and it was eleven o'clock before they knew it. Hammer rose. He was a little unsteady, and his eyes were strangely brilliant as they came nearer to the electric lights.

"We must be going," he said.

"Oh, have one more before you go," Morgan said.

"Well, a little one," Hammer said.

He mixed another generous highball. After he had drunk it he turned to Mrs. Hammer with a kind of defiant dignity.

"Ready, dear?" he asked.

"Quite ready," Mrs. Hammer answered.

The Morgans escorted them to the door, and the four of them talked back and forth till the Hammers were ready to close their own door. Milly turned quickly back into the room then.

"Now you run along to bed," she said. "You've got to go to work tomorrow, you know. I'm going to wash these few dishes. That's to be a rule in this household. Never a dish unwashed."

"Well, you hustle," Morgan said, and as she scurried to the kitchen with glasses and plates, he went to their bedroom.

He felt a little drunker than he had ever felt before. He and Hammer had put a hole in that quart, all right. Wasn't Hammer a good scout? They'd have some fun together. . . . . He washed and undressed quickly and crept into bed. He did not want Milly to see that he was slightly unsure of himself.

Milly came into the room softly in less than half an hour. She stood a moment in the dark, listening. Morgan was breathing deeply.

"Poor tired dear, he's gone to sleep," Milly told herself, and she moved about the room like a ghost—not a wan gray ghost like Mrs. Hammer, but a lovely ghost just entered into beatitude.

MORGAN woke next morning to a slight headache and a fevered mouth. His wife was already up. The little clock on the dresser marked seven. He had an hour in which to dress, eat and get to the store. If he had not been away, he would not have needed to go there, for he was an "outside" man, and all Tomlinson had ever looked to him for was to bring in the business. So he had to rise.

He drank copiously from the cold-

water faucet and bathed in water as cold. He was putting on his collar when Milly tiptoed to the door. The cold water had brought color to his freshly shaved cheeks and life to his eyes.

"Hello, lady," he said. "Breakfast ready?"

"Yes sir. Just ready. Hurry, now. Don't you be a minute late at the store."

They kissed and went arm in arm to the breakfast-table. Milly hovered about him, eating little herself, waiting on him, making sure that he would be on time. When he had eaten, she held his coat and handed him his hat. After he had given her a tender good-by, she opened the door. The Hammer door opened simultaneously. Hammer came out.

"Hello, folks," he said huskily. "How're you all this morning? Going downtown, Morgan? Good. We'll trot along together."

They went down the stairs together, Morgan with many a backward glance at the young wife in the doorway. In the street Hammer turned to him.

"Say, do you know what I almost did this morning?" he asked. "I almost came over to ask you for a touch of that Scotch. My Lord, I was dry and shaky. I don't stand it like I used to."

"Why didn't you?" Morgan asked. "You'd have been welcome as the flowers in May."

"I didn't have the nerve, to tell the truth," Hammer said. "But I'm going to shoot a couple right now. I touched the old lady for a dollar this morning. It's a good system to turn your money over to the old lady, and then you can make a touch when you need it most."

"Betcher life," Morgan assented. "Well, I must run along. I've just got time to reach the store at eight if I walk fast. That's the beauty of living close in. You can walk if you have to. I didn't go downtown to get any money yesterday. I'm flat."

Hammer hooked his hand in Morgan's arm.

"You're going right over here and shoot a couple on me," he said. "You saved my life last night, old man. I'll save yours this morning. I'll have carfare left, and we'll get to your old store right on the dot."

"All right," Morgan assented.

They entered a saloon on the next corner. Hammer greeted the man back of the bar with pretended sharpness. He called for a little service in a hurry, and the bartender entered into his mood and moved with false alacrity.

Morgan reached the store on time, as Hammer had promised him. Young Tomlinson, who for the last year and a half had been general manager of the business, was already there. Morgan, the two drinks he had taken warming his stomach, walked up to Tomlinson's desk and put out his hand. Tomlinson took it and shook it and congratulated him on his marriage; but while he did all that, he did not once take his sharp, rather small eyes from Morgan's face.

They talked business for half an hour, Morgan's chair pulled close up to Tomlinson's desk. The talk was more in the nature of a report from Tomlinson to Morgan than from Morgan to Tomlinson. Tomlinson told how Morgan's customers had been handled in Morgan's absence.

"I think you'll find that they're entirely satisfied," Tomlinson said. "Jackson seems to have made rather a hit with them."

"That's good," said Morgan; and as he rose, he wondered why Tomlinson seemed to be studying him so intently.

Morgan left. In an hour the elder Tomlinson came to the store. The son went over to his desk.

"I win that bet about Morgan, Father," the son said. "He came to work this morning with the smell of whisky rank on his breath. His marriage hasn't made a bit of difference. I knew it wouldn't."

The older Tomlinson frowned. He had built up this printing and stationery business with his own hands. It was very dear to him. A total abstainer himself, he viewed with alarm the mixing of whisky and business—especially whisky and this business. The son had kept silence for a long time about Morgan's drinking, and the old man's dimmed senses had not warned him about it.

"Well, watch him," he said. "He's got to stop it. You think Jackson can handle his route, do you?"

"I could let Morgan go to-day," Tomlinson said.

"Don't do that," the father said, for he was of a kind heart and his years were many. "He's just married. Give him a chance. You might speak to him."

"Not me!" the son said decidedly. "I'm no coddler of the erring. He's a strong man and of sound mind. Let him deny himself as we all have to do nowadays, if we get anywhere."

Even then Morgan was drinking a gin-fizz in a gaudy saloon. He had met a friend on the street, and the friend had loaned him five dollars. The morning was hot and sultry, but the saloon was cool and the drink was cold. Morgan lingered for another.

And Milly was up in her little flat, singing and dreaming and singing again, all unaware that lips may become too tired and cold for song and some dreams may not come true.

MORGAN, coming to the store on a Friday afternoon a week later, found on his desk a telephone-number with a request that he call that number. He sat down and made out his order-slips. He had had a pretty busy morning, and the day was excessively hot. In the last half-hour he had sought relief in several bottles of cold beer. He had drunk a good deal of beer during the torrid spell. He had a case of it at home, and the ice-box was kept filled. The Hammers came over nearly every evening; and besides the beer, there was always a supply of Scotch or rye.

As Morgan made out his last slip, young Tomlinson came over to his desk. Morgan went on writing with face bent down. He was aware that young Tomlinson had lately become rather "nosey." Young Tomlinson never let a day go by without wanting to talk to him about one thing or another. And on most occasions Morgan had not wanted to talk to Tomlinson. He knew that his breath was unpleasantly laden, and he knew also that Tomlinson had a decided aversion toward "booze" of any kind. But no suspicion of the true reason why Tomlinson was watching him had yet come to Morgan.

Tomlinson talked awhile now and then went away. Morgan finished his business and left. He had an easy afternoon ahead of him. There was one important call he had to make. After that he would be free. He wished he might defer that call till the next day. It would be pleasant to go home and spend the afternoon under a fan with Milly. The thought of the beer in the ice-box made him dry.

In the street he suddenly remembered the telephone-number on his desk. He had a quick memory, and he could repeat the figures without returning to read them again. He walked a couple of blocks away from the store and turned in at a barroom. The place was cool, dim and inviting on a day like this, and Morgan had a glass of beer before he went into the telephone-booth.

He called the number and asked who wished to speak to him. He was told to wait. Then Hammer's voice came over the 'phone.

"Hello, old hoss," said Hammer. "What you doing this afternoon? One call, hay? Say, I'm just starting on my vacation. Business kind of slack, and the old man thought I better take it on the jump. We'll take in that one call of yours, and then we'll shoot a few. What say? I'll be down there in ten minutes."

Hammer was there within the ten minutes, and they sat down at a table. Hammer produced a modest roll of bills. He explained that the "old man" had advanced him two weeks' salary.

"I'm going to get quite a little tight this afternoon," he said, "and then me and the old lady are going to beat it for the country in the morning. I know a place where beer grows on trees. All you got to do is to sit under a tree and lick it up. Now, this is my little treat to pay you back for all the parties at your house. I been a little shy, and I aint had a chance to come back at you, but here's where I shine. We'll have a couple of Scotch uns in the tallest glasses they got."

Those Scotch ones might have grown on trees too, considering the ease with which the deft waiter produced them. There had been an even dozen between the two men before Hammer remembered that Morgan had a call to make.

"Let's get it out of your system," Hammer said. "Then we'll be free as the birds that fly."

They went out into the terrific heat of the street. Morgan gazed for a moment dizzily into the glare.

"Whew," he said. "None of this for me. We'll pass that call. To-morrow will do as well. Come on back in. I got a little change."

"Change, nothing," Hammer said. "This is mine, I tell you. I got close onto sixty bucks stored on my person. You stick along, old pal."

Morgan stuck along till memory hid itself in the dim recesses of his brain and decision was lost in a whirl of emotion.

HE awoke to a steady patter of rain against the window. Memory, frightened and timid, crept forth. Morgan sat up. He was in his own bed. In a wild panic he tried to recall how he had got there—but he could not. He had been in that place with Hammer, and then they had gone about town. After that there was nothing that he could seize upon in the retrospect.

He became alive to the fact that he was quite ill now. His head ached horribly, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He fiercely desired a drink.

"Milly," he called, and he wondered at the dead sound of his voice.

There was a stir in the room beyond. The curtains were parted. Milly stood in the doorway. Morgan stared at her.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked.

"Matter?" she repeated dully.

"What you been crying about?"

Milly stood looking at him for a moment. Her young face was like a flower upon which a blight has suddenly fallen.

"I didn't understand about this drinking," she said, beginning with an abruptness which startled her husband. "I didn't understand until yesterday and last night. Mrs. Hammer came to see me yesterday. She warned me to leave you if you didn't stop drinking. She said you and I were both headed for hell if you didn't stop. That was the word she used. She told me about Mr. Hammer." She threw wide her arms in a swift gesture of abandonment. "Why, Mr. Hammer was so kind, so jolly, I thought he was just a part of our new happiness. But Mrs. Hammer says that in spite of his cleverness he has had ten jobs in the last eight years. He can hold a job only so long on account of his drinking. And almost all of their money goes for his drink. Why, they've moved about every six months since they were married. They had to move, because they couldn't pay the rent. She says he might have been anything, done anything, if he had let liquor alone. . . . . And they quarrel if she says anything. How can he quarrel with her—a weak, sad little woman like that? And last Monday, when you got your pay, you gave me only twenty dollars out of the thirty-five, and you've had eight of that back. It's been a dollar every morning, and two nights a dollar, and that quart of Scotch. The rent will soon be due, and the payments on the furniture, and the grocery-bill is heavier than I expected it to be on account of having to buy things when Mr. Hammer dropped in.

"And last night you came home—" She stopped and stared at him in agonized disbelief. "I couldn't believe it was you. You couldn't walk. Mr. Hammer almost carried you upstairs. And he was terrible himself. And you couldn't talk. You just fell down on the floor and slept there for four hours. I couldn't move you till almost morning. . . . . Oh—oh!"

She sank to a chair and rocked herself amid the filmy fragments of her broken dreams. Morgan slid from the bed and went over to her. But she shrank from him. Then a sudden thought came to Morgan. Milly had said she could not move him till nearly morning. He looked at the little clock on the dresser. It marked ten o'clock. He seized the clock and held it to his ear. It ticked steadily.

"My Lord, Milly," he cried. "This isn't the right time, is it?"

At the alarm in his own voice she looked up quickly.

"Yes," she said. "Why?"

"Great guns, I should have been on the job early this morning. There was a party I should have seen yesterday, but I—I missed him. I must get over there. Tomlinson has been looking me over lately. I don't know why. Milly, get me my clothes. First thing I know I'll be losing my job."

That quieted her momentary wildness. If he lost his job, they would face ruin indeed. He got into his clothing with amazing swiftness, considering his condition.

"I'll have your breakfast in just a minute," Milly said. "Sit down."

"No, no," Morgan cried, picking up his hat. "I can't eat. I haven't time. Milly, I'll talk to you about this business to-night. But I—I—Milly, I've got to ask you for carfare. It's vital. I must get out there, and it's a good two miles."

"Yes, yes," she cried.

She found her purse and plucked a dollar-bill from it with nervous fingers. He clutched it and shoved it into his vest pocket. Then he put a shaking hand on her shoulder.

"Listen here, Milly," he said. "I was never like that before, and I never will be again. But I've got to get this order this morning. I need stimulation. I've got to take a couple of drinks. I give you my word if the situation wasn't what it is, I'd pass up the stuff. Do you believe me?"

"Yes," she said. "But hurry."

He left her, ran to the sideboard and took two big drinks. He was at the head of the stairs when the telephone-bell in the hall rang. For a moment the husband and wife stared at each other. Both somehow sensed the message that was coming.

"It's probably the store," Morgan said, and he took down the receiver. He hung it up almost at once. "It's Tomlinson," he went on. "He wants me to come right down."

Milly gasped in sheer terror, with blanched face and trembling lips. Morgan put his arm about her slim waist.

"There, there," he tried to soothe her. "It'll be all right. If I'm in any trouble, I'll pull out all right. For more than a year now I've had a standing offer from the Burgess people. If Tomlinson gets fresh, I can get as good a job in an hour."

AT the store Morgan went straight to Tomlinson's desk. Tomlinson glanced up quickly. Morgan saw in his eyes a hostility which those eyes had never reflected before. Sullen anger gathered in Morgan's heart. Did Tomlinson think he was going to get away with some "rough stuff" with one of the best salesmen in the city? Morgan rather guessed not.

"The Babcock Company called up this morning, and we had to take their order by 'phone," Tomlinson said. "They're one of our best customers, as you doubtless know. Their buyer was pretty sharp. He said yesterday was your day to see him. He said he'd like a little more attention. Why didn't you see him yesterday? How did it happen you weren't on the job this morning?"

"I can hold the Babcock Company," Morgan replied, ignoring the questions.

"We've turned the Babcock people over to Jackson," Tomlinson said with some heat. "You needn't bother about them in future."

"Is that so?" Morgan said with a snarl in his voice. "Perhaps you don't know that I landed their business for us. They're my customers."

Tomlinson had looked away, but now his eyes came flashing back to Morgan's face.

"Jackson will take care of them from now on," he declared. "And he'll take care of the other people you neglect."

For a moment they faced each other after that, two tense, white-faced men, Morgan smarting under what he felt to be Tomlinson's injustice, and Tomlinson throwing to the winds the repression under which he had chafed in Morgan's case. Tomlinson was the first to speak.

"Look here, Morgan," he said. "I've had something on my mind about you for a considerable time. Like every other man that does it, you think you can drink and get away with it. Oh,

I saw you yesterday afternoon. You were paralyzed. You looked right at me and didn't know me. That's why you didn't see the Babcock people yesterday. That's why you lay abed this morning instead of being on the job. And you've had a few this morning already. . . . Now, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to keep you on for a month's trial. But I'm not going to let you handle your regular customers. Jackson will take care of them. You can go out and hustle up some new business. We need it. I'll pay you a commission on everything you bring in. You'll get no salary. Maybe if you have to buckle down, you'll straighten out."

Tomlinson's face was almost blotted from Morgan's sight by the red fury which swept over him. It was due partly to what he felt was a raw deal, but it was due a good deal, too, to the alcohol in his brain.

"Well, what do you say?" Tomlinson snapped out.

Morgan got unsteadily to his feet.

"I say you can go to hell, you little shrimp," he choked. "Do you think I have to work for you? I guess not. I can go some place else; and lemme tell you"—he bent toward the other man—"I'll just take that business with me."

He was shaking when he got to the street, and he went at once to a saloon and had two drinks of whisky. Then he proceeded to Burgess' store.

BURGESS was very busy that morning. Morgan had to wait nearly an hour before he got to him. During that hour he suffered a variety of tortures. He was afraid that presently he would be a man out of a job. Burgess might not come through. And as the whisky died in him, he began to feel ill. When he at length got to Burgess' desk, he was pale and unsteady. Burgess looked up but did not offer his hand. In the old days, when Burgess had wanted him, Burgess had been very cordial.

"Well, I'm here," Morgan said, trying to be jovial.

"So I see," said Burgess. "What can I do for you?"

"I've left Tomlinson," Morgan answered. "I'm ready to take up that offer of yours."

"What offer?" Burgess asked.

Morgan understood then: Burgess had heard of his discharge and of the reason for it.

"Very well," he said.

He started dizzily away from the desk. Before he had gone a dozen feet, Burgess was by his side.

"Sorry, old man," he said, his sternness vanishing before the real liking and admiration he had for Morgan, "but it doesn't go any more, you know. If it hadn't been that Tomlinson had had Jackson on the job, we'd have got the Babcock business ourselves. Babcock will talk, you understand. Your other customers will hear about this business. I don't think they would follow you to us—not with young Jackson handling them the way he is. You couldn't do us any good now, and if you keep on the way you're going, you'd do us harm in future."

Morgan bowed and went into the street. He now felt an overwhelming desire and need for stimulation. He had never felt like that before. But his mind and his body urged him to relieve their sufferings. He suddenly remembered that he had some money coming from Tomlinson. He supposed Tomlinson wouldn't pay him for a full week. Anyway, he had four days and a half coming. At the store, however, he found that the cashier had thirty-five dollars for him. He took the money and departed once more.

He had no thought but to drink now. He was ashamed and humiliated and afraid. He was worse than a man without a job. He was a man to whom all doors in his own line were shut. Tomlinson's talk about his working up a new trade was guff, he told himself. How could he work up a new trade when the city was honeycombed every day for every little order for letterheads or envelopes? Hang Tomlinson!

He came to himself quite suddenly at seven o'clock that evening with a drink of whisky in front of him. He thought of Milly. There had been terror in her eyes when he had left her. What must her condition be now? He

shoved the whisky from him with a bitter oath and started home. On the way he remembered the next day would be Sunday. He would have to have a few drinks to-morrow, and the saloons would be closed. He bought a quart of Scotch.

MILLY was standing in the doorway as he came up the stairs with the wrapped bottle under his arm. He realized that he was drunker than he had thought. Within the last few minutes the whisky had seemed to beat relentlessly against his brain. He felt tired and old. Even as he looked at her, his girl-wife vanished from the doorway. When he staggered into the living-room, he found her in a big chair with her eyes closed and her face like the death-mask of a child. She seemed so very young.

"Milly!" he whispered.

She opened her sick eyes.

"You've lost your job?" she whispered back.

He nodded.

"And the other job?"

"They've all turned against me."

Milly Morgan got slowly to her feet. Her husband watched her. She went into their bedroom. When she emerged from it, she had on her hat.

"Where are you going?" Morgan asked hoarsely.

"Away."

For a moment he did not seem to understand. He just stood there by the door, gazing at her with his stupid, stricken, drunken eyes. She advanced to him.

"Let me pass, please," she said.

He stood aside. She opened the door. The action startled him into life.

"My God, Milly," he cried, "you aint quitting me too, are you?"

"Yes, I'm quitting you," she said. "I can't stand this. Anyway, what are we to do? Where is the money to come from to pay the bills? It's nearly the first of the month. They'll put us into the street. I must get work to support myself."

That rage which he had felt against Tomlinson swept over him with renewed force. He seized her arm.

"You come back here," he screamed. "You can't quit me. You're married to me. You understand—I can hold you. What'd you say just a few weeks ago? 'Till death do us part.' Get that? Well, I'm not dead yet. You—"

"You coward. You sot!"

He released her and recoiled as if her words had been whiplashes that had cut his face. His hands went over his eyes.

"All right," he said. "All right! I understand. Go ahead—go ahead. I'll make out. I'll get along—by myself. You gotta right to go. I'm just a booze h'ister with no friends, no money. . . . . Yes, I got money." He thrust his hand into a pocket and drew forth crumpled bills. "Take it. Take it all. Leave me busted. What do I care?"

"I don't want your money," she said in a hushed voice. "I can earn my living. Mother and the children are all right. The children are working. I can make out. You keep the money. You'll need it."

He thrust the money back into the pocket.

"All right," he said. "All right. Have your way. Too proud to accept my money. Go ahead—go ahead."

She did not speak again. He stood with his hands before his eyes. There was silence in the room save for his heavy breathing. He quieted that, so that he might catch the sound of her own breathing, the rustle of her dress, a sob, perhaps. But there was nothing. He uncovered his eyes. She was gone.

SPRINGTIME, beneficent and joyous, was upon the city. The soft sunshine lay upon the brick and cement and stone, and wherever a little living green could aspire to the light it bravely did so. Except in those darkened, shuttered hearts which could never know another spring, the vernal spirit seemed to rule the people of the city. Steps were lighter; bodies were straighter; greetings were cheerier.

Out of this sunshine a man entered quickly a dingy printing-shop on a side-street. He was a tall, handsome, well-made man. He seemed not much beyond thirty, but there were little graying places in his dark hair. He seemed

vigorous enough, but his face was a little too thin for perfect health. Whatever touch of ill health was in him might have been mental or it might have been physical. A psychologist doubtless would have said that this man had suffered.

Inside the shop an undersized, very bald man rose from a worn desk and stood waiting while the other man approached him. His face was eager; eyes usually dim were bright.

"You didn't get it, Morgan," he said, but even so he could not keep a note of hope out of his voice.

"I got it," Morgan said briskly. "The next thing is to handle it."

"Lordy," the little man said, and he sank into his chair again.

Morgan drew up another chair and shoved his hat to the back of his head.

"Now, look here, Tuttle," he said. "You played fair with me. You gave me my chance. You believed in me when nobody else did. So I'm going to play fair with you. We've got to have new machinery. We can't handle this job without linotypes and new presses. I've got the money to buy that machinery, and I'm going to do it. I borrowed five thousand dollars to-day. By paying that down we can get credit for whatever else we have to have. We've got to move up on Quay Street. That's right in the heart of the wholesale district, where there's big business. We're going out after big business. No more piddling stuff for us. We'll form the partnership of Morgan and Tuttle. I'll stack my five thousand up against what you've got—good-will and all. Are you on?"

"But Morgan," said Tuttle gently, "you don't need me. If you've got five thousand and this cracking big order from the Hopkins Company, you don't need no partner. I'd be a fifth wheel."

"I said you gave me my chance," said Morgan stubbornly. "I'm giving you yours. I do need you. You've got the technical knowledge that I lack. You run the shop, and I'll get the business. You're a good workman but a poor business man. We'll make a great team. How about it?"

"I'll take you up," Tuttle said.

THEY sat far into the night, figuring, planning, arranging for their removal. In a week the firm of Morgan and Tuttle opened a well-equipped plant on Quay Street. They finished their first important job on time, but with scarcely a minute to spare.

Tuttle awoke to new life. The firm began to turn out printing that was something of a revelation to the wholesale district. On one side of the first floor of their two floors they opened a modest stationery-store. They carried enough of everything to supply the trade. The stock was small, but it was adequate and easily replenished.

In six months the firm of Morgan and Tuttle was on its feet. Morgan had been industriously circulating among his old customers. They began to give him small orders and then larger ones. The story of his rehabilitation went through the business world much more rapidly than the story of his downfall had done. Everywhere he went he was received like a man just returned from a long journey. Doubt had given way to confidence.

By the end of November the firm had to have more room. Morgan had hoped that that would come to pass, and he had rented a building in which there was vacant space above him. The rent had been higher, of course, but they would make their saving now because they could enlarge without removing.

On a gusty evening, as the working force was leaving, Morgan came to Tuttle.

"I'll be busy as the deuce next week," Morgan said. "Let's eat a bite somewhere and come back and plan that third floor. Then you can go right ahead with it while I'm plugging on the outside."

"All right," said Tuttle. "Meet you at Foley's in fifteen minutes. Got a few things to clear up."

After Morgan had gone, Tuttle took up his telephone. There was an odd, happy look on his face. He spoke a number, talked for a minute, hung up the receiver and left the store.

"It didn't take you long," Morgan said as he entered Foley's. "Might as well have come with me."

At ten o'clock that night Morgan stepped back to the end of the big room on the third floor and surveyed it. There was a look of satisfaction on his face.

"That will be fine and dandy," he said. "I guess that fixes it. We might as well call it a day and a half."

Tuttle was already at the head of the stairs. His mouth was working nervously, and he was clasping and unclasping his thin hands.

"You wait just a minute, Morgan," he said shrilly. "There's one thing more — something mechanical you hadn't thought about. I'll be right back."

MORGAN leaned against the wall, thinking deeply. His thoughts were long, long thoughts. He recalled the night his wife had left him. He remembered how he had finished the bottle of Scotch he had brought home with him and how next day he had begun a debauch which had taken all the little money he had. . . . . And after that, the degradation! With shut eyes he shivered at the picture of that. . . . . But he had come back. He had picked the crumbs for a long time, but now he was privileged to sit at the feast. And with the exception of the humble help which O'Brien and Mrs. Hagan had given him, he had done everything for himself. Not once had his wife sent him a kind word, though he knew she was in the city. She had left him to drift to the depths. But his pride had saved him. O'Brien and Mrs. Hagan, by their charity, had kindled the little spark of it, and he alone had fanned it to a flame which should never die. He had attempted to pay O'Brien and Mrs. Hagan, but they had refused payment. Some day he would square his account with them. Then he would owe nobody. Nobody! He lifted his head and opened his eyes, and the pride that was now his ruling passion shone in his chastened face. If his wife could see him now, he believed she would be sorry she had been a quitter.

There was a step on the stair. It was a slow step, not unlike Tuttle's. Morgan brooded again with bent head while the step drew nearer. Then for a full minute there was no sound in the room. At the end of that time it came to Morgan that the sound of the step on the stair had ceased. He looked up quickly. He gasped, and his hands went groping along the wall on either side to support himself.

His wife was standing there at the head of the stair. His eyes swept her from head to foot and back to her face again. He saw that she was shabby. Her blue suit was too thin for the keen wind outside. Her hat was of summer straw. But she was well. There was a shining light on her face and a deep color in it.

He caught his breath sharply, swallowed hard—and then his tears came. He brushed them away angrily, as a strong man will. He did not wish to lose sight of her for an instant. He was suddenly too hungry for her. When his vision cleared, she was in front of him.

"Take me in your arms and kiss me," she whispered.

He caught her up to him, and their lips met.

Some time later they came down the stairs hand in hand. Tuttle was not in sight.

"Mr. Tuttle went home," Milly said.

"Do you know him?" Morgan asked.

"I've known him ever since you've been with him," Milly answered.

"You can tell me about that in a minute," Morgan said. "First let me tell my story."

"Let me tell you both our stories," Milly said.

"Both of them?" Morgan wondered.

"I KNOW yours as well as I know my own," Milly went on. "Listen: It all began with Mrs. Hammer that night you and Mr. Hammer stayed away. When you both didn't come home, she came to see me.

"She cried and said there was no hope for Mr. Hammer and her, but she begged me to leave you before it was too late. She said you were starting just as Mr. Hammer did. Then Mr. Hammer had to have whisky. The night he first met you in that saloon he was waiting for some one to come in

to buy him a drink. Think of that! And so I decided I would make you think I had left you." She smiled a little. "But I never left you, dear. I knew when you gave up the flat and when they came and got the furniture. I know how you went down, down, till you were sleeping in the park. I saw you get shabbier and shabbier. I knew when Sergeant O'Brien found you in the park and sent you to Mrs. Hagan. I knew just what she did for you. I—I paid your board while you were there, at first."

Morgan's face went to his hands. He could not bear to see that look in his wife's eyes. He understood many things now. He recalled how O'Brien had acted a strange rôle for a police-officer and how Mrs. Hagan had fed and sheltered him without charge till he had begun to earn a little money. He remembered how the kindness of those two rough people had helped him to begin his long and bitter fight against the lure of whisky. And that had all been due to brave Milly.

"How did you interest O'Brien and Mrs. Hagan?" he asked.

"Mr. O'Brien asked me to marry him, once," Milly answered without a blush. "And so I went to see him. I told him all about you. I told him how good you were. I said if he could not get you to try again, he was to arrest you and send you to jail."

"Milly!" Morgan cried.

"I was ready to do anything," Milly said passionately. "I was not going to lose you forever, if I could help it. I knew there was too much good in you for you to go on like that if you woke up. I cried all night the night you consented to go to Mrs. Hagan's, and I guess I was nearly crazy the first night she told me you hadn't had a drink for a week. And then when you finally went to Mr. Tuttle and began soliciting those tiny orders on so pitiful a commission, I thought my heart would break for joy. . . . . And now you've got a business of your own."

MORGAN groped for his wife's hand and clasped it. It was very still in the store. Outside there was only the beat of the autumn wind against the windows.

"I thought I was hoeing a hard row," Morgan said slowly. "There were times when I thought I must slip back, but I kept plugging along. At first men wouldn't believe in me. They said they had seen men take a brace before, only to fall harder than ever. But one by one I got them coming my way. To-day I don't know a man who thinks I will ever take another drink. Fourteen months ago I couldn't have borrowed a nickel. Just the other day I paid to old man Babcock, the president of that company whose order I fumbled, you remember, five thousand dollars I borrowed to get this business going. I had always thought Babcock was a crusty old customer, but when I told him my story from first to last, he reached for his check-book. A lot of people have been good to me, Milly. I've been helped a lot more than I deserved."

He paused to wipe a fine sweat from his forehead. "Milly," he broke out after a moment, "I'm not worthy of you. No man could be. You've slaved and suffered and almost starved for me, while I thought you had quit me."

"Man," said Milly, "I've had enough to eat, such as it was. I'm not starved."

"But I've gone on with pride in my heart, thinking bitter thoughts of you," he argued. "I thought I was pulling something off in spite of you. And all the while your hands were holding mine and guiding me."

"Ah, my dear," said Milly, "I've found out that we don't go along alone in this world. I've found out that the weak must have help, and that the strong must have help. The weak have to have it given to them, and the strong just take it. I had to have help too."

"Who helped you?" he asked jealously.

"You did," she answered. "You helped me the first time you came back to Mrs. Hagan's sober. You see how it all works out?"

"I see how it all works out," he answered, and he took her hands and held them against his lips, his eyes again shut and his head bowed.

The Fatal Hour

by Michael White

"THAT will do, *khitmutgar;* you can leave the room now."

The words were spoken with a touch of American accent by the attractive mistress of a wide-spreading Indian bungalow. Impassively the turbaned native bowed and slipped away noiselessly on bare feet. Mrs. Arnold glanced across the tea-table at her caller. Morton Post presented some twenty-five years of manhood, with characteristic keenly alert yet sympathetically responsive features. These two represented the United States in a north-central India station. Mrs. Arnold was the wife of Kenneth Arnold, Inspector of Police, and Post had been sent thither as the agent of an American commercial firm. Letters of introduction from mutual friends had strengthened their bond of national feeling.

"You don't take cream?" she remarked, pouring out the tea.

"No—not yet. But guided by your instruction, I hope to acquire a British taste in time. Bought a fox terrier the other day to hunt out cobras and things from under the bed; so you see I'm making pretty fair progress."

"How would you like some real ice-cream, Morton?" She shot a tantalizing glance at him.

"Or a five-pound box of real Fifth Avenue candy?" he retorted.

"Morton, don't be cruel. You know very well we can't, for the wealth of the Indies, get either here."

"Righto!" grinned Morton, helping himself to a substantial slice of cake. "Got *that* out at last. Wonder if it fitted into place. No one seems to have invented a *wrongo* as counterpart to it. But where's Arnold?"

Mrs. Arnold's expression grew visibly serious. She looked toward the door through which the *khitmutgar* had vanished; then she fixed her eyes on Post's face.

"I suppose"—she spoke in a lower tone—"it doesn't much matter whether these people overhear what we say or not. They appear able to read our thoughts. Kenneth—is frightfully worried."

"Not bad home news, I hope."

"No—but the situation here. You know we usually have trouble during the feast of *Mohurran,*—a riot between the Mohammedans and Hindus,—but this year he believes there is real danger of a general uprising."

"Why, I thought we were pretty well ready for anything of that kind. I presume the old fort wouldn't stand much battering from modern artillery, but Colonel Cliveden has surely enough men in it to make short work of any rebel body other than a regular army."

"Yes, but you forget your friend

Mr. Kent, our new High Commissioner."

"What about him?" questioned Post.

"He—well—he is simply impossible." She threw out her hands in an expressive gesture.

"Impossible!" repeated Post with emphasis. "I have found him entirely satisfactory. When I approached him first on a business matter he met me in a democratic spirit, and since then he has received me in his house on friendly social terms. I—"

"Oh, yes, of course," Mrs. Arnold nodded. "His daughter, Dorothy Kent, explains your partisanship."

"Not at all. She does not enter into my opinion of Mr. Kent, or that Colonel Cliveden is—what you might expect in a military autocrat."

"Colonel Cliveden has at least the manners of a gentleman,"—Mrs. Arnold tapped the tip of her shoe impatiently,—"while your Mr. Kent carries things with the high-handed prejudice and stupidity of an ill-bred upstart in authority."

A slight flush mounted to Post's cheeks.

"I am afraid, Etta," he said, "your mingling with the Anglo-Indian Four Hundred has bereft you of your former sound American common sense."

"Nothing of the kind," she flashed back at him. "I am not blind to their faults,—remember, we are none of us immaculate,—but in this case I am frankly on Colonel Cliveden's side. When Mr. Kent came here, instead of waiting for Colonel Cliveden to pay the customary official call, he sent for him as if he were a mere orderly. Kenneth was present at the meeting. He says Mr. Kent's attitude toward Colonel Cliveden was so offensively dictatorial that he does not blame the Colonel for refusing to communicate with the High Commissioner except in writing. Since then Mr. Kent, as the supreme civil power, has vetoed all Colonel Cliveden's recommendations for public safety, and Colonel Cliveden naturally refuses to recognize Mr. Kent's authority within the precincts of the fort."

"Ye gods of convention!" groaned Post, shaking his head in helpless bewilderment. "To think of it, that because Mr. Kent overlooked some trivial bit of official formality, and the Colonel was probably fuming red-hot about it, these two men can't get together. Consequently we are threatened with the usual *Mohurran* skull-cracking on an extended scale of other issues."

BOTH ceased their contention on Arnold's entrance. Post stretched out a hand to greet a well-set-up, suntanned, quietly pleasing Englishman in uniform. Arnold dropped into a chair beside the tea-table. He accepted a cup from his wife in silence, bending over and stirring his tea thoughtfully. Presently he set it aside without tasting.

"By the way," remarked Post, diving a hand into the breast pocket of his coat, to bring forth and select from a packet of letters a much folded sheet of pink note-paper, "I found this among my shaving-tools. Can't be a bill, because our *khansamal*" (butler) "has the eye of a hawk in seeing to it that no one but himself has the ghost of a chance to make a penny of undue profit out of us. His gorgeous new waistcoat speaks for unflagging industry in protecting our bachelor household expenditure—from the other fellow. I presume, Arnold, you can translate what it's about."

Arnold took the note, ran his eyes over the characters and nodded conclusively.

"Did you save a native kid from being trampled on by a runaway eleplant?" he asked.

"There was hardly much saving about it," replied Post. "I merely grabbed the youngster out of the mad brute's path. Had quite forgotten the incident."

"A native, you know, always remembers an act of that kind. So the father writes to warn you not to frequent the houses of Europeans during the approaching feast of *Mohurran*. He adds he will provide for you a shelter in his own home if necessary. If a bearer offers you three pomegranate-seeds, you can safely trust and follow the man."

"That's mighty considerate of him," exclaimed Post. "But—does he seri-

ously mean to infer that the Europeans are in danger?"

"That we are in for the very deuce of a racket here—yes." Arnold came to his feet and began pacing the room with emphatic action. "And all because our High Commissioner is about as open to logical reasoning as a blind mule. I know it's contrary to regulations to criticise a superior, and I dislike saying anything in disparagement of a man who seems to have acted decently toward you, Post, but that note should illuminate Mr. Kent's utter incapacity in the present state of things. He refuses absolutely to turn over control of the situation to Colonel Cliveden by proclaiming martial law, insisting that the civil power aided by the police is all-sufficient to preserve order."

"What did I tell you, Morton?" Mrs. Arnold shot a confirmatory glance toward Post.

"I've done what I can," went on Post, "but with Colonel Cliveden's force bottled up in the fort, the city honeycombed with sedition, and thousands of fanatics likely to go on the rampage, the Commissioner must be out of his senses. To cope with it I have no more, comparatively, than a handful of men, and half of those cannot be trusted."

"It really looks bad, then?"

"Bad!" ejaculated Arnold, halting beside Post's chair. "It would be senile to pretend otherwise. We can, of course, send our women into the fort, but the rest of us will have to stay and meet whatever happens. Hang it all! one would think Kent's sense of personal safety would induce him to yield to plain facts. But he is just the type of man to sacrifice himself and others to a dogged principle. Look here." He dropped a hand on Post's shoulder, as if with an inspiration. "By Jove! you're the only fellow that does seem to have some influence with him. Wont you go out and, in your plain American fashion, put the situation squarely before him? Make him see how we stand. You have the advantage over us in not feeling compelled to treat him like an official idol."

"Well, I must say," reflected Post, "Mr. Kent has never shown that he expected anything of the kind from me. But then, I haven't attempted to advise him how to run the government. That would hardly have been good business or social policy—the only steps, so far, by which I've approached him. He has not requested my opinion. I don't know how he might take your suggestion. I certainly don't wish to make matters worse by being cut off on the ground of uncalled-for interference. For an 'incapable' man, he's mighty decisive."

"Now, Morton," Mrs. Arnold came to her husband's aid, "has not Kenneth told you matters cannot be worse?"

"Oh—well—since that's the case," he began to reconsider.

"And, you know, you can accomplish anything if you try hard enough. Remember, some of our lives, at least, hang in the balance. Now, *I* ask you to go to Mr. Kent."

"That, of course, settles it, Etta. Naturally I couldn't refuse you—an American woman in this benighted country—or any woman in such circumstances. All right! I'll tackle the High Commissioner. I'll see what can be done with him."

WHILE Post drove his car to Mr. Kent's residence, a word dropped now and then in previous talks with him came back to throw gleams of light on the usually taciturn man whose actions caused so much apprehension in the station. Post gathered that John Kent had risen from near the bottom of the ladder to his present great position, solely by his own will-power. Unlike the majority of Anglo-Indians, he cared nothing about sport, sought no social diversion and seemed absolutely centered in his work. Once or twice he had surprised Post with an astonishing grasp of detail outside his routine scope. He appeared to have mastered several native languages and their dialects. Since he had never spoken of his wife, Post imagined that possibly away back somewhere there hung a shadow over his career which caused him to withdraw from human fellowship. On the whole, Post wondered why Kent treated him with so much cordiality.

As he swung in at the gate bearing the impressive—almost imperial—letters, "I. C. S.," Indian Civil Service, he further wondered if he were not venturing considerably on his privilege of intimacy gained, particularly in view of his promising relations with Dorothy Kent. But in this respect Etta Arnold's plea had bereft him of choice. A *chuprassie* in scarlet livery informed Post that Kent Sahib Bahadur was engaged in his study, but that the young *memsahib* would see him in the drawing-room.

The spacious shaded chamber into which Post was shown, again contrasted with such reception-rooms in India. Nowhere were there those photographs and souvenirs to recall memories of the homeland, but merely the furniture which sufficed. The High Commissioner's drawing-room was pervaded with the cheerless atmosphere of an English railway-station—a mere passing-on place. Presently, however, it brightened at a tripping footstep and the laughing eyes of the golden-haired, rosy-cheeked Dorothy Kent. A resident could have told at a glance that she had not been subjected for even many months to the vitality-sapping climate of India.

"MORTON," she cried, holding out her hands, "I'm simply delighted to catch a glimpse of you, even though you came to see Father."

"I came to see you too, of course." He pressed her hands in both of his. "Most assuredly!"

"It—it is so awfully dull here." She pouted very prettily. "I don't know why, but no one calls on us now."

Post looked at her with sympathetic understanding. Far be it from him to enlighten her on what he had learned of her father's unpopularity.

"Well," he strove to make plausible excuse, "people seem to be terribly busy just now. Come, let us sit on this settee until His Excellency, your Honorable Dad, can give me a few minutes."

"I nearly had an accident to-day," she informed him.

"Tell me all about it," he urged solicitously.

"I was out riding and my horse shied at something. Shah bolted. Luckily a passing officer galloped to my assistance. But, of course, I haven't told Father."

"No! Why not?"

"Oh! Haven't you discovered yet?"

"The chief discovery I have made of late is that I'm outrageously in love with you."

She cast a quizzical smile upon him—then dropped her head to begin pleating a fold of her skirt thoughtfully.

"I—I really don't understand Dad."

"He is certainly not an ordinary man."

"You see, I know so little of him. Mother died when I was a baby, and I never saw him until a few weeks ago when I joined him here. He was always awfully good, though, in sending all the money for me to the people who acted as my guardians in England."

"That shows he has a generous nature," put in Post.

"Yes; but nothing—nothing could bend his mind on some things. I believe he positively hates a military officer."

"That's curious," said Post. "Have you any idea of the reason for it?"

"No—none at all; but a day or two after I arrived he told me if ever I thought of marriage, he would view with stern disapproval any affair with an officer. He said he would prefer my choosing a man with a future in business. He seems to like Americans," she added naïvely.

"Luck is on my side so far, then," responded Post. "I suppose this is the reason you did not tell him of the morning incident?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"By the way," he asked, "have you ever heard him mention Colonel Cliveden's name?"

"No. But I did so once when we received a formal invitation to a garden-party at the fort. He instructed me to refuse in the third person, and never to refer to Colonel Cliveden again."

BOTH experienced slight embarrassment on becoming conscious that the scarlet figure of the *chuprassie* was

standing in the doorway, motionless and staring into vacancy.

"The ghost-walking habits of these people get on my nerves," remarked Post. "What is it, *chuprassie?*" he demanded.

"The *Burra*" (Great) "*Sahib* will now see Your Honor."

"You wont say anything about the officer, will you, Morton?" Dorothy besought him on his rising from her side.

"No, sweetheart, I'll keep it as a dread secret, if you wish, though for the life of me I don't see where the harm comes in."

Post followed the *chuprassie* across a wide hall, to pass him at the door of a kind of library and office combined. A native secretary of prosperous waist-girth bowed himself out, bearing a packet of documents. The High Commissioner of the province was still bending over a center-table occupied with official correspondence. Post took a chair beside the table and waited. His gaze rested on the upper part of a tall, powerfully built man, such as one comes across in the English north country. His prominent features were sternly chiseled, with a mouth and jaw of irrevocable decision. Thick black hair waved back off his forehead, shading the deep sockets of his eyes; his closely cropped beard showed no trace of fading into gray with years. Neither had he need for glasses. Presently he spoke without looking up from the letter he was writing.

"Have you had any more difficulty with the transshipment of your imports?"

"No, Mr. Kent. Your letter removed all trouble in that respect."

"What is my daughter doing?"

"I presume she is attending to the usual household routine."

"Did you see her?"

"Yes."

"Then why presume? Would it not be more direct to have made the statement as one of positive fact?"

Post took the correction with a smile of good humor. To be sure, she was not—exactly—attending to the household routine when he did see her. The Commissioner carefully penned his signature, read the letter over, pushed it aside and lifted his head. A stray shaft of light lighted up his face. Post again felt that somewhere beneath the grim exterior, the man of iron will held down a haunting secret. More impressively than before, he could detect hardly any physical or characteristic resemblance between the Commissioner and his daughter. He supposed Dorothy must have grown to womanhood entirely on the brighter and more lovable model of her mother.

THE Commissioner tapped the edge of the table with long, broad-knuckled fingers. Post took it for a sign that he was expected to disclose his errand, since apparently it did not relate to the freight shipments. He grasped at the native note of warning by way of a lead. He stated its origin and contents concisely.

"Have you reported the matter to Captain Arnold?" asked the Commissioner.

"Yes."

"Very well! He has instructions how to act in such cases."

Post saw clearly that he must break into his main object in direct American fashion. He shifted his position a little, to look the Commissioner squarely in the face.

"Mr. Kent," he began. "I know you appreciate absolute frankness. You stated as much a few minutes ago."

As if in assent, the Commissioner slightly inclined his head.

"From every source I hear that we are threatened with serious danger."

"In such an emergency," declared the Commissioner decisively, "I look to Captain Arnold to uphold the civil power."

"But Captain Arnold tells me he cannot possibly do so with the police-force under his command," protested Post.

"Then Captain Arnold had better resign his position and hide in the fort. I will never, by stroke of the pen or otherwise, yield my authority to Colonel Cliveden."

The Commissioner uttered Colonel Cliveden's name as if there were an impassable gulf fixed between them. For a moment Post was dumb before

the surging to the Commissioner's surface of an abysmal consuming passion. But the iron will came down in mastery over it. Post pulled himself together for attack with further argument.

"Mr. Kent,"—he cast a hand across the angle of the table separating them,—"there's a situation here that *must* be straightened out to prevent a bloody massacre. I don't care a hang if you turn me out of the room for plain speaking. I'll camp on your veranda until you are willing to listen. I am acting impartially both as regards yourself and Colonel Cliveden's faction."

The Commissioner's eyes met Post's, and the two glared at each other. But the sincerity and equal determination of the younger man caused the Commissioner to moderate his attitude.

"Go on, then," he said.

"IN temporarily yielding authority to Colonel Cliveden you will save innumerable lives—both European and native—probably including those of yourself and daughter."

"I have stated that in this case I will not delegate my power to Colonel Cliveden."

"Then your only alternative is to remove to the fort."

"With my daughter?"

"Certainly!"

"Am I right in concluding that you are personally interested in her?"

"Interested is hardly the word, Mr. Kent. I regard her as the most desirable girl I have ever met."

"You wish to marry her?"

"I purposed asking your consent."

The Commissioner lifted an arm upon the table to support his head. He seemed stirred by conflicting feelings.

"And you would urge—*me*—to place—*her*—under Colonel Cliveden's protection?" he presently asked.

"As the alternative, yes. I would regard it as acting with ordinary prudence for her safety."

"With ordinary prudence for her safety," repeated the Commissioner. "Good God, young man, you do not comprehend what you are advising. If you did—"

He paused, searching Post's face interrogatively. For the first time in their relations it seemed to Post that the Commissioner was undecided. His brows knit evidently in a conflict of thought, while he clasped one hand over the back of the other upon his crossed knee in a characteristic attitude. Presently he slowly nodded, speaking with impressiveness.

"Do you wish me to disclose the reason why I cannot even consider your suggestion?"

"It would at least throw light on what otherwise is inexplicable."

The Commissioner rose from his chair.

"Yes—you are right. Besides, it is your privilege to know, considering what you have just informed me of your relations with my—with Dorothy. But—remember,"—he lifted a warning finger,—"you have forced me to it. Do not blame me for what transpires. If you should feel deceived, or ill-used, the account must be settled with Colonel Cliveden. Please wait a few minutes."

THE Commissioner strode from the room. Post remained seated in a state of bewilderment. How could he, Post, feel aggrieved over some breach of official etiquette between the Commissioner and the Colonel? It was absurd! In the ominous circumstances of the moment it impressed him as something worse than nonsense for two apparently sane men to maintain such a bitter quarrel. To Post it looked like one of those baffling English social puzzles, in the face of which it is hard to know whether to laugh or shed tears.

After a while he became conscious that the Commissioner's "few minutes" of absence were slipping into many, and that the atmosphere had become tensely still. A nervous impulse moved him to get upon his feet and stroll to the French window. He looked out across a pleasant garden-compound upon a strip of white road. Late-afternoon shadows were falling from some tall bamboo-clumps, and a native gardener was watering the rosebushes.

The scene was peaceful enough. But beyond, Post's glance fell upon a *fakir* squatting in the dust by the roadside. He had encountered several of the

species—nearly naked, long hair matted, skeleton ribs picked out in white chalk, and usually fondling a human skull. He disliked them on every principle, but this one in particular. His presence watching the Commissioner's house was suggestive of the fanatical storm and bloodshed in which it might be, at any hour, enveloped—unless two men could be brought to a level of ordinary common sense.

A MOVEMENT in his rear prompted him to wheel around. The Commissioner and Dorothy had entered. They halted on the further side of the library table. Post took an impulsive step forward—then drew back. It was not so much the pallor on Dorothy's face or a compression of her lips which thus impelled him, but the impression conveyed of a sudden change in her whole nature. He experienced a foreboding of a very real crisis. The Commissioner cleared his throat slightly and began to speak.

"I have just told Dorothy of what I shall inform you. I did not anticipate her presence here, but I agree with her that since she would probably be compelled to face publicity some time, it is best to do so now. She is not my daughter."

"Not your daughter!" repeated Post.

"No; she is a natural daughter of Colonel Cliveden."

Post was stricken mute, staring at the Commissioner's face, groping for enlightenment.

"I will be as brief as possible," went on the Commissioner. "Dorothy's mother was my youngest and favorite sister. Our family were plain people—tenant farmers. I appeared to be the only member of it stirred to climb upward. I was—somehow—different from them, even physically. When still a young man an opportunity opened for me to come out to India. I was a born hard worker. Presently my efforts attracted official notice. I won promotion rapidly.

"Meanwhile I took a short leave home. I found my youngest sister missing from the family group. Her name was not mentioned. When I insisted on news of her, I was told she had disgraced them. That was all. They knew nothing of her. They were good, but narrow-minded people. Life abroad had separated me from them in this and other respects. I commenced a search for my sister. I discovered her lover had been a gay devil-may-care army lieutenant. He had met her by chance when forming one of a shooting-party at a near-by castle, and induced her to follow him to London. There he deserted her. I found her grave, also, the living witness of her death in a wretched East of London orphan-asylum. I took her child from that place into a distant county, and placed her with strangers. Their instructions were to bring her up as my daughter, since legally she was not even my niece, and according to English law could not be made so. On the whole it seemed best to confirm her as my daughter to terminate the curiosity of her guardians.

"I had promised that if ever I did encounter the young lieutenant, one or the other of us would prove the stronger man. I presently heard of him in India; but it is a wide country and our paths did not cross—not until I was appointed to this province. On my side, Dorothy's joining me compelled at least a truce between Colonel Cliveden and myself—for her sake. Your entry into it began soon after.

"Now do you wonder at my refusing to relinquish a pen-stroke of my authority to Colonel Cliveden, or accepting for either of us the protection of his fort?"

Post came out of a maze to admit that the Commissioner had a just cause of grievance against Colonel Cliveden. He glanced toward Dorothy's position, to notice she had vacated it—slipped quietly from the room. The Commissioner took up Post's look of inquiry.

"Dorothy had intended to release you personally from your promise. She felt that it would not be right to hold you to it with the—cloud upon her birth. I presume she feared a breakdown when it came to that part. It is my regret to perform it for her. You will now understand our position. I—er—think that is all."

The Commissioner begged to be excused, bowed gravely and had departed

before Post could find words to express the thoughts flashing through his mind.

"ALL," Post gasped on finding himself alone. "All!" Everything, he reasoned, was crumbling to atoms in those parts. Some one must do something—and quickly. Etta's image rose before him. Yes, she had American brains. She would find way and means, of that he became suddenly confident, where he might blunder into mere violence with the first man who disputed that justice lay on Mr. Kent's side.

He stayed no longer in making for his car. It was at a wild, reckless speed he drove to the Arnold bungalow. Fortunately neither holy cow nor immovable elephant stood in the path of his race for a woman's counsel. He dashed into the compound to find a police-guard stationed on the veranda. Captain Arnold had been called away to suppress an incipient riot. Things looked threatening. He found Mrs. Arnold sorting letters at her desk. A glance around revealed that she was prepared for departure at a word or signal from her husband. Only her hat and gloves on a side-table remained for the finishing process. She glanced up quickly at Post's abrupt entrance, with the question of it on her face.

"See here, Etta," he began without preliminary. "This whole trouble has disclosed elements beyond my grasp. You must help straighten it out. I believe you are the only creature here able to do so."

"Yes," she nodded quite calmly. "Tell me about it."

As concisely as possible Post narrated the substance of what the Commissioner had revealed. He had barely finished before she was on her feet with gloves in hand, adjusting her hat.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Colonel Cliveden at once," she replied decisively.

"But—what do you expect from him?"

"Everything! Is he not the origin of it all? I have told you before that I regarded Colonel Cliveden as a gentleman in manner. Now is the time for him to act like one."

"In Heaven's name how?—to satisfy the Commissioner?"

"He must make the first advance to Mr. Kent in a spirit of unreserved and sincere contrition. Mr. Kent will then be in the wrong if he does not respond suitably."

"He is bitter to the core about it."

"Granted the core is sound, that is something to work on. I'm going to try, anyway. Will you lend me your car? You do not, of course, intend to relinquish Dorothy?"

"Certainly not. I'm coming with you."

MRS. ARNOLD dispatched a police-orderly to inform her husband. Meanwhile she directed Post where to find a loaded army revolver. When they went out to the car Post laid it within handy reach of the driver's seat. Mrs. Arnold hurried into the rear.

Between the Arnold bungalow and the fort stretched a part of the native town of evil repute. The fort crowned a steep hill with its guns overlooking the town. By making a wide detour into the country, Post could have avoided a considerable risk, but time—every minute of it—was urgent on their hands. The ominous roar of a native tumult had not yet broken on their ears. Instead, the pungent, acrid smell of cow-fuel in preparing the evening meal was borne on some wandering current of hot air. As a rule the native prefers to begin his skull-cracking and blood-letting on a full stomach. Therefore Post decided to take a chance with old Kismet.

Night had already fallen with tropical swiftness when Post began to thread cautiously the maze of native town streets. He knew the way fairly well, having passed through on several occasions. To his relief few people were astir. Passing glimpses into smoky kerosene-lamp-lit interiors revealed groups squatting around trays of heaped-up rice, stoking stomach courage.

Post thus covered two-thirds of the distance to the fort without encountering any opposition. He began to feel he had won out in his cast of the dice with Kismet. He swung hopefully

around a corner into a main bazaar to jam down his brakes in haste. Right ahead, the yawning gates of a temple were emptying a fanatical human tide full upon him. That it emerged in silence emphasized a sinister purpose, for a torch here and there revealed the glint of steel weapons. In the van of it a group of Brahmin priests bore aloft a revolting, blood-smeered image.

Since retreat was impossible, Post drew in close to the wall of a house, hoping the crowd would pass him by unnoticed. He glanced over his shoulder to notice that Mrs. Arnold was holding her nerve also, the butt of a pistol otherwise concealed in the fold of a light wrap. But a moment of tense suspense followed. The van of the throng halted, while the main body came up to press close upon three sides of the car. Threatening mutters and gestures foretold a speedy assault.

Presently a contemptuous-visaged, white-robed Brahmin strode to the car-door and spat a foul epithet upon Post. Whether this was intended for a signal to drag the occupants forth mattered nothing in the light of what followed. Post's anger jumped to the boiling-point. Nothing further was necessary to urge him forth. He kicked the door open and leaped out to spring upon the Brahmin. He grasped his insulter by the waist-cloth and bodily hurled him into the car beside his seat. Then he jumped back in and grasped his pistol.

"Curse your heathen soul," he shouted, poking the muzzle of his pistol under the Brahmin's ear. "Sit up and tell these people to clear a path, or you go right away to Gehenna. I mean it."

He forcibly assisted his dazed and cowed prisoner to an erect position. The glint of Post's pistol within view of the near-god's eyes warned him that quick compliance was advisable.

"Go on—do what I tell you," urged Post grimly.

The Brahmin lifted his arms, waving them toward the crowd. Terror-chased words sped from his lips. Thereupon the crowd fell back in awe and astonishment. The sacred person of the Brahmin in Post's hands was a better hostage than a maharajah for an immediate passage onward.

Post seized the opportunity to send the car ahead at a lively speed, while the Brahmin fell back beside him in collapse. He was soon clear of the mob, and presently began to climb the steep paved road leading to the fort.

Within the gates the military was in force, waiting to march forth at the summons of the civil High Commissioner. Post drew the car up before Colonel Cliveden's quarters. Mrs. Arnold alighted to send in a message. Presently an orderly returned to conduct her to the Colonel's presence.

Post waited. The period of it was comparatively short. Meantime he handed over his hostage to the guard. In a little Mrs. Arnold came forth with Colonel Cliveden. Post caught a triumphant smile on her face as she explained hurriedly that they wished to go as quickly as possible to the Commissioner's. She passed on the information that by turning to the right at the foot of the hill a road led directly across-country.

"I have a surprise in store for you," she added in an undertone, "but it must wait for what people call the psychological moment."

POST tested his skill as a driver in overhauling time along that road to the Commissioner's. A few groups tramping cityward hastily scrambled out of the car's onrushing path. For the most part Mrs. Arnold and Colonel Cliveden maintained silence.

On reaching their destination, the Commissioner was stated to be in his study. Mrs. Arnold beckoned Colonel Cliveden and Post to follow. As they entered, the Commissioner lifted his head from his usual position at the center-table. On catching sight of Colonel Cliveden his brow clouded in an ominous manner. He spoke incisively.

"I did not send for you, sir."

"No," Mrs. Arnold put in with engaging persuasion. "I have brought Colonel Cliveden to you on my own responsibility. Please listen to him."

"I come, Mr. Kent, to claim my daughter," the Colonel stated.

"*Your* daughter?"

The Commissioner's eyes flashed.

His hands clenched. Post drew in between the two men to prevent a physical combat.

"Your daughter, sir," the Commissioner went on, with grimly set features. "After your treatment of her in the past, your present claim is an insult."

"My legitimate daughter, I should have defined," put in the Colonel.

"Your legitimate daughter?"

"Precisely! If you will cable your lawyers in London to search the registers of St. Barnabas, they will be able to assure you that a certificate of marriage between myself and your sister exists."

"Is this possible?"

"Upon my oath. Listen to my side of the case."

MRS. ARNOLD glanced triumphantly at Post, taking the opportunity of a truce to slip from the room.

"Granted my marriage to your sister, what followed?" went on the Colonel. "You may understand if not condone my position as a young lieutenant. With small pay in an expensive crack regiment, I was practically dependent on the allowance made by my family. To have disclosed our marriage until promotion came would most likely have ended the allowance and spelled ruin for us both. So we agreed to keep it a secret. I fear my wife held it only too faithfully.

"Suddenly I was ordered on foreign service in Afghanistan. I gave my wife all the money I could spare. It was little enough. I had overdrawn my bank-account, but hoped the next allowance instalment would replenish it for her use. It transpired that unpaid rents delayed and reduced it. She soon became, therefore, without means of support.

"For myself, I followed the campaign in Afghanistan. I was wounded severely, fever developed, and I lay for months in hospital. Some of our mail was cut off. I never received a letter from my wife.

"About this time, I gather from Mrs. Arnold, you returned to England, discovered and carefully obliterated all traces of what you supposed was your sister's disgrace and death in poverty. I never heard she had given birth to a child. When I went back to England some time later, I could learn practically nothing about her.

"As you know, we did not meet until recently. Meanwhile no information came to me to suspect even that you were my wife's brother. You can imagine my surprise at Mrs. Arnold's disclosure. It explained what I had taken for a strangely unfriendly attitude on your part.

"I believe now, Mr. Kent, you will agree I have been more the victim of circumstances than intentional cruelty toward your sister."

The Commissioner nodded slowly.

"Yes, yes—indeed it would seem so," he said. "In my judgment of you, Colonel Cliveden, I too have been a similar victim."

"And that is all that need be said."

IT was Mrs. Arnold who spoke as she entered with Dorothy.

"Mr. Kent," she went on, "give Dorothy one of your hands. Colonel Cliveden, you give her a hand also. Now, Dorothy, join them together."

"Isn't that splendid!" she cried, clapping her palms, as the act was performed. "See"—she nodded smilingly to Post—"how well it has all worked out."

It occurred to Post that it was about time for him "to get into the picture." He stepped forward, placed an arm around Dorothy and kissed her.

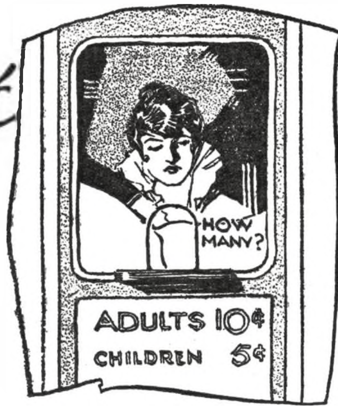
"Sorry, Colonel," he grinned, "that now you have her, and now you don't. It's part of the settlement, isn't it, Etta —Mrs. Arnold?"

"Of course it is. I made Colonel Cliveden consent beforehand. He was as nice as could be about it."

"And now, Colonel Cliveden," said the Commissioner, "how do you regard the situation in the city?"

"No one need lose a wink of sleep over it," replied the Colonel cheerfully. "By the light Mrs. Arnold and Mr. Post so promptly threw on the cause of our separation, I gave orders to occupy every danger-spot with the military. I felt sure you would agree. There will not be any uprising this *Mohurran.*"

A Verdict for the Plaintiff



John Barton Oxford

The Imperial Theater, like the rest of the movie-houses of the Sugden-Raymer system, opens its doors to patrons—what few of them sift in at that unseemly hour—at ten o'clock in the morning. Therefore at five minutes of ten that lowery April morning Flo Zeigler opened the door of the glass ticket-booth in the center of the Imperial's rococo entrance, hung her hat and smart little jacket on a hook, closed the door behind her and was ready for the day's business.

It would be better, perhaps, to say she *should* have been ready for the day's business. The truth of the matter was that Flo was all at sea until she had read the morning paper. This she usually accomplished over her coffee and single piece of toast before coming to work. But on this particular morning she had overslept, and the paper had been neglected.

But in her hands as she entered that glass ticket-booth was a folded copy of her favorite morning sheet. Unless the wholly unusual happened, there would be ample time for perusing its engrossing columns in the next hour and a half. Flo sold tickets to a decidely rural-looking gentleman with his dowdy wife at his heels, pushed the big roll of tickets at her elbow a little father back and opened the journal.

In the first heavily captioned column an irritable gentleman had rushed into a lunch-room and murdered his divorced wife, who was a waitress there. In the second, a Zeppelin had again raided London. And in the third column—

To say that Flo Zeigler gasped would be putting it altogether too mildly. What she did do was to open her mouth wide and draw in an overlarge quantity of the dank April morning air. Her throat being contracted quite outside her own volition at the moment, the result was a series of whistling squeaks, quite beyond the possibility of any justly adequate description.

A meek, apathetic little man stood weakly tapping a dime—borrowed, at that—on the glass slide of the ticket-window to attract her attention, but his tapping was quite in vain. Flo's startled eyes were devouring that disturbing third column of the first page of the paper. It was only when the shabby man twice ventured a suggestive if apologetic "Say!" that the girl within the booth looked up, tore him off a ticket and swept his dime into the drawer. Then she went on with her perturbed reading.

The house-manager came over to the booth.

"Watch the phoney coins a little sharper, Miss Zeigler, if you will," he instructed her. "There were two punk quarters and a lead half yesterday in your shift."

Flo, aware he was speaking, nodded perfunctorily. But it is doubtful if she

caught a word of what he said. Over and over she was looking at her own name as it appeared in the inexorable print of that third column.

AND then Flo was aware that some one was opening the door of the booth behind her. She turned about dully on the high stool on which she was perched. There, flushed, eager, her plump cheeks fairly aquiver with excitement, stood Lottie Bliss. Lottie took the shift in the booth from four in the afternoon until closing-time. Her appearance on the scene at this wholly unreasonable hour of the morning was easy enough to explain to-day, however. That third column in the paper told Flo all too plainly why Lottie Bliss was there.

"Dearie!" gurgled Lottie, gathering the slim form on the stool in a moist, patchouli-scented embrace. "You old Sphinx's daughter, you! Oh, aint it grand? Aint it splendid? Why didn't you ever let on who he really was? And you went and landed the noose on him, Miss Sly-boots! Oh, honest, I can't believe it yet. My head's been just whirlin' ever since I seen the paper. But what are you doin' here, dearie, anyway? I never thought of seein' you here this mornin', of all mornin's. That's why I come rompin' right down soon as ever I'd seen that in the paper. I thought maybe you hadn't given any notice and things might be balled up some."

Flo was making desperate efforts to hold herself steady—to be quite her normal self in every respect; and she was succeeding passibly well. The underlip had ceased its quivering, and she was smiling, even if the smile was a bit forced.

"I haven't given them any notice," she said quietly. "That's why I came back."

"Not given 'em notice, when you knew—" Lottie began.

"I didn't know, Lottie. Honest, I didn't," said the same quiet tones. "I was riding with him last night, and he sort of talked me out of myself, and—and—"

"He wouldn't had to talk very hard to *me*," said Lottie with emphasis. "Oh, good gracious, Flo! I'm just weak from the shock of it. It went and hit me that unexpected. But say, I'm glad! Gee, but I *am* glad for you, Flo. You wont forget your old friends wholly now, will you?"

"No, I sha'n't forget them. It will all be just—just the same," said Flo with a quaint emphasis on the words that wholly escaped the other. "Say, would it be asking too much for you to stay here a little while—say, till eleven or so? I'd like to hike out until then or maybe a little later."

"What do you think my blood-pumper is—embalmed?" asked Lottie warmly. "I'd be a pippin, wouldn't I, if I wouldn't stay here for you *this* mornin'? You run along. And you forget all about this joint. It aint any place for you, not now it aint."

She snatched down Flo's hat and jacket and passed them over to her. Her own outer garments were already shed and waiting for the place on the hook.

"Eleven?" she went on with a grin. "I'll bet I'll be lucky, Flo, if I *ever* see you again."

"I'll be back at eleven, just the same," said Flo. "Good-by till then!"

THE door of the glass booth closed behind her. Lottie waved a flamboyant adieu from her stool. A splash of April rain struck Flo's hot face. She stumbled aboard a car that would take her past Bothnia Street.

The clouds were thinning, and wan sunshine was struggling through them when she reached her destination. She paused before a wide doorway with two bay trees flanking the steps. By one of the bay trees was a wooden standard, gilt-lettered. It announced to such as cared to read as they ran:

NEWLY FURNISHED APARTMENTS
1, 2, 3 and 4 Rooms
With Kitchenette
Inquire Janitor, Suite J

She was fumbling in her pocket for her keys. An automatic elevator whisked her to the fourth floor. The place smelled overpoweringly of fresh varnish and floor-wax. She slipped a key into the lock of a highly polished,

imitation-mahogany door which bore the bronze numerals 22. The pungent odor of cigarette-smoke and of the same painty smells which had assailed her in the hall greeted her as she swung open the door. She closed the door softly, standing with her back against it. Her underlip was quite beyond any hope of control now.

"Billy!" she called chokingly.

The loud ticking of a Mission clock in the room beyond was the only answer to her summons.

"Billy!" she said again, half-heartedly, anxiously.

"Billy!" This time there was more anxiety in her voice as she left the door and entered the room just beyond. The pale sunlight streamed in through the overnew draperies at the windows and made feeble splotches of yellow on the overnew rug and the overnew Mission chairs. In the center of the table was a gilt-rimmed saucer, half-filled with ashes and cigarette-stubs. Beside it she saw a scrawled note on a bit of torn wrapping-paper. She caught it up eagerly. It was in a boyish hand, in pencil.

Hope to be back before you. If not, will be here at five prompt. Doll up for a feed somewhere downtown and a show afterwards.

She sank into one of the stiff Mission chairs near by, crumpling the note slowly in her fingers. She seemed very tired, very dispirited, very distraught. Her head, with the wealth of brown hair beneath the cheap but saucy little hat, went lower and lower. Then all at once she threw her arms on the table and buried her face in them.

"If it only might have been! If it only might have been!" she muttered plaintively. "Billy, Billy, if it only could have been as you made me think it was!"

At last Flo lifted her head, dabbled her eyes with her handkerchief and got up. She slipped into the tiny bedroom with its brass bed and its bird's-eye-maple dresser. At the glass of the latter she straightened her hat, touched her red and shiny nose with a bit of orris-smelling chamois, gave a touch or two to the smart little jacket and smoothed out the rumpled creases in her skirt. She turned away slowly and crossed the living-room to the hall door, with steps at once pitifully firm and pitifully reluctant. On one of the chairs lay a worn old velvet smoking-jacket, evidently where the owner had thrown it impatiently. She caught it up impulsively. It reeked with stale tobacco-smoke, but she suddenly and almost wildly pressed her warm young lips to it.

"Billy!" she said again, her voice shaken. "Oh, Billy! Billy!"

Then she went out to the faint hint of early spring that had crept even into Bothnia Street.

A half-hour later, her knees all but refusing to hold her up, she was standing before a door in the downtown district given over to the worship of Mammon. There was nothing particularly terrifying in that doorway. It was the doorway of a quiet old building. There wasn't a door up and down the length of the street but what was more imposing than was this one before which she stood. On either side of it was a brass tablet, worn smooth and dim by much polishing. These tablets read simply: "JOHN NORRIS AND SONS." Nothing at all startling in either that doorway or the tablets! Yet had Flo Zeigler only known it, she was not the only person who had stood thus before them, trembling.

She did not think just then that she would ever have the courage to open that door, but she was inside at last, seemingly by no volition of her own. She was clutching quite desperately the crisscross work of a brass grille. A spruce and courteous young man was asking what he could do for her.

Flo drew a card from the little wrist-bag she carried. With a pen she scratched out the *"Miss Flora Anna Zeigler,"* and wrote beneath it in a shaky hand: *"Mrs. William Harding Norris."*

"Will—you—take this—to Mr. Norris—Mr. Robert Norris?" she requested between chattering teeth.

The young man, inclining his head the slightest degree, disappeared. Flo hung on to the grille-work. Presently the young man was back. A gate in the

railing had clicked. He was holding it open invitingly.

"This way, if you please, Mrs. Norris," he was suggesting.

FLO wasn't at all sure whether her quaking legs would ever again do her bidding, but she managed to toddle along in his wake. They passed rows of desks, from behind which, Flo knew without looking, numerous speculative, cynical, grinning eyes were watching her. The spruce young man ahead of her tapped on the glass panel of a door and then opened it. Flo took a deep breath and pulled herself together. She had no idea that she entered Robert Norris' private office with all the air of a reigning queen.

Dimly she saw a large room, the dying embers of a fire on a wide hearth, faded old portraits in great gold-leaf frames, soft rugs, a mahogany desk—and behind that desk, standing, a small, plump man with a close-cropped gray beard and a pair of blue eyes that warned you at the outset they would have the truth and nothing but the truth. He was tapping the side of his chin with his eyeglasses.

"So you are Harding's latest!" he said sharply. "Sit down."

He indicated with a jerky nod a chair close to the mahogany desk. Flo ensconced herself in it.

"You know he has been married twice before—chorus-girl the first time, and a designing widow the second?" he asked.

Flo bent her head.

"Yes," she said simply.

"And that both times I managed to extricate him from the scrapes?" he went on.

Flo nodded.

"Well, what can *I* do for you?" There was ice in the words, and particularly in the emphasis of the pronoun.

"I too want a—a divorce or an annulment or whatever it is that—that undoes what's been done," said she.

"So soon?" he mocked. "The others weren't quite so quick at showing their hand. However, I like to deal with direct people. How much?"

Flo stared, and as his meaning came to her she winced and flushed.

"How much what, please?" she asked rather faintly, her eyes half closed as if in sudden pain.

"Money," he said, with no pretense of finesse.

"Oh!" she said. "Nothing. No—no money. Oh, no money at all. Just—just the divorce, or freedom from him."

It was he who stared now.

"If it isn't money, what *is* your reason?" he shot at her, his teeth coming together.

Flo sat clasping first one of her hands and then the other, as if they were numb with cold. She seemed trying to find the right words to express herself. Apparently it was a difficult task for her.

"Harding is considered an excellent catch, I believe. Nor is he wholly without personal charm," the man remarked after a moment.

"Not—not an excellent catch for me," said the girl. "It wouldn't lead anywhere. I'm not his kind. I'm just a passing fancy. I know it now. It would be with me as it was with the two others. He'd grow tired of me. I wouldn't have married him, anyway, if I'd known. He said his name was William Harding. He told me he was a chauffeur. I can see now, looking back, lots and lots of things that should have made me guess the *Norris* that went with that *William Harding.* But I didn't. And last night we were married. We took a little furnished flat on Bothnia Street. He was to work; and I was to keep on working, for a time. We were to be very happy. But it's over now. I found out this morning in the papers. And if it's over, the sooner it's all over the better. I might have been a success as Mrs. William Harding; I never would be as Mrs. William Harding Norris. I'm not wholly a fool. So that's why I've come to you, to ask you, to beg you to get the divorce or the annulment or whatever is necessary to end it completely."

Norris, listening, had swung halfway around in his chair. He was looking thoughtfully at the glowing coals on the wide hearth.

When she had finished, he began to send question after question at her.

Very adroit, subtle questions they were. But they drew out clearly and concisely his son's courtship, his son's perfidy. He also asked minutely about that furnished flat on Bothnia Street, about Flo's work, about Flo herself.

At the end of it all he swung briskly back to his desk.

"Will you leave it all to me, this getting you your freedom again?" he asked.

"Yes," she said; and there was gratitude in the single word.

"And you'll accept some slight provision for yourself? It's only fair," he urged.

"Money?" said Flo. "No—not that, please. All—all I really wanted was William Harding, a chauffeur, and—and you see there isn't any William Harding, a chauffeur. And I'm afraid money wont—wont make one."

Norris escorted Flo through the outer office to the door. He himself helped her into the taxi he had insisted on having called.

"You will hear from me about matters very presently," he said as he closed the door.

Flo's eyes were too misty to see him bowing with old-fashioned courtesy as the taxi sped away.

IT was a quarter of twelve when she stopped at the Imperial.

"Gee! Y' aint really come back?" Lottie shot over her shoulder, for the noonday rush for tickets was already on. "Watch me comin' back to a dump like this if I'd have tumbled into half your luck. Taxies already when we move about! And that's all right, all right, too. I guess maybe we can't afford 'em—wot? You really goin' to stay here and *work* to-day, Flo? Say, I can just as well stand this trick for you as not. Honest, you don't hafter come back at all."

But Flo was eagerly shouldering the other away from the ticket-window. Already her nimble fingers were snapping tickets from the roll and making change.

"I want to work, Lottie; that's straight," she said. "I want my mind taken up. I never knew before how much I loved it here. —Two, sir, was it? —Run along, now. I'll stay on till six, to make up the time you've put in for me."

"Six, nothin'!" sniffed Lottie, pinning on her hat. "I'll be back early, a little before four. Sellin' tickets may be sorter fun," she admitted grudgingly, "when you don't hafter do it for your beans."

"This is a Canadian five-cent piece you've given me instead of a dime," Flo was saying severely to a man at the window. The noontime rush was mercifully blotting William Harding from her mind.

A little after two the house-manager opened the door of the ticket-booth.

"Two gents to see you, Miss Zeigler," he announced. "They're waiting in my office. Run along. I'll take the booth for you. Take your time. Needn't hurry back on my account."

Unusually affable of the house-manager, that! He was prone to grunt and fume and send people away who called to see any of his employees.

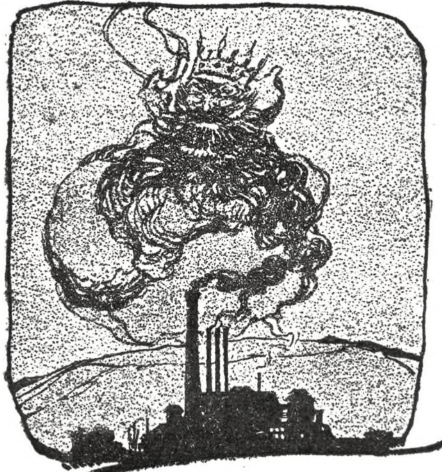
FLO tripped up the short flight of stairs to his office—littered with papers and newspaper-clippings and photographs and literature of the film-producing companies. She had expected one of her visitors would be Billy—but she hadn't expected the other one would be Robert Norris.

"Yes, come right in, please," said the elder Norris as Flo stopped short at the sight of him.

"It's all settled," he went on, drawing up a chair for her. "I've talked it over with Harding."

He turned to his son.

"Harding," he fairly roared, "tell her what's happened. Tell her that I've turned you down cold without a cent. Tell her you've got to make your own way in the world, you and she together. And if you're half a man, you'll feel like getting down on your knees when you do tell her. Make it clear to her that you're a real chauffeur, thanks to the job I dug up for you; and tell her, too, that you're going to stick through thick and thin. And you are going to stick, or I'll break every bone in your miserable young body, for you've married a woman this time."



OLD KING COAL

by

Robert J. Casey

JOHN BRIDGE felt an overmastering desire to tweak the nose of one Barnabas Millet. He stopped his mud-bespattered automobile at the high curb in front of Tom Sweeney's hardware-store, alighted and stood for a moment exercising some of the intense weariness out of his long legs. The more he pondered on the matter, the more he felt that it required his instant attention. The standing of the community, the welfare of the State of South Dakota and the peace of mind of John Bridge all seemed to depend upon the instant and thorough tweaking of Millet's nose.

Eons back toward the beginning of time in the calendar of social development, or some five or ten years ago as reckoned by the solar system, the tweaking of a nose would not have sufficed. There would have been few words, some target practice and some one gasping forth his soul in the dust of Main Street. Now reprisal had taken the form of insult rather than injury—a neat arrangement and considerably less expensive than the code of the six-shooter days, albeit somewhat lacking in excitement and satisfaction.

So, after a careful consideration of the case and its requirements, John Bridge walked stiffly across the street and up the dingy, creaking staircase that led to Barnabas Millet's law-office, pushed his way past a pale clerk into the inner sanctum, leaned over Millet's desk and seized his nose.

Bridge displayed no animus. At the first twist he smiled benignantly; at the second he raised his eyes as might a musician in the execution of a wonderful tone-poem; at the third a world of grief was in his demeanor—grief that he should be bound by duty to heap this indignity upon Barnabas. At the third twist, Millet recovered his presence of mind sufficiently to jerk away from Bridge's grasp. He cursed spasmodically.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "What do you mean? I'll have you sent to prison for assault. I'll teach you that you can't insult a man in his own office." He grew oratorical as his voice came back to him. "I'll show you

who I am. Get out of here, or I'll drill you."

BRIDGE laughed and drew up a chair.

"Unless you want everybody in the street up here to listen to what I'm going to say to you," he cautioned, "it might be well for you to postpone your breathing exercises. And quit trying to find your gun. I'm having a difficult time with my temper. There's no telling where it may lead me."

"What do you want?" returned Millet sullenly, but he ceased fumbling about his desk and settled back in his chair with an air of surrender under protest.

He sent a piercing glance at Bridge, who failed to pay any attention to the scrutiny. Barnabas had the keen eye that goes to make good detectives, successful statesmen and prominent horse-thieves. Anyone would have known him instantly for a professional politician. All the details of the costume were his—the broad-brimmed black hat, the frock coat, the string tie. Friendly mining interests had sent him to Congress. Since then he had prospered. He was a great man in Cascade City—an influence to be cultivated and feared. Back of him were unnamed powers in whose hands rested the whole destiny of the Hills. Few opposed him—something always happened to those who did.

There was just the least hint in his scowl that he realized all this as he leaned back, folded his arms and waited for Bridge to speak.

"I came up here to pull your nose," declared the younger man, "because that is the only redress left me by the law. It used to be that when a man jumped a claim it was etiquette to shoot holes in him. That's not done any more by the best people."

"Do you mean to accuse—" blustered Millet. Bridge interrupted him.

"It's a funny thing, isn't it," he said, "to show respect to the law that's just bit you in the foot?"

"I don't know what you're raving about."

"I've just returned from Cambria," announced Bridge with seeming irrelevance. Millet's eyes narrowed almost imperceptibly. "And I found, you good old hypocrite, that you had acquired my coal-prospects."

"I honestly think, Bridge," returned the Congressman, "that you have taken leave of your senses. It's an easy thing to prove that I don't own any coal-lands."

"No, that's admitted. But you must acknowledge that when one Charles Baker, a clerk in your office for twenty years, turns up with twenty-five thousand dollars in cold cash, there's just a faint tinge of suspicion to the thing."

"I don't owe you any explanations, Bridge. You've acted anything but a gentleman," returned Millet with an air of great tolerance. "But I will say that Baker was left a small inheritance."

"Who told him of my location?"

"I'm quite sure I don't know. The Cambrian field is not so new."

"My prospect was new. Engineers had passed it by for years. The Government geologists said no coal was there. I told you about it—asked your assistance in buying it. Your clerk falls heir to a fortune and I fall out—which proves conclusively, Mr. Millet, that two and two always make five unless trained properly in early youth."

"He didn't buy your land, anyway," yawned Barnabas. "His stuff is east of the location you told me about."

Bridge laughed.

"How did you know where his land was?" he queried unexpectedly. Millet started at the thrust.

"Very naturally, he wired to me of his new venture—asking my aid as might be expected after all these years. He's a good boy, Baker is. He was bound to make good. Only a poor sportsman would begrudge him his success."

"I'll admit it," grinned Bridge, "that Baker is a deserving young man. But he's somewhat lacking in caution—too much so ever to make a success as your agent.

"As soon as I got to Cambria, I saw what was in the air. I knew you had a perfect alibi. On paper the ground that Baker bought looks like an entirely different piece from the one I told you about when I asked your aid in the

promotion. The difference is just exactly the same as the difference between a scientific survey and the guesswork of a pocket compass.

"I saw that I had been double-crossed, and then my wicked temper got away with me. I am sorry to confess it, Mr. Millet, but I took it out of Mr. Baker's hide."

MILLET looked more startled than grieved at the news. He showed plainly that he suspected something yet to come.

"And then," went on Bridge with solemnity, "he proved that he was just what I had taken him to be—a crook. He lied about you, his benefactor. He said that he was acting for you. And so I beat him up some more for luck and came back to Cascade City and pulled your nose."

Millet half rose from his chair.

"I can have you sent up for assaulting Baker," he said more to himself than to his visitor.

"Guess again," said Bridge. "Cambria is in Wyoming. You're not. Cambria is a mining-camp without many frills, and at the time I left, they didn't seem to have taken kindly to your ex-clerk."

"Well, don't think I'm going to let you get clean with this. I had intended making you manager of the new coal company—not that we owe you anything. Luck broke harshly for you, but that's none of our concern. We were disposed to be generous with you."

"Kind of you, I'm sure. But then it's like you," said Bridge with a grin.

"Don't interrupt," snapped Millet. "I cannot tolerate the spirit you have shown to-day. You have openly charged me with theft—"

"I didn't, but it was an oversight."

"You have come here, in my own office, to insult me. So you must see that you can expect no further indulgence."

"The Lord forbid!" prayed Bridge.

"I'm a dangerous man to those who attempt to cross me, boy. Others have found that out. Don't force me to break you."

Bridge stood up and leaned over the desk.

"Barnabas Millet," he said with the trace of a smile still lingering about his mouth, "I'm broken now. I haven't a cent. Everything I owned is sunk out there." He pointed out the window toward the West. "I'm cleaned, and I'm folding my tents like the Arabs to get out. I'm sorry for all that I've said to you, who, next to big Jack's bartender, are the greatest man in Cascade City. But before I go away, I would like to mention that the wake isn't over yet, and that before you get through with me, the corpse may rise up and kick you dexterously and firmly in the eye."

Then he departed, leaving the sorely tried Barnabas to puzzle whether his closing speech might be construed as a threat.

INASMUCH as Barnabas Millet's start in life, according to the testimony of those best informed in the matter, had been acquired with a skillful manipulation of a branding-iron, it was only natural that he should be acquainted with the signs and superstitions of the old range. It was because of this early training that the new coal-fields near Cambria were opened immediately.

The hay-crop that year was short, woefully short—hot winds had burned up the pasture-land and checked the growth of the buffalo-grass in the brakes. That, in the eyes of the plainsman, could have only one meaning. There would be a severe winter.

The prospect for a hard winter meant the prospect for the sale of considerable coal, and Millet lost no time in sinking his shafts, erecting his hoists and making arrangements for the marketing of his product. He soon forgot about John Bridge. His success in life had been due, among other things, to the flexibility of his conscience.

The opening of the new fields, aside from the personal connection of Barnabas Millet with the affair, made little difference to Cascade City. Some few of the citizenry purchased stock, but they showed no more enthusiasm than loyalty to the community's greatest institution demanded. It was tradition, expensive tradition, that what Barnabas Millet did was right.

Then came the National Briquet

Company, its marvelous equipment, tremendous financial backing and mysterious policies, and the interests of the Millet mine were instantly one with those of Cascade City.

Shortly before its establishment as a business institution, an official of the National company, a man who introduced himself as Armand M. Ferris, called at the office of Barnabas Millet. Briefly he outlined the purposes of his company.

"Soft coal has a restricted sale in the cities, Mr. Millet," he said, "because it is dirty and difficult to handle. I don't have to tell you that were anthracite and bituminous coal the same price, there would be no market for the latter at all.

"Few new anthracite fields have been discovered. Shrewd operators are curtailing the output of existing mines as much as they dare, and the hard-coal market rises accordingly. Here, I dare say, you would pay from sixteen to twenty dollars a ton for it and find little even at that price.

"The product of our company is to be what might well be called synthetic anthracite. We shall manufacture briquets of a uniform size and weight, artificially hardened, dustless and odorless. Such an article could be easily transported and should find a ready sale.

"Our reason for locating here is not so strange as might appear at first glance. Cascade City is on the only direct line from the coal-fields. The old smelter, long for sale, would be well adapted to our work, saving us several thousand dollars in the construction of buildings and trestles. The labor market is good here, too. Whether we shall establish ourselves in Cascade City or Pennsylvania, depends altogether upon what sort of an arrangement we can make with you. What would be your price to us, mine-run, on a million-ton basis?"

BARNABAS blinked. He could scarcely believe his good fortune. Customers who brought million-ton orders to new mines were birds of strange plumage indeed. He made some rapid calculations. His only expense in the deal would be the hauling of the coal from his shafts to the cars at the mine. A few cents' profit on every ton would make the order well worth his while.

"I'll sell you a million tons for two dollars and a half a ton," he decided.

"I don't believe I shall have to consult my principals," said Mr. Ferris. "Your price will give us a profit on the present market. Payment will be made upon delivery, and we shall expect the usual discounts for cash. We shall require deliveries of fifty thousand tons a month. Here is a contract. Please fill it out in duplicate."

With these simple ceremonies, the National Briquet Company came into a radiant existence.

The National company seemed to have been assured of success in the arrangement of a contract, for in a very few days the first trainload of equipment arrived from Omaha. A strange array of tanks and crushers went into the abandoned smelter with a dispatch that indicated previous calculation. Lumber and other materials for repairs in the old building arrived on the scene so expeditiously that old-timers shook their heads dubiously.

"Taint natural," observed the graybeards unanimously. "Looks sorter too cut-an'-dried, like."

And there were plenty of others ready to go a step farther and cast aspersions upon the policies and purposes of the new company. There was too much secrecy connected with the installation of the machinery to augur well for the honesty of the enterprise, one faction averred. Interferin' with coal as the Lord made it was flyin' in the face of providence, anyway, said another; and so the ancients reached an agreement.

The old-timer is a menace to the peace and dignity of many a community.

WHATEVER the purposes of the National Briquet Company, however, it rapidly assumed the proportions of a real enterprise. Its bills were promptly paid and a leak in the business of the telegraph-company let slide into Cascade's channels of gossip a rumor

that substantial Eastern interests were behind the venture.

One day the smoke curled from the top of the tall stack, idle for more than ten years, and the directors of the briquet company were made guests of honor at a civic banquet. Even the great Barnabas was temporarily thrust into the shadow—which did not please Barnabas, but otherwise added to the festivities. There were those present who had grown tired of Millet's eternal righteousness.

Barnabas made a short speech about Barnabas and South Dakota toward the close of the program. Ferris replied briefly with an address concerning the usefulness of briquets, and amid wild applause the meeting disbanded.

The next morning Barnabas felt a curiosity to see how the brick-makers were getting along. With the privileges of greatness he did not feel called upon to knock at the door of the president's office. He turned the knob and walked in with an airy greeting on his lips. When he looked about him he forgot what he had intended to say. He, the great Barnabas Millet, gasped—actually gasped, and never realized it.

Seated at the president's desk was the late Mr. Bridge. He was working in his shirt-sleeves—silk shirt-sleeves. His coat and hat were on the president's hat-rack. Ferris was opening mail at a smaller desk in a corner of the room.

"Hello, Barnabas," greeted Bridge before the visitor could recover his breath. "Pleasant weather we're having—and did you have a nice time at the banquet last night—and how are you, anyway?"

Barnabas regained control of his emotions but could not trust himself to speak. He opened and closed his eyes several times with the solemnity of an aged owl.

"What do you want, Barney?" went on the young Mr. Bridge without looking up from his work. Millet became apoplectic. Such irreverence was a new experience.

"I came to see the president," he said stiffly. "Please tell him I'm here."

"Very well, sir—of course, sir. You came to the right place, sir. What can I do for you, Barney?"

Barnabas managed to control himself.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are the chief of this enterprise?"

"Guessed it, first shot."

For the second time Mr. Barnabas Millet gasped.

"In that case," he said at length, "I shall have to see further proof of your company's solvency before I make any attempt to fill your order for coal."

"Mike," called Bridge, addressing Mr. Ferris, "take a little time and explain to Barney, here, the difference between an order and a contract. Then tell him why he's going to keep on delivering coal as per agreement."

Ferris turned, but Millet showed plainly that he did not think the instruction necessary.

"I don't believe you can meet the obligations of that agreement," he said. "I shall have to take steps to protect myself."

"Logical but not legal," commented Bridge. "You will observe, Mike, that lawyers don't know much about the law."

"There are many legal expedients that would tie you up," said Millet in a voice that showed too plainly an eagerness to convince himself. "You know what sort of a chance you would stand in the courts here against me."

"Be that as it may, Barney, you'd be even a bigger fool than I take you for, to bite off your nose to spite your face. You have a partiality toward that nose of yours. Deliver the coal, and you get paid. Fail to deliver it, and we'll all go to court—you and Mike and Baker and I—and a pleasant time will be had by all. Any way you choose, Barney. I'm resigned, old scout. Put on the performance that suits you."

And he grinned. How Barnabas Millet despised that grin!

BARNABAS sat in his office until late that night trying to decide what to do. Cancellation of the contract with the aid of his own courts and his own interpretation of the law might not be a difficult matter. Where his gain through such an action might lie, however, was another question.

He had received every evidence that the National Briquet Company was a

concern of good financial standing. He did not like John Bridge, but the true statesman must be a diplomat. Millet's whole career had been spent in close relationship with people he did not like. Under the circumstances, the situation with Bridge did not seem so difficult.

At midnight Barnabas decided to abide by the pact, and went home. He felt as if a storm were brewing.

The processes of the National Briquet Company were surrounded by much mystery and a high brick wall. Nothing of its details could be learned from the workmen in Cascade City. They knew that the coal went through a washing process, filters and heavy presses. The secret work, however, had been placed in the hands of a half-dozen young engineers imported for the purpose. They drank not, neither did they talk; and so the manufacture of the coal-briquets went on without the assistance of the public.

The first few trainloads of coal from the Millet mine arrived about a month after the signing of the contract, and thereafter deliveries were made as promptly as railroad conditions on the Wyoming border would permit.

Barnabas received his money with unfailing regularity. The National company never missed a discount. He was congratulating himself upon the strength of character that had permitted him to overlook Bridge's snubs and jeers, when he began to notice that the National company was in a position with regard to other companies similar to that occupied by a vagrant in the social scale. It lived very well without visible means of support.

It made bricks, many of them—black, unbeautiful things that stacked up in quantities about the old smelter. One or two samples had been given a trial by families of the workmen engaged in their manufacture, and it was conceded that they would burn very nearly as well as bituminous coal. But somehow no one seemed to want any of them. Cascade looked at first with eyes of puzzlement—then with eyes of suspicion. There was entirely too much happiness and good will at the mills of the National Briquet Company, considering the condition of things.

MILLET discussed the situation at some length with a person named Baker, who seemed to have inherited a fortune only to have lost track of it.

"I don't make it out, sir," said Baker when asked for an opinion. "They pay their bills."

"That's what gets me," replied Mr. Millet. "They've paid close to fifty thousand cold dollars for coal since that contract was drawn up—paid it cash. That money in itself is more than enough to pay for this year's construction-work on the mine. . . . . But I'll confess I never heard of such a fool concern in my life. The man who's putting up the money for Bridge and Ferris could have the pair of them arrested for obtaining money under false pretenses."

"The briquets are all right," sighed Baker with the same reluctance he would have shown in admitting that two and two make four. "But they haven't sold fifty thousand dollars' worth."

"You've said it—but you're too mild. They haven't sold a dollar's worth since they opened their factory. In another month they'll have to be renting all the pasture-lots in their vicinity to store the briquets on. And yet they go right on spending money like water. I can't see the answer."

Many others couldn't see the answer.

Puzzlement became an amazement when *The Mining Quarterly* made its appearance in Cascade City.

"What do you make of this?" Baker asked Millet, handing him the journal. And Barnabas pleaded ignorance.

Atop the first page was an article upon the amazing success of a novel American venture, the manufacture of hard coal out of soft.

The National Briquet Company, read the statement, had been formed as an experiment by a group of Eastern capitalists, and to date it had more than fulfilled their expectations. Under the management of John Bridge the concern had turned out one hundred and fifty thousand tons of briquets and had declared a dividend of thirty per cent on its capitalization of five hundred thousand dollars for the first quarter during which it had been in operation.

Barnabas read the article a second time, and a third. Then in bewilderment he handed it back to Baker.

"Declared a dividend," he repeated. "Declared a dividend of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and hasn't sold a brick yet. Baker—that Bridge is the biggest crook in this State."

"Either that," declared Baker with his usual reluctance, "or a financial genius."

"Financial bosh," retorted Barnabas. "The director of the mint couldn't declare a dividend without something to declare it with."

Shortly thereafter the drama took a tragic turn.

CURIOSITY mastered the better judgment of Barnabas Millet, and he made a hurried trip to Omaha. On the same train with him, when he returned, but displaying no signs of recognition, was George Williams, a private detective. George alighted from the train unheralded and unnoticed, and carried his nondescript grip to a boarding-house near the old smelter. There he complained of a headache, paid the landlady two weeks' board in advance and kept close to his room.

One night he distributed some essential pieces of a burglar's kit about his clothes and prepared to investigate the affairs of John Bridge and the briquet company which never sold any bricks. Before starting, he carefully emptied his pockets of anything that might betray his errand should he be captured—that is, almost everything. He methodically tore up a laundry-bill, an old tobacco-sack, a visiting-card, the seat-coupon of a variety show, two or three cigar-coupons and a handbill—but he neglected a check which bore the signature of Barnabas Millet. A detective is not supposed to know that thoroughness should begin at home.

The old smelter occupied a hill just east of Cascade City. The bluffs rose behind it. The other three sides were exposed to the view of anyone driving along the road. And for this reason Williams was hardly to blame that a watchman saw him ascending the hill and promptly telephoned to the office.

Williams skirted the old slag-dump and soon found what he had hoped to find, a rotten tramway leading to the room where once the furnaces had roared.

There were a few scattered lights in the old building, but he had expected that. What surprised him somewhat was the sound of some light machinery and the distant throbbing of a pump. He had believed, since the National company employed no night-shift, that the plant would be entirely shut down. Moving machinery presupposed a caretaker, and he had not counted on meeting caretakers. On the other hand it might mean that the engineer and watchman were sitting by a warm fire in the boiler-room, leaving the plant to take care of itself.

The door through which the slag-cars had passed in their journey over the tramway was falling from its hinges. Williams balanced himself precariously on a rotting tie and silently pulled off enough planking to admit his body. Once inside, he lay flat against the wall in the shadow of one of the furnaces and looked about him.

There was the smell of damp earth in the place—damp earth with a spicing of acid. Immense vats stood in rows all about him, a dim light at the end of each row. Water was flowing in some far corner.

The arrangement was entirely unexpected.

"This looks more like a sausage-factory than a coal-plant," he confided to himself, and he began to worm his way among the big vats.

Barnabas Millet was just going to bed that night when his telephone-bell rang. He lifted the receiver to hear an abrupt message from John Bridge.

"I'll be in my office for another ten minutes," Bridge was saying when finally the politician realized the import of the call. "We have a man of yours here. If you think it will help the situation any to come over here, come along. We'll listen to whatever you have to say."

Millet started a denial of the charges he supposed to be pending, without even knowing what the charges were, but a click told him that Bridge had not cared to listen. With much concern he

made his way to the National Briquet Company's offices.

HIS foreboding was realized when he opened the door. On a table lay all that was left of George Williams, the Omaha detective. His face, none too beautiful in life, was an awful thing now. Barnabas drew back unconsciously.

"Come on in," ordered Bridge. "Do you know this man?"

"Never saw him before," replied Barnabas, momentarily ashamed of himself at the utter obviousness of his lie.

"He knew you," said the briquet company chief. "He came to look over the plant and died of heart-disease. Just as he passed out, he said something about the strange appearance of this place and accused you of sending him here."

Barnabas swallowed hard.

"Well," queried Bridge harshly. "What are you going to do about it?"

"What are *you* going to do about it?" retorted Millet. "This appears to be entirely your own affair. I haven't admitted that I knew this unfortunate. If he dropped dead or was slaughtered in your plant, it's one and the same thing to me, of course. You can explain to the coroner."

"Don't try to be funny," advised Bridge. Ferris and a worker, apparently the night-engineer, entered by a side door.

"A check made payable to him and signed by you was found in his pocket," Bridge went on evenly. "If you would care to undertake that part of the explanation, let's call the coroner."

Barnabas began to see a great light.

"You can take a look at the corpse if you want to," put in Ferris. "He fell into a mixing-vat and was bruised and wet a little bit—but you can see for yourself that he wasn't a victim of any sort of foul play."

"What do you want me to do?" Barnabas asked.

"Take your spy out of here," demanded Bridge brutally. "You sent him here to his death—you owe him a burial. We don't want an inquest here with our processes exposed to the inspection of a coroner and anyone he cares to bring with him, and so we'll let you get out with a whole hide."

"All right," agreed Millet dully. "Get a door or a plank and help me carry him down to my machine."

The engineer improvised a stretcher and took an end of it.

"Before you go, Barney," cautioned Bridge as the grim cortège started through the doorway, "let it sink in that the next time we find a spy here there'll be trouble for more people than the spy. So long as you get paid for your coal, restrain your interest in our affairs. You may have other lives to answer for."

THUS ended the surveillance of the National Briquet Company's plant, so far as Barnabas was concerned. He issued a statement that he had come upon George Williams dying in the road. The public, stoutly upholding the integrity of its idol, accepted the explanation at face value, and Williams' body was shipped back East.

The autumn was followed by the terrible winter that range-prophets had predicted. The mountain railroads were blocked repeatedly by blizzards, and the first signs of the annual freight-car shortage appeared on the commercial horizon. Through that long winter the National Briquet Company continued to manufacture bricks without customers. Mountains and towers of the jet blocks arose all about the white buildings. Tons of the product were distributed free to Cascade families, rich and poor alike, unfortunate enough to be without fuel.

Sam Enderby, dealer in coal, wood and other economic necessities, called at the National office in an effort to obtain the agency for National coal-bricks in the Black Hills district.

"What do you want the bricks for?" asked Bridge.

"To burn, of course," replied the applicant.

Bridge turned to Ferris.

"Can you imagine it?" he said with a note of awe in his voice and a laugh in his eyes. "Here's an actual customer."

"There's no joke about it," put in Samuel, somewhat irritated.

Bridge made an attempt to keep a serious countenance.

"Will these things burn?" he asked.

"Certainly they'll burn. Don't you know it?"

"Can't say that I do. . . . . I suppose they ought to burn, though. They're made out of coal."

Enderby opened and closed his mouth two or three times before finding words.

"Are you going to sell me these bricks and give me an agency or not?" he demanded in a tone midway between astonishment and anger.

"Drive your wagon up and take what you want of the things, Enderby," Bridge invited him. "We never made arrangements for a retail marketing system, so you might as well be it as not. We'll give you all you can peddle during the next two months. We haven't time to open a new set of books to take care of the account."

Many a time after that Enderby recalled the incident and tried to convince himself that his hearing had been amiss. Somehow he didn't have much success. Every time he saw one of the National bricks—which was often enough that winter—he recalled Bridge's words: "We'll give you all you can peddle during the next two months. We haven't time to open a new set of books to take care of the account."

Enderby's experience got around, as such things will, and Cascade had plenty to talk about aside from the weather.

As the grip of the winter tightened about the mountains, Barnabas Millet felt a return of his old suspicions concerning the business affairs of Mr. Bridge. He had not forgotten their conversation subsequent to the nose-tweaking incident. It occurred to him now that John Bridge might have an ulterior motive in his dealings with the Millet Coal Company. It seemed hardly likely that he would have placed a big contract with an acknowledged enemy when he could have made terms as good with any of the other companies in the Cambrian field. He began to see that he had been tricked—but puzzle though he would, he could not determine just how.

PETER B. KYNE'S NEW STORY:

TIB TINKER—the one and only *Tib*—will appear again next month. "For the Sake of the Children" describes some of *Tib's* most interesting exploits, and it is written in Peter B. Kyne's most attractive style. Watch for—

"FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN"
in the March BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale February 1st.

ONCE the chill weather had set in in earnest, the dénouement was not long in coming.

Ferris called up one day to inform Barnabas that his coal-deliveries for the month were short not less than three thousand tons.

Millet shuddered. Instinctively he knew that this was the springing of the trap he had dreaded.

"I'll look into the matter," he replied evenly. "I suppose there has been some oversight at the mine."

"Don't lose any time about it," came the peremptory answer. "We have to have coal to run here, and three thousand tons a month will make quite a difference."

Barnabas repeated his promise with becoming humility, but he could not rid himself of a vision of evil consequences. He had no sooner ceased talking to Ferris than he started a clamor for a long-distance connection with Cambria. While waiting for it, he worried a telegraph-operator nearly to distraction with a dozen lengthy telegrams to mine-operators, railroad officials, expensive lawyers and private-detective agencies. Barnabas was seeking frantically to maintain peace and meanwhile girding himself for battle.

In about an hour the mine-manager answered his call.

"What's the trouble with this National shipment?" Millet demanded. "How does it come they're three thousand tons short?"

"No cars," was the laconic answer. "Can't ship coal if the railroads don't

get us enough cars to ship it in, can we?"

Barnabas swallowed hard. This, then, was the climax of the plot. This was the contingency which they had foreseen and he had not.

"Can't you get any cars at all?" he queried. "Aren't there any box-cars—cattle-cars—flat-cars—anything?"

"What would they be doing with box-cars out here?" was the peevish reply. "We're getting a few gondolas, but not enough to meet our contracts by a long distance."

In a daze Barnabas remembered long strings of "empties" that recently had been accumulating in Cascade City yards. He hung up the receiver without further parley and hurried to the nearest railroad-office.

"Sorry," recited the freight-agent after he had heard Millet's story through. "We'd like to help you out, Mr. Millet, but these cars were brought here for the National Briquet Company. Unless you can make some arrangements with Mr. Bridge, I wont be able to let you have any of them."

BARNABAS saw the futility of interviewing Bridge. He realized that in the Cascade City yards had been gathered very nearly all the unattached freight-cars in the Black Hills. It was hardly likely that they had come there by accident.

The roads to the east through the Bad Lands and south over rolling prairie were well-nigh impassable. Very little freight was moving into the Hills; none was moving out. It might be a month before the winter would release its clutch sufficiently to permit normal railroad-traffic. By that time the condition of the freight-car market would not be a matter of great concern to the Millet mine.

Barnabas strolled casually over to the National plant and there received another shock. The black mountains were being razed. Cranes and derricks were picking up the bricks in enormous loads and depositing them in long trains of freight-cars. Other trains, empty, filled the long switch-tracks. A protesting engine was dragging a string of loaded cars away from the creaking trestle. Barnabas could hardly believe the evidence of his senses.

The company which had declared dividends without a single sale was marketing its accumulated product of months seemingly at one stroke. He walked back to town and ingratiated himself with a clerk in the offices of the Cañon line—a little mountain road that began and ended in Cascade.

"Cascade ought to boom, now that the National Company's getting into full swing," the great man confided to the clerk.

The clerk looked at him queerly.

"If they're on the square, Mr. Millet," he replied after a short pause, "—if they're on the square."

"Don't you think they are?"

"Well—I'd hardly try to judge that. I like John Bridge. Everybody likes him. He pays his bills, and the men up at his brick-mill are satisfied. But unless he's crazy, I can't see any excuse for the way things are going on up there."

"So?" rejoined Millet with an air of mild interest.

"It's so, all right. Do you know where all the freight-cars that they're loading up on the hill to-day are going?"

Millet professed ignorance.

"Every last car of the shipment is billed to some station in the Bad Lands. They're scattered around a little. No single station between here and the Missouri River has enough sidetracks to take care of the whole shipment. But every town in the Bad Lands is getting as many cars as it can provide a switch for. And who the devil in the Bad Lands is going to use up a couple of hundred thousand tons of coal? I don't get it."

"Oh, I suppose they have some wildcat scheme in view," observed Millet with a lack of concern he was far from feeling. "We'll know in a few days what's happening. Just wait until they unload the bricks."

MILLET was partly right. In a few days the mystery was solved. But the bricks were not unloaded.

The cars were switched into the yards at a dozen or more towns on the

two railroads east of Cascade. They were allowed to remain there during the greater part of the time allowed the shipper to remove the contents. Then they were billed back to the National Briquet Company. They returned to Cascade only to be dispatched on other aimless journeys. Thus was conducted a seesaw that cost the National company enormous sums of money and Barnabas Millet great mental anguish. In the meantime, neither love nor money could raise a freight-car in Cambria.

Barnabas saw the beginning of the end.

HE paid a visit to the offices of the National Briquet Company. The yards looked strangely bare now that the piles of black bricks had disappeared. There seemed, however, to have been no cessation of activity. The pounding of the crushers was audible at the bottom of the hill despite the muffling influence of a heavy snowfall, and little cars were drawing new piles of brick from the presses.

Bridge greeted Millet amiably.

"Pull up a chair near the radiator," he invited, "and shake the snow off yourself."

Millet glared at him.

"I can't fill my contract," he announced. "What are you going to do about it?"

"We're going to soak you," returned the irrepressible Mr. Bridge. "We're going to soak you playfully but forcibly in the snout."

"You crook!" shouted Millet. "You crook! You can't make me live up to that agreement. It's obvious that you built this plant just to throttle me, and no court in the country is going to make me play into your hands."

"You surprise me," smiled Bridge. "What's the trouble, Barney? Isn't there any more coal in my mine—I mean your mine—of course—your mine?"

"You know perfectly well what's the matter, you young highbinder. You demand that I deliver coal, and then you commandeer all the cars in the Hills. That's what's the trouble."

"You don't mean to tell me!" was the surprised answer. "Are you trying to infer that you hadn't made any arrangements with the railroads to furnish you with cars?"

"You know I hadn't."

"That makes it very difficult, doesn't it? You have no way of getting back at them for what you're going to pay us."

"I'm not going to pay you anything," retorted Millet, but not so forcibly as before. He was beginning to realize that compromise, even with a gang of blackmailers, might not be a bad thing.

"Sure you're going to pay," Bridge insisted. "I sympathize with you deeply, but even a claim-jumper has to pay his bills sometimes. You know there's just sufficient sentiment connected with this case to make me certain that you'll stand by your contract."

Millet winced.

"I know you've been gunning for me ever since Baker bought the mine," he said. "But that was merely a business transaction."

"That's all theft is," Bridge reminded him. "I'll admit that it was the loss of my mine—the abuse of a confidence reposed in you—that started me in this company. That doesn't change the issue at hand."

"Can't we come to any terms?"

"That's more like it, Barney. We'll begin by placing the value of your contract at one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars."

"That's highway robbery. I'll take my chances in court."

"Suit yourself," agreed Bridge wearily. "We can show that we were clearing two dollars a ton on our product."

"Bosh!" commented Barnabas.

"We can show that you had delivered two hundred thousand tons of coal. That leaves eight hundred thousand tons still to be delivered. Our loss sizes up something like one million, six hundred thousand dollars."

Barnabas grunted scornfully.

"You're crazy," he charged, "tee-totally crazy. How the deuce could you stand to make anything when you haven't marketed a ton of your product since you've been in business?"

"All that will come out in court if

you choose to take it there. You know we have financial backing, and we can make you spend a hundred thousand dollars in legal fees."

"Go ahead with your proposition," decided Millet.

"I was going to say," Bridge resumed, "that we'd set a value of one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars on your contract and turn it back to you as part payment on my mine—your mine."

MILLET was dumfounded at this turn of affairs, but he saw instantly that it offered him a possible chance to escape.

"I'll sell out for five hundred thousand," he stated.

"Then it's all off," decided Bridge. "If I buy the mine, it will be on the basis of its three hundred thousand dollars capitalization at par. The land cost you twenty-five thousand. You've cleared about one hundred and twenty-five thousand on our orders alone since you opened the mine. That looks like a pretty fair profit. As for the purchase of the stock, I own about forty per cent of it now. I've been buying all winter. I offer you your contract and fifty-five thousand dollars cash for the balance."

Millet considered the proposal for a long time in silence. He feared a court fight with Bridge more than he dared admit, although he did not believe a word of the statement placing the National Company's possible loss at more than a million dollars. Men with money were behind this deal, and he knew of old the nature of the battle in prospect.

"I don't think I can accept," he said in a move to feel out the enemy's plans.

Bridge turned to the work on his desk.

"Sorry, Millet," he said. "The work of soaking you on the proboscis must go on. It may interest you to know, incidentally, that I filed a cross-claim on my mine—your mine—to-day. The gent who sold it to you had forgotten to do his assessment-work at various times past—and I stand a good chance to get the whole business without paying you a cent. By the way, use your influence to have the case set early. We're losing money chasing our coal-bricks around the Bad Lands."

And then Barnabas Millet admitted defeat.

It did not occur to him to doubt Bridge's story of a cloud on the title of the Millet mine. Such things were to be expected in every mining-claim. Millet had been in the Hills a long time. He knew that usually the side with the most money was the winner of such a contest.

"I'll settle at your terms," he said.

"WOULD you mind telling me some things?" Barnabas asked when the transfer of the mine and the cancellation of the coal-contract had been legally settled.

"Ask me some questions," replied Bridge.

"I suppose it's none of my business—but who was the soft mark who put up the money for this piracy?"

"If you must know," grinned the young chief of the National Briquet Company, "I did—that is *you* did, with my assistance."

Barnabas gazed at him unbelievingly.

"You see," explained Bridge, "we knew things about the mine that you didn't know. We brought the coal here, crushed it and put it through cyanide.

"All the coal of that district will assay about four dollars in gold and eighteen cents in silver to the ton.

"There was little expense attaching to the recovery process. . . . . Coal is much more easily handled than quartz. We bought a plant here to keep away from inquisitive mining-men, and we weren't bothered except by your spy—who fell into a precipitation-vat and took a drink of cyanide before we could get him out.

"The bricks, as you may have guessed, were for scenic purposes only, although I suppose there may be a market for them if we ever get time to work it."

Barnabas said nothing. He was too well trained a diplomat for that. But he thought many things too scandalous to print—very many things.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

The Last Laugh

By Clarence Herbert New

AT three o'clock, a tall man in a dark-gray suit walked into the outer offices of the most prominent banking-house in Stockholm, handed his card to one of the clerks and asked to see the president of the bank. The clerk explained that the president was a very busy man—being also a member of the Swedish diet and a director in various enterprises—who never saw anyone without a previous appointment. The stranger merely smiled in a patiently bored way, repeating his request that the card be taken in.

Just then one of the assistant managers stepped up to see if he could be of assistance. A brief glance took in the fact that the gray suit was of expensive cloth, cut by an artist-tailor whose prices were prohibitive to the average man. The stranger wore a monocle as if it had grown in his face, but the occasional flash of the keen eyes, and the lines into which his features settled when at rest, gave an air of command which impressed the observer increasingly as he looked. The manager glanced at the card in the clerk's irresolute fingers:

GEORGE LLANGOLEN TREVOR, R. N.

Above the name was a small, finely engraved earl's coronet. An expression of wondering deference came into his face as he whispered a sharp reprimand to the clerk for his stupidity.

"I beg Your Lordship's pardon! This young man did not recognize you! I will take in your card to Baron Hedvig myself, and I've no doubt that he will see you at once!"

In a few moments the Earl of Dyvnaint (the earldom had been conferred upon Lord Trevor after his return from Roumania, in recognition of his swinging that country to the side of the Entente) was courteously received by the bank president, Baron Hedvig, in his private office. After an exchange of general remarks, the Earl drew from his pocket a sealed envelope which he handed to the Baron. The distinguished Swede turned it over once or twice in a puzzled way, noting the official seal of the British Foreign Office

upon the envelope; then, with a look which asked and obtained permission, he opened it and drew out a number of folded documents, the faded ink of which indicated the lapse of years since they had been written. A smaller Foreign Office seal affixed to each one made examination impossible without breaking it, but the Baron recognized the outer endorsement as being in his own handwriting. As he counted them, the color receded from his ruddy face—it was a moment or two before he got his nerves entirely under control.

"Er—Your Lordship and the British Foreign Office are familiar with the contents of these documents, I presume?" he asked finally.

"On the contrary, Baron!" replied the Earl. "They came into our hands through secret-service channels, and the agents who found them among the papers of a certain German count, here in Stockholm, were not familiar with your earlier name of twenty years ago, and so could form no opinion as to what they referred. Sir Edward Wray, however, recognized your endorsements upon the outside of them, and sealed the papers up without further examination and requested me to hand them to you with his compliments. If they are really of value, it gives our government great pleasure to restore them intact."

"But—but—do I understand Your Lordship, that this is a gratuitous courtesy? I will admit to you, frankly, that I offered a certain man eighty thousand kroner for these documents less than two months ago, and that he laughed at me!"

"I fawncy I know the man you have reference to, Baron—he is now on his way to one of the more inaccessible British islands, where he will remain for many years after peace is declared. The return of your papers is entirely a matter of courtesy—but our government would like to have you believe that under no circumstances will we ever be a party to or permit the loss either of Swedish territory or prestige among the European nations, as long as Sweden maintains with us her present friendly relations. You are possibly aware that I hold commissions in the Royal Navy and in the Aviation Corps—but have no connection with the Foreign Office. It was because of my extensive acquaintance here in Stockholm that I was asked to be the bearer of these papers."

THE Baron seemed at a loss for words to express the relief he felt and his overwhelming sense of obligation—the fact being that the use of the documents in certain unscrupulous hands would have ruined him wholly. While he was thinking the matter over, he rang for wine and cigars. When a clerk had brought them and taken himself out of the office, a suggestion occurred to Hedvig as being of possible value to his guest.

"Your Lordship, I find it difficult properly to express my appreciation of this kindness or to think of any way in which I may return it. There is, however, one little sugestion which occurs to me as being of possible value to your government—though it may amount to nothing at all. Possibly you've heard of the Conde de Monte Fernandez—a Spanish nobleman who married one of our Swedish ladies and is interested in some of our mines, up north? He has lived during most of each year in Stockholm and for some time has been very thick with the German minister. His wife never had the reputation of being a flirt before her marriage, but Von Klotz has seemed to hypnotize her; their relations have been increasingly noticeable for more than a year.

"Von Klotz's official position here naturally makes him a prominent man; he's one of those 'blood-and-iron' Prussians who have an utter contempt for men of other nationalities—and though he and the Conde have been very close for years, he doesn't imagine that Monte Fernandez is man enough to get jealous and do anything. Recently, he has been getting the Conde in his power in a very questionable way — making him drunk, night after night—urging him to play cards and give notes for his losses until the Conde is practically a ruined man.

"I have learned confidentially that Von Klotz needs money and has secretly

pawned the notes to a banker in Goteborg, on the understanding that he would redeem them in six months. The banker made inquiries which seemed to show the Conde's mine-holdings to have been grossly overestimated and that he has practically no ready money—so, unless Von Klotz does redeem the notes, Weinberg thinks he will lose at least sixty per cent of what he advanced."

"Cawn't see why Monte Fernandez didn't take up his notes within a day or so after he gave 'em!" observed the Earl. "He'd have been out the money just the same, of course,—but there'd have been no debts of honor hangin' over his head."

"That's just the point! Von Klotz wanted the hold over him—said it didn't matter if he never paid them! What were a few I-O-U's between friends! You see? That sort of thing! The Conde didn't really wake up until the amounts had become perfectly hopeless and the affair between his wife and his friend rather notorious. You catch the general drift of the situation, of course. Now—what I had in mind was this:

"I've learned from more than one source that Monte Fernandez and his Condesa have been considered Austrians by Von Klotz, to all intents, because of the Austro-Spanish intermarriages in his family—and that he has talked unreservedly with them concerning German plans in this war. There is no question but that a number of the *Wilhelmstrasse* agents get outside by way of Sweden and Norway—as neutrals, we have no right to arrest them even if we know who they are. If your government can find some way to relieve the Conde from the worry of those outstanding obligations, it is morally certain that he will at least challenge and kill Von Klotz,—you see, if he does that now, it looks like murder to wipe out his debts of honor,—and it is not impossible that he may feel inclined to give his benefactors what he knows of the recent *Wilhelmstrasse* plans. Because of Von Klotz, he is said to hate everything German vindictively—in fact, he has always spoken rather slightingly of his Austrian relatives."

Before the Swedish statesman had finished, Earl Trevor had seen the possibilities in his suggestion and had determined to investigate them.

"Baron," he said, "I fancy you may have rendered us a greater service than you imagine. That banker in Goteborg will jump at a chance to sell those notes at their face value—may even take less. You say Von Klotz's six months expired some time ago? Weinberg probably considers them worthless by now. At all events, I mean to see what can be done in the matter—an' thank you on behalf of my government for the suggestion."

NEXT morning the Earl of Dyvnaint arrived in Goteborg. Calling upon the banker Weinberg, he represented himself as a lifelong friend of the Conde de Monte Fernandez who desired to redeem that gentleman's notes, if the total sum were not prohibitive. The banker had not paid Von Klotz the full face value when he advanced the money on them, but he made a perfectly natural attempt to collect interest at eight per cent. He was, however, dealing with the best poker-player in all Europe, and eventually compromised at a slight loss to himself—secretly pleased to get most of his money back. Trevor then returned to Stockholm and, calling upon the Conde, invited him to dine in a private room at the hotel where they couldn't be overheard.

Being justly celebrated as a charming host, the Earl had no difficulty in putting his guest entirely at ease. Placing the notes in his hands, he said a number of his friends in the Swedish capital were convinced that Von Klotz hadn't obtained a single I-O-U honorably and that after hearing the story he had determined, as a sporting proposition, to recover them from the Prussian if possible—the inference being that he had somehow obtained them in Von Klotz's house at no expense to himself.

The Conde was overwhelmed. It took him several minutes to comprehend that all of the notes were at last in his possession—then he wanted the Earl to act as his second and bear a challenge at once to Von Klotz. When

Trevor explained that there were official reasons why he couldn't do this, the Conde sent for one of his more intimate friends,—a colonel in the Swedish army,—who looked his satisfaction as he went off with the challenge.

After his departure, the Conde poured himself a glass of wine, lighted a fresh cigar and sat for a while buried in thought—glancing occasionally at the Earl in a rather peculiar manner, through half-closed, speculative eyes. Finally he straightened up in his chair and leaned across the table.

"My friend," he said, "you 'ave render' me a service w'ich I value more than my life! How you obtain ze notes, I do not know—perhaps eet is more discreet if I do not ask. If that *ladrone,* Von Klotz, choose t' saber or t'e small-sword, I shall keel him ver' quick—for, me, I am expert weeth those weapon'. If, however, he choose t'e pistol, that ees othair matter—I keel him just t'e same, but he may keel me too! Ze bullet, he ees uncertain—one does not know where t'e othair man's bullet weel go. So we consider t'e possibility t'at I am dead after ze duel — same as t'e *ladron* who 'ave wrong me. I cannot then repay t' kindness you have shown me, nor discharge in any way t'e obligation. Whatever ees in my power to do mu' be done now, while I live an' drink to your health.

"You are Ingles, my frien'; your country ees fight Germany to ze fineesh. An' t'ere ees somet'ing I can tell you w'ich may block some of t'e German scheme to defeat you. *Si!* Las' month, seex women an' five men 'ave go from Goteborg to Englan' as *Americanos* on their way home—all 'ave t'e American passport' an' 'ave liv' in *los Estados Unidos* for several year'. Nex' week, two women an' ze othair man weel go from Stockholm—t'ey are ze leader' who weel direc' those othair' now in Englan'. T'e women are the Señora Emma Sunderman, an' la Señorita Alice Scheffelin—who 'ave come over in ze dove-ship with Señor Ford, an' 'ave presumably remain' in Sweden ever since. T'e man ees t'e banker Charles Morgenthal of New York—suppose' to be Hebrew but really a Brandenburger of old family. Of course t'eir credential' are not to be question'—they are too well know' in America; an' eet is t'eir intention to spen' several month' in England, visiting their many frien' t'ere."

"Er—have you any idea as to their probable activities, Señor Conde? I hold two of His Majesty's commissions, and am very much interested in what you tell me."

"Si.....Si! Germany, she of course desire' to weaken the fighting spirit of her enemies. T'ese fourteen *Americanos*—who are *Wilhelmstrasse,* of course—weel be scatter' in your industrial center', where t'ey weel stir up ze strike in ze mill an' factory. T'ey will address public meetings on t'e subjec' of peace—saying all nation' are willing for peace except France, an' she weel keep ze othair nation' fighting until millions more are keel'! Stop ze bloodshed! Return to civilize' condition! T'ey weel talk this everywhere! Ze strike, he weel appear an' make trouble all over Englan'—an' you 'ave enough malcontents who weel join them in such work.

"But, look you, my frien'—the Señora Sunderman an' t'ose othair two who are now here weel be in constan' communication weeth those othair eleven. Your secret-service weel be able to spot t'em. Put t'ose fourteen out of ze way, an' ze trouble weel die out until Germany 'ave send some more people. T'ose t'ree leader' are now stop' as guests of ze Von Ebling family, here, an' of ze Herr Olaf Svenson. I weel give you card to Svenson, who is my good frien', an' he weel introduce you to the Señorita Scheffelin without suspecting why you wish to know her. You weel meet ze othair two as easily; then you can renew ze acquaintance w'en t'ey arrive in Englan'. Your Lordship ees mos' desirable person to know because you are European celebrity—eet is t'ey who weel, mos' likely, seek ze introduction."

VON KLOTZ had served his time in the Imperial cavalry, and so he naturally but unwisely chose the saber as his weapon next morning—being killed by the Conde before the duel had been in progress five minutes. After

this the Spaniard temporarily disappeared from the city. For a week longer the Earl remained in Stockholm; then he returned to London, where a conference with Sir Edward Wray in Downing Street increased the closeness of the espionage over incoming travelers in every port.

At this time Nan—Countess of Dyvnaint—was probably the most popular woman in all England. By many she was considered the handsomest. Years before, when she had come from India as Nan Tremaine,—the sixteen-year-old daughter of a man famous in the Indian secret-service, recently murdered in Kabul,—she had won the hearts of her guardian, Sir George Trevor, and all of his friends. Their unknown services to the Crown were soon recognized by Royal patents making Sir George, Viscount Dartmoor, and his fascinating ward Baroness Dartmouth in her own right—and their marriage only strengthened a social leadership almost world-wide. So any American with the slightest claim to social position would have improved an opportunity to call at the famous Trevor mansion in Park Lane. To their New York friends, Mrs. Sunderman and Miss Scheffelin were merely doing the obvious thing in cultivating the acquaintance of such distinguished personages as the Earl and Countess—doing what a hundred per cent of those in what is called "American Society" would have taken much trouble to do. But to those who swam in the undercurrents of international diplomacy, their course was even more obvious. The personal backing of such people as Dyvnaint and his beautiful countess would prove an invaluable protection to any agent of the *Wilhelmstrasse* in case of unexpected complications. In itself, it was a guarantee of respectability. And the grim joke of the situation was their walking like flies into the web of the British Secret Service when they supposed they were using English celebrities to further their own ends.

Countess Nan—like the older Martha, Countess of Wessex—has the reputation of being charmingly democratic. It is said that either of them will put a tradesman or a railway guard at his ease before she has spoken half a dozen words—and both possess the ability to freeze a duke with a single glance if he takes himself too seriously. So it was quite in line with what she usually did for Countess of Dyvnaint to bestow some attention upon the two American women—after learning that they were officially prominent in various benevolent societies at home, including the movement for universal peace.

They had been in their London hotel scarcely twelve hours when the Countess' private secretary drove up in one of the Dyvnaint limousines and left cards for them. Later—when they had discovered that the British government did not permit the daily use of private, high-powered touring cars, and that the one they had brought over with them on the steamer must be stored until they left for the United States—it was the Earl himself who courteously straightened out their difficulties by procuring for them a War Office permit to motor through England and Wales, with certain perfectly reasonable restrictions. Ireland was barred. So the difficulties connected with holding clandestine meetings in isolated corners of the country were almost entirely smoothed away through their fortunate meeting with Trevor in Stockholm. What they probably never suspect to this day is the fact that high-powered Government cars trailed them at every step—just out of sight behind the last turn of the road or behind the last hill—and that their movements were reported by telephone, every few miles. One of the provisions of their permit compelled them to carry an orange-colored disc, by day, and two small lanterns at night—arranged vertically—which could be easily made out with a glass at two or three miles distance.

ONE of the characteristics which made Earl Trevor the marvel he was in international diplomacy was an ability to set each little item of acquired information or special knowledge aside in his mind—until a necessity arose for its use—and immediately relax into his unconscious habit of minute observation as he proceeded about his daily ac-

tivities. When he left Goteborg on the steamer for Hull, he had dismissed Monte Fernandez' revelations from his mind for the time being and was pleasantly striking up a traveling acquaintance with some of the other voyagers.

Among those to whom the Earl was attracted on the steamer were an exceedingly pleasant-spoken Swede and his wife—who had been a Belfast girl before her marriage. He was crossing to place a few shipments of Swedish ore through London correspondents with whom his Stockholm house had dealt for years—and his wife had accompanied him for the sake of spending a month or so with her own family. Their papers were above suspicion—straightforward and easily verified. Carlstrom seemed to be a man of thirty-eight or forty—his wife possibly in the early thirties. They both seemed to possess more than average cultivation, and a sense of humor that would have made them good company anywhere. Before they retired for the night, however, he had subconsciously acquired an impression that Carlstrom's accent in speaking English was just a shade too harsh for a Swede—almost Prussian—and that his wife's occasional touch of brogue was more pronounced than one hears in Ulster. It was hardly as Celtic as Cork—but it certainly wasn't the Gaelic flavor of Londonderry or Belfast. Twice, during the night, he woke up to puzzle over something a little baffling about them.

A few wireless messages in the Navy code had been sent ahead of the steamer. When they reached Hull, five men from Downing Street were on the landing, apparently to meet incoming friends; and when the Carlstrom's papers were civilly handed back to them after a merely perfunctory examination, they had reason to congratulate themselves upon leaving the boat in the Earl's company—his identity being unknown to them until they learned it from an admiring customs inspector after His Lordship had left. From the moment they set foot on English ground, however, they were shadowed by men instructed to make daily reports to the Earl of Dyvnaint at his Park Lane mansion—but in no way to molest them, no matter what they did.

MRS. SUNDERMAN and Miss Scheffelin occupied the position of two mice in a surrounding trap so large that they couldn't even see the wires—with a circle of purring lion-cubs looking down over the outer rim, waiting for them to start something. It was assumed that they might openly attempt to get up meetings in some of the larger halls of London and address their audiences with strong appeals for an early peace—as the opening wedge for a subsequent campaign throughout all of the larger cities. But for a fortnight they seemed contented to present their excellent letters of introduction and make the acquaintance of surprisingly loyal people in London society. Eventually, however, they sought Countess Nan's advice as to the propriety of addressing an audience in one of the smaller halls, upon the suffrage question and woman's influence toward perpetual peace—admission by ticket only.

This appeared to be a new trick in the game—more innocuous than it would eventually prove. The lion-cubs purred some more—and made things surprisingly easy for the two American ladies. One of the first-class halls was placed at their disposal. A cinema program was added to help them out and insure a full attendance. The hall was filled to its capacity, with exceptionally loyal Britishers who, on the whole, approved of what the American ladies had to say. There was nothing in the least seditious—no ranting about stopping the war and bloodshed at once—rather an assurance that women's influence when they had the ballot would go a long way toward preventing the recurrence of war. After reading the columns devoted to the affair in the morning papers, the lion-cubs stopped purring long enough to stretch their claws and yawn a bit. Really, this Teutonic weakness for long drawn-out preparation and thorough system at every step was almost unsportsmanlike—if you get what we mean! Here they were, giving those *Wilhelmstrasse* women every facility for conspiring against the British Crown and

arms, to their hearts' content—and the ladies appeared afraid to play the game.

When he had finished his morning paper, Earl Trevor sent a code message to one of his agents in New York, and the reply—which he read while at dinner—gave him food for thought.

He was away from home, as it happened, when one of the Downing Street men who had been following the Carlstroms came to report in Park Lane—but his card was taken up to the Countess, who received him in the big Jacobean library.

"You know I am entirely in His Lordship's confidence, Leftenant Greer—so you may give me any report you have for him. I believe you're working on the Carlstrom case? It may amount to nothing at all, but His Lordship thinks there are fairly good reasons for keeping them under close espionage."

"I fancy there's not much question as to that, Your Ladyship. Carlstrom appears to be accepted here in good faith by his London correspondents, and has been having interviews in their offices with three or four men who are supposed to be large purchasers of Swedish ore. He intends making a tour of the larger cities in the United Kingdom for the purpose of talking with other people in the same general line of trade. His wife has gone to her family in Belfast—where it appears that only a brother and one sister are still living. They've been there five or six years, but are said to have come from Kerry originally. Two of the men seen here by Carlstrom are employed as assistant managers of works in which machinery is manufactured—particularly the rifles and machine-guns used by our army. The other is said to be a large shareholder in several mills now turning out supplies for the War Department—but he seems more likely to prove a labor-leader with rather extensive influence. We find that he has recommended and obtained positions for some twenty women and fifteen men in the largest munition factories now working on Government orders."

"Have you the names and descriptions of those people, Leftenant?"

"Only seven of them, Your Ladyship! We will probably get more, presently—but with only five of us to do the work I fear it will take more time than will be safe, if His Lordship's suspicions about Carlstrom have any foundation. So far, we've not discovered a fragment of evidence against the man or his wife. These men he has seen in London may easily be purchasers of Swedish ore—and his wife's family being Kerry people doesn't prove her disloyalty."

"Very true! Everything concerning the Carlstroms appears to be entirely regular and businesslike. In fact, it couldn't be more so if the man and woman had studied systematically for a year to make the proper connections and give themselves just this appearance—which is one of our reasons for thinking that may be exactly what they did. The whole impression they give is just a bit *too* regular? I'm going to send you four more assistants. I want the names and descriptions of all those factory workers recommended by your supposed labor-leader—also, everyone with whom those other two men appear to have any dealings!"

NEXT morning a taxicab stopped before the offices of the Importing Agents who were Carlstrom's London correspondents, and a plainly but expensively dressed woman inquired for him—writing upon her card the words "*Swedish ore,*" and leaving in one corner four little apparently accidental pencil-scratches. The card bore the name "*La Condesa de la Montancta,*" but a close observer might have detected in her a curious resemblance to the Countess of Dyvnaint. Somewhat to the clerk's surprise Carlstrom asked if he might use one of the private offices for an important interview — saying that he would see the lady at once. When they were secure from interruption, however, he calmly assumed that she wished to discuss ore-importation and nothing else—that is, until several imperceptible recognition signs in the *Wilhelmstrasse* code had been exchanged between them. Then he said:

"I think we need fence no longer, Madam. I recognize you as one of the

inner circle and will carry out whatever commands you give me. Presumably, either I or the Fräulein must have been careless in some way unknown to us, or have omitted some precaution we should have taken."

"On the contrary, my friend! So far, we have nothing but commendation for your work; it appears to have left no loophole for suspicion, and you were in great luck on the steamer to have made the acquaintance with Earl Trevor in so casual a manner. He is probably one of the only six men in England in whose company you might have walked ashore anywhere without being questioned."

"Then, you've additional instructions to give me, Madam?"

"Rather—suggestions. For the past eighteen months I've maintained a bijou town-house near Grosvenor Square as La Condesa de la Montaneta, and have acquired a rather good position in London society as a sympathizer with the Entente. Although it is against our official practices, I'm going also to give you the English identity of K.W.-93. He is known here as the Honorable Chudleigh Sammis, M. P., and has been returned by his constituency for three successive Parliaments. The espionage is so close here that it may be dangerous for you to hold conferences with your subagents in any room or building we're not dead sure of. You simply can't use a motor-car without a secret-service man as chauffeur—but I have a special permit from the War Office which enables me to go and come as I please, with certain trifling restrictions.

"Your man, John Rowley, the labor-leader, is already being watched—and every building he enters. It is supposed he actually did come to get prices on ore from you—but if you were to meet him in some other house, you would certainly draw suspicion upon yourself. I can get word to him or any of the others to go out of town thirty or forty miles and get off the train at some isolated station in Sussex or Dorset, where we can pick him up in the car and have our discussion. When you are ready to make your tour through the shires, I can take you as my guest. I own shares in various works, and visit country-houses all over the place. We'll hold Chudleigh Sammis and his various lodgings in reserve, in case we have reason to believe that I am suspected. He had a narrow escape from being implicated in the Cabinet affair, last year, and has been living very circumspectly ever since. By the way, I think the strike agitation might be played up a bit more strongly in the mining and shipbuilding districts. It's a capital blind for other activities and has its own value for us as well. Where are you lodging—since you left the Savoy?"

"I've a room and bath in a remodeled Chelsea house recommended by the junior partner here. Nice, quiet place to bring the Fräulein if she comes back this way."

"Couldn't be better—or worse, if you attempt to have any of our people coming there! Have visitors, by all means—but see that they are the most loyal sort of Britishers. They will be seen and reported, which will strengthen your standing. Of course, my friend, you're not directly under my orders—and it's not our practice to meddle with any service which other agents have been commissioned to carry out. But when it appeared likely that you, Rowley and others would need a safe place to confer, it became imperative that you should be warned as to his being under suspicion. This affair is altogether too big to risk a fiasco, with various hanging parties in the Tower—but you need have no fear as to anyone's robbing you or the Fräulein of your just credit in the *Wilhelmstrasse*. Your work, so far, is already known—including your landing under the wing of Earl Trevor."

Now, when a very handsome woman—whose title has been whispered here and there as that of a supposed agent high in the councils of the *Wilhelmstrasse*—calmly talks with one of details in his own conspiracy which he supposes known to not over half a dozen people in the world, is he likely to distrust her, or will he welcome her coöperation? Previous clashes with the *Wilhelmstrasse* agents had given new information which enabled her to play

her part perfectly, and Carlstrom was completely deceived. When she left him that morning, driving westward into the Strand, he congratulated himself upon her timely warning and offer of assistance — but a far-reaching and most cunning scheme of the *Wilhelmstrasse* had sprung a tiny leak which grew larger with each succeeding day.

THAT night there was a dinner party and subsequent conference in Park Lane between England's Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, Baron Lammerford of St. Ives, and the Earl and Countess of Dyvnaint. It really more closely resembled a directors' meeting at which a good deal of vastly important business had been transacted. Five telephones upon the broad and massive table in the center of the room were connected, by floor-plugs under it, to as many trunk wires from the house switchboard—which lead to Downing Street, the Admiralty, the manager's private office in the building occupied by the International Press Syndicate, the Atlantic cable offices—and Trevor Hall in South Devon, where the Earl maintained the most powerful wireless installation in all England, with a six-thousand-mile radius. Some of the recent information obtained had necessitated an exchange of several messages with the army commanders in France and some of the North Atlantic admirals. When they were through with these, the Home Secretary took from his pocket several sheets of memoranda relating to the ladies of the peace propaganda—the lion-cubs had now been sitting around this mouse-hole for nearly a month.

"Trevor—I'm at a loss to know just where we're at in regard to these people! Our men have been watching every mining and manufacturing district in the United Kingdom for the past four weeks, but there appears to be nothing more than the normal strike-agitation that we've had since the beginning of the war! There's been a good bit of peace talk,—oh, aye,—but in every instance the speakers have been men or women who've been prominent as radicals in their own localities for the past ten years or more. Mrs. Sunderman and Miss Scheffelin have motored out of London once or twice a week—in each instance to some well-known country-house where they were guests for a day or so—no deviation into byways, narrow lanes or woods at any time. The people they've met at those houses have been above suspicion—even down to the servants. Of course, we must assume that they're deep in the game somewhere, considering the way the information came to you—but I'll frankly admit that they have the laugh on us, so far. There hasn't been a word or a move of theirs at which we could take exception!"

The Earl drew from his pocket a long cablegram in code, with the translation on the back in pencil, and he read aloud:

"'Mrs. James Sunderman was Miss Emma Randolph of Virginia—married, 1905 — husband of old Pennsylvania family, American for six generations. She has been actively interested in women's suffrage and the work of various benevolent societies for several years. Miss Alice Scheffelin belongs to a New York family prominent during the Revolution—she is popular in New York and Philadelphia society—has assisted Mrs. Sunderman in above-mentioned work for some time. They sailed together on the *Helig Olav* ten weeks ago—not on Ford ship. Have had nothing to do with Ford party. Are considered here strong Entente sympathizers—had booths at Allied Bazaar in Grand Central Palace.'

"I've been tryin' to digest this information for the last two days, d'ye see," commented the Earl, "—tryin' to make it fit in, somehow, with what the Conde told me about them in Stockholm—but its an *impasse*. The two stories don't match in any way!"

Baron Lammerford had taken from the library-shelves three editions of the "Almanach de Gotha," dating back several years, and was looking up some of the Spanish marriages. Presently, he asked a question:

"I say, George! Is this your friend, the Conde? 'José Maria Felipe de Hermosoto y Pilar, Fourth Conde de Monte Fernandez — born, Vienna, 1864.'"

"I fancy it must be! The age is quite right—though a Spaniard always looks younger—an' there simply cawn't be two of them, d'ye see!"

"Then my hunch was correct, after all! Your Conde and the man I once knew as the Herr Pilar-Schombourg, in Vienna, are identical. His parents are both Austrian, though closely related to prominent Spanish families. He was given that lot of Spanish names in the expectation that he would, some day, come into the title—which it seems he actually did, in 1893. The two intervening heirs were lost at sea on the same ship. The most int'resting point concerning him, however, is the fact that the man still mentioned by his Vienna friends as 'Pilar-Schombourg' was in the service of the *Wilhelmstrasse* at last accounts!"

"By Jove! I wonder if—"

JUST then, the Earl's Afghan *khansamah* came in with the card of Baron Hedvig, the Swedish banker and statesman to whom Trevor had rendered such valuable service, a month before. He was promptly brought into the big library and introduced to the others. When he comprehended that the little party represented three executive departments of the British government, he saw no reason for reserving his business for a private interview with His Lordship of Dyvnaint.

"Gentlemen — under the impression that I was rendering His Lordship a small return for a great service he had just done me, I suggested a way by which the Conde de Monte Fernandez might be induced to volunteer certain information of great value to your government. I knew at the time that he bitterly hated the Imperial Minister to Sweden, and assumed from what he had been heard to say that his antipathy extended to everything German. I inferred that His Lordship had been able to follow out my suggestion from the fact that, within three days, the Conde challenged and killed the Minister.

"But to my amazement and that of many others, he very soon presented credentials appointing *him* as Imperial Minister to Sweden, pending a subsequent appointment if it should prove that he was *persona non grata*. He seems to be entirely in the confidence of the *Wilhelmstrasse*—has not been called to account for the killing of Von Klotz—and I now fear that any information he may have given His Lordship of Dyvnaint must have been purposely misleading. Because of this fear, I came to London at once—hoping to warn him in time to avert any unfortunate consequences."

They heard this explanation with rather less amazement than he had supposed they would feel. Earl Trevor enlightened him:

"First, let me express our thorough appreciation, Baron, of your courtesy in making such a trip in order to warn us—any written or cabled communication was, of course, too dangerous to risk. We had just been comparing notes when you came in, and had found it impossible to make our investigations fit in with the information given me by the Conde. He was unquestionably misleading me,—after I had just rendered him a great service,—and it came within an ace of causing us to imprison two estimable American ladies who are actually very good friends of the Entente." (The lion-cubs may be pictured by the reader as looking at each other in a plainly embarrassed way, and pussy-footing it off to the consideration of other more promising mouse-holes.)

WHILE Baron Hedvig was absorbing an impression that Londoners were the most hospitable people in the whole world, and their ladies the most charming, the "Condesa de la Montaneta" was entertaining some curiously mixed types of people during the tea-hour each afternoon — men who fumbled, unaccustomedly, with their cups and spoons—women who tried a trifle too seriously to act like the ladies described in the fashion gazettes. At the end of the week she started on a motor-trip through the northern shires, accompanied by the Carlstroms and a chauffeur who spoke Berlin German in a whisper but held his own with the traffic-police in the richest Whitechapel cockney. They stopped overnight at various manor-houses of well-known

people, and visited most of the leading industrial centers—in some of which the Condesa was supposed to be interested as a shareholder, being reported as one of the wealthiest women in Spain, with extensive properties in Calabria.

In a cipher much more complicated than it looked, la Condesa and the chauffeur jotted down sheet after sheet of secret memoranda which they carefully concealed—names, addresses, descriptions of men and women whom the Carlstroms or their "business acquaintances" talked with in various places. As they were returning to London, she asked Carlstrom if he intended leaving the country before the final try-out of his scheme. (Without appearing dangerously curious, neither she nor the chauffeur had been able to catch any mention of a fixed date.)

"It would certainly be safer for *us*, Madam la Condesa, if we were but sure that the others could be trusted to go ahead without any slip or misunderstanding. But you know what the Service is! When any of us have been given a certain commission, no excuses are accepted for our not remaining to actually see the attempt made."

"You're quite sure that each one of them understands the exact hour at which he or she is to act?"

"As sure as it is possible to be, with so many subordinates. Might send final telegrams to the chief agent in each locality."

"That would mean at least forty different telegrams, sent the same day or evening—fully half are likely to go through the general post office—"

"Scatter them through the preceding twenty-four hours—send them from forty different places in London and the suburbs—word each one in a different manner—sign with different names."

"Very good—if it works! But suppose the censor holds up several of them, as he is quite likely to do? Suppose the inspectors hold some for investigation? That leaves half your people uninstructed while the other half are acting. Perhaps a surer way would be to look over the smaller periodicals—find one which is running a prize guessing contest—and then have post-cards printed stating that all answers must positively be in the mails before midnight of a certain date. Our agents are all clever enough to know the meaning of any communication which comes to them through the post mentioning any particular date—and as practically all of these guessing-contests are now being held to raise war-funds, your cards are likely to go through with scarcely an hour's delay."

Carlstrom supposed that the Condesa was merely suggesting a couple of alternative methods in case the one already started proved defective at the last moment, as indicated by some unexpected communication from some of the agents under his orders. That she was thoroughly conversant, not only with the plot itself, but with all the details for carrying it out, he believed as a matter of course. For this reason he explained but little, and she dared not risk betrayal by asking questions.

And so when the Condesa came into the big library in Park Lane with the same four men, next evening,—for another important conference on dealing with the renewed submarine activity,—she had really obtained no definite information as to what the Carlstroms were up to.

NAN—"la Condesa"—was positive that she had the names, descriptions and lodging-places of every confederate working under orders from the pair—but the plants in which most of them were employed were of such varied character, all over the United Kingdom, that the only concerted stroke which seemed at all probable was a paralyzing general strike. Hints had been given the managers of all the works involved to guard as far as possible against anything of the sort—but one and all had seemed inclined to laugh at the idea, claiming to be sure of at least seventy per cent among their employees, the bulk of whom were women.

By midnight, the submarine discussion had been pretty well threshed out. As he was lighting a fresh cigar, Sir Edward Wray happened to recall the man and woman whom Earl Trevor had been having shadowed since they

arrived with him on the Goteborg steamer.

"By the way, George—have you learned anything suspicious about that couple whom you thought spoke German a little too well?"

"Nan took their case out of my hands, awhile back, when I had more pressing matters to look after—I fancy she's convinced they're up to something. Tell us what you've discovered, Nan!"

"Enough to indicate them as the real executives in Monte Fernandez' conspiracy—whatever it is—instead of those two American women! Without betraying a curiosity that would have jeopardized my usefulness as a supposed *Wilhelmstrasse* agent, I couldn't get any more than I did out of them. They trust me implicitly—but suppose me conversant with every detail of their plot, and so haven't volunteered the vital information we must have before we can act. I have names and descriptions of forty-one subagents under their orders—and a hundred more under *them* in various works throughout the country, all of which are turning out munitions and other equally important supplies for the forces on the fighting-line. Considering the varied character of these works, it looks to me like a concerted strike at a certain hour, but the managers wont believe me—laugh at such a possibility. How did you happen to think about the Carlstroms, Ned?"

"Why—you'd pointed out the beggar to me a fortn't ago, an' I saw him gettin' into a compartment of the Tilbury Special at Fenchurch Street, just before I came here this evening. Had a woman with him, an' a couple of large portmanteaus. Your men were shadowing him, of course?"

"Yes—but—with orders to keep their hands off! I didn't want to alarm any other confederates he might meet! Great heavens, Ned—why didn't you tell me of this while we were at dinner! There are four steamers sailing from Tilbury at midnight—ten minutes from now! Grab that 'phone—quick! Have them put you on to your F. O. branch office down the river! Tell them to hold every boat coming down the Thames until the people on board can be overhauled!—George, get the Admiralty on the other wire! Have a wireless sent to the patrol-cruisers in the mouth of the Thames—with the same order! Tell them to spread the net—don't let even a ship's yawl get by! —Sir John! Our operator will put you on to the G. P. O. exchange—please issue an order holding every outgoing boat on the east coast. The secret-service men have Carlstrom's description!"

WHILE the three men were promptly acting upon her instructions with full appreciation of their possible seriousness, Nan handed Baron Lammerford a list of names—telling him to use another trunk wire into the G. P. O. and get fifteen secret-service agents by their F. O. telephone code-numbers—which gave their calls precedence over all others as being "On His Majesty's Service." Then she asked him to order the instant arrest of every person on the lists already in their possession. As he quietly but rapidly got the connection, she took up the remaining 'phone, which had been connected all the evening with the offices of the International Press Syndicate, and asked for the Provincial operator—the Syndicate having its own wires to a hundred cities and towns in the United Kingdom. As she happened to be one of the chief and managing owners, the Provincial man answered her inside of a minute.

"Burlingame," she directed, "get an assistant you can trust and remain at the switchboard until further orders! One of you get the next number while I'm talking—don't keep me waiting a second! Take down this list of thirty-one Foreign Office numbers and repeat it to me before you do anything else! . . . . . Got them? . . . . . Call back. . . . . . Those are correct! Now get me 393 through the Manchester P. O. exchange, while your assistant is putting me on to Newcastle F. O. 912—and have him ready with each succeeding number as I need it. . . . .

"Are you there, 393? . . . . . Are you there? You will proceed at once to arrest Anne Mowbray, Bridget O'Rourke, Dennis Brady, Charles McKalway, Laura Donovan, Clara Burgeson, Thomas Hobbs and Henry P.

Gribley! You have their addresses and descriptions! When you have them all in custody, report to me through the I. P. S. offices for further orders. . . . . Newcastle! . . . . . Are you there, 912? Take these orders:"

The same instructions were repeated to secret-service men in twenty-nine other towns, while Lammerford was duplicating them to his fifteen. Then there was a lull while they waited for reports that the arrests had been made. There was an atmosphere of tenseness in the big Jacobean library, dimly illuminated by the shaded incandescent cluster on the table—a growing chill of apprehension.

"Just what do you imagine you're trying to head off, Nan?" one of the men asked.

"I'd feel much easier if I knew! Carlstrom wouldn't attempt to leave the country unless the critical moment were some time to-night—which means that it is probably something a good deal more serious than a concerted strike! If the time had been set for midnight, we'd have heard something before this —it's now a little after one! Half the F. O. men have been making those arrests for an hour, and the local police have been ordered to help them. But most of those people have been purposely lodged in widely separated parts of the towns—it will be nearly three before they can get them all. . . . . What bell was that? It's your 'phone, Sir John! They're ringing as if it were something important."

THE Home Secretary caught up the receiver—grasped the fact that the Mayor of Leeds had located him in Park Lane and was laboring under so much excitement that he could scarcely make himself intelligible. Presently they learned that the great Dexter & Hemingworth plant—running night and day on munitions, machine-guns and small-arms, and covering three acres of ground—had been totally wrecked by dynamite, quantities of the explosive having been concealed in every building. It was feared that over a thousand workers had been killed. The completeness of the catastrophe indicated systematic work upon the part of the conspirators for at least a month. Inside of the next half-hour, the destruction of two smaller plants was reported—but that completed the casualties. As the various secret-service men finished the arrests, they were ordered to proceed with a platoon of local reserves and search the various works in their vicinity for explosives.

By daybreak, the second batch of reports began to come in. Over a hundred different plants had been found so thoroughly mined that, after the initial explosion, nothing could have saved them.

"And that," said the Home Secretary, "might have meant the loss of miles on the firing-line before the works could have been rebuilt! It would have been a most serious blow—just at the moment when we are steadily succeeding! Trevor, you've rendered England many a service, but I fancy this is one of the greatest! My word! The success of the whole thing hung upon a mere impression of yours that one of your fellow passengers spoke German a shade too well for a Swede, and the other's brogue was a bit too rich for Belfast! I'm not belittling Her Ladyship's work, either! It was nothing but her amazingly prompt action last night which saved us from the final catastrophe! And, faith, we owe you apologies for loss of interest in your Swedish information after hearing Baron Hedvig's explanation of how badly you were sold by that Spanish count! We fancied you'd been had, don't you know, in the matter of those American ladies—thought it a narrow escape from offerin' them an inexcusable affront, an' that the whole idea of a *Wilhelmstrasse* conspiracy here was a wheeze!"

Sir Edward Wray's ascetic face settled into sterner lines as he offered his fellow minister a fresh cigar.

"Those bounders over there never sleep, Sir John! Better 'be had,' as you put it, a dozen times than let them once catch us napping with a plot as far-reaching in its effects as this one! We laugh last—at that infernal Conde's expense. But the thing was too beastly close for me to feel like bragging."

Another of these "*Free Lances in Diplomacy*" next month.

JILL-O'-THE-MOON

A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

by HARRY IRVING GREENE

CHAPTER I

FROM a pile of straw that cluttered a rambling woodshed a small, lean-bodied terrier rose—yawned and stalked with the stiff-leggedness of a stork to the door of the low-hung shed and thrust a snuffing nose without.

It was morning, early morning in the fall, with the mist lying flat in a sodden layer upon the dank grass, the east asserting itself by a feverish splotch of crimson where the bloodshot eye of the sun, fresh from oriental revels, was peering warily over the rim of the world. Looking like a ghost-dog in the gray smother, the terrier pondered for a moment, with the end of his black nose twitching; then he flitted around the corner of the house. Arrived before a window, he upended himself until his fore-paws rested upon the sill. Then he yapped.

The blankets that spread the bed within the room heaved volcanically and a boy emerged and swung himself to the floor. He was milk-white and lean of body, with a straight nose, ears set alertly acock and a mouth that now yawned cavernously as it exposed a length of red tongue. Using his knuckles augerlike, he bored open his sleep-filled eyes.

"Sufferin' cats! Wonder if that was the pup calling me or if I just dreamed it."

The yap was repeated, caution-smothered yet impatient; and the boy, fishing blindly beneath the bed, hooked forth a pair of trousers into which he leaped with an acrobatic two-legged spring. Then with the hoist of one suspender over a shoulder and the slapping of a rusty hat upon his head he stood fully armored for the day. He called softly to his friend without.

"Yep, Tip. Be there in a jiffy." Opening his bedroom door, he stole out with the tread of a burglar.

WITH the terrier whisking like a wraith before him, the boy crossed a meadow and entered a wood. Imaginative of mind, in the gray gloom the distorted trunks of the oaks were to him the gnarled bodies of old men writhing in the grip of some great agony; the straight hickories were young soldiers standing guard; the matronly maples were the forest mothers beneath whose outstretched arms the tender saplings gathered as they waxed tall and mature. In the uncanny hush and glimmer, the place was surcharged with threat and mystery—a Druid forest wherein were hidden fearful sacrificial altars. Haunted by the mysteriousness of the place, the boy's feet fell upon the wet grass as lightly as the cushioned pads of a lynx. From out the smother in front of him a large dark object swept, brushing his face, and he leaped aside. The next second he sniffed disgustedly.

"Cuss you, old whoop owl a-coming home from devil's mass! I'll get you one of these days, for scaring me like that. And tell old Nick I said so," he muttered. Cautiously he went on.

The mist parted, and a narrow river with arching willows overhanging it

lay before him. From the place where it was hidden amongst them the boy shoved forth a canoe of such slenderness that it would scarce contain even his lithe form. Paddle in hand, he crept into place, followed by the pup, and with a sweep of his strong little arm sent the craft slipping down the stream.

The sun burst forth with a brazen glare, and the last remaining mist-wreaths vanished. A low exclamation burst from the paddler. Upon the bank, hunched of back and with teeth exposed, helpless in the iron jaws which held him, a muskrat faced them with the courage of all cornered wild things. Within the canoe the terrier, his teeth also bared to the red gums, whined his eagerness to do battle with this denizen of the stream, but the boy with a sharp command that he be quiet raised his paddle and with a merciful blow ended the captive's misery. Critically he ran his fingers through the fur, noting its thickness and texture.

"Poor little cuss. Sorry I had to do it," he said sympathetically. An outcast himself, he looked upon all innocent wild life as his kin, and only stern necessity could force him into shedding its blood. Silently he continued his course.

AN hour later he had completed his round. A half-dozen small furry bodies lay upon the bottom of his craft, and his labors had yielded him fair profit. Already taught by bitter experience to expect but small favors and few, he unemotionally accepted those that came his way, and when even they failed to materialize, he but frowned a bit and went his way in but little disappointment. Moody without sullenness, sensitive without timidity, unresentful as a rule, yet knowing that he was cursed unjustly because of the sins of others, he lived his life alone, both unsought and unseeking.

He returned through the wood, pausing at its further edge with a slow sinking of the heart. A few hundred yards before him lay his home. Low-walled, blotched with dead paint that hung to its sides like scales upon an unhealthy skin, surrounded by unkempt brush and weeds and dim of windows, it somehow reminded him of a squat and scrofulous old vagabond with blear eyes and a wild tangle of whiskers and hair. Shame and disgust burned within as he gazed at it; yet here also was a curse that could not be remedied. His mother—he involuntarily squirmed at the word—had not the means to have it repaired; he

himself had not the ability to do it; and father he had none. There the matter rested. It was just another misfortune to be endured, if not with humility, at least in silence; and swallowing something that had arisen to his throat, he again trudged on.

He entered the low doorway and stood within the kitchen. Hawkish of face and acid of voice, his mother confronted him. "Thought mebby you'd run away with a witchamaroo—gone so all-fired long," was her greeting. A witchamaroo was an indefinite mythical creature of her own fancy, conceived in sarcasm and born of contempt, and now she applied it to him in open disfavor. "Where's that wood?" she demanded.

He turned without answering, and going into the back yard, hacked an armful of dead limbs from a brush-heap and returning, dumped them into the already nearly filled box. She viewed the operation contemptuously.

"Where's the water for that bar'l?"

Silently, moving like an automaton, he drew a few pailfuls from the open cistern by the door and filled the barrel. Then for a moment woman and boy faced each other without words, she with arms akimbo and head drawn back after the manner of a hawk about to strike, he with his face old and trouble-filled for its years, upturned indifferently. Again she addressed him.

"How many did you ketch?"

"Six."

"Mushrats?"

"One mink."

Her face lost perhaps a tenth of its hardness. The change might have been likened to a face of steel softened into a face of iron; still, to a degree there was a softening. A mink was worth several muskrats, and he had done a fairly profitable morning's work. She nodded to the table upon which reposed what she had left of a scanty breakfast, and throwing his hat aside, he seated himself.

HE finished his meal quickly, and passing out of doors seated himself upon an old box. A great lonesomeness was upon him. Slowly his mind wandered over his brief, bleak past. Of his father, John North, he remembered nothing; he had died soon after Martin's birth, and the unnatural woman within the house was the only relative he had ever known. The first thing he remembered was playing around this very doorstep, and following that brief period had come the years when he had begun to mingle with the other children of the town. Then as he grew old enough to begin to observe, there had gradually come upon him the consciousness that while he was sometimes *with* the other children, he was never *of* them. Why this was so he had not been able to determine in his childish brain until one day, now a few years back, when the wretched explanation had come. He had quarreled over some game with an older boy; and the latter, looking down upon him, had spat upon the ground in disgust.

"You are a little ———" The word the boy used was a bit of very plain old-fashioned English casting a slur on his birth.

Well he remembered how his head had spun and sung at that seething insult. Knowing but vaguely the meaning of the word, yet fully comprehending that it was something of unutterable loathsomeness, impotent to defend his honor except by an appeal to arms, he had followed the epithet with a blow and fought the older one until, hopelessly whipped, he had crept away with his dog to sob the bitterness from his heart in sodden misery. Then at the first opportunity he had looked in a dictionary and laboriously spelled out the definition of the word.

Straightway he had then gone to the only parent he had ever known and told her the whole miserable tale of the name that had been applied to him and demanded that he know the truth. Her reply had been a blast of rage and vituperation.

"So they say you are not my lawful child, the dratted swamp-cats! Been telling *you* that lie, too, have they? Not enough that they should keep up their devil's talk before grown-ups, but must teach it to their babies as well. I'd like to skin them and nail their pesky hides on the door. I'd—"

But he had run in terror before the

fierceness of her outburst, and thereafter he had not dared speak of it again. And from that wretched happening had come the great revulsion of his nature: the metamorphosis from a child with but a child's sorrows, into a boy of moods and silences. Thereafter, hungry for companionship though he often was, he had known no friends but his dog, the birds of the air and the harmless beasts of the wood which he sometimes caught that he might pet them—trapping the small fur-bearers regretfully and only that their backs might clothe his own. Eventually by patching together overheard pieces of gossip, he possessed the current rumor as to his birth.

JOHN NORTH had been one of the first settlers of this town of Altamont. A rugged descendant of the Puritans, he had come into the Middle West as a young man, blazing the trails, hewing the forests and drawing the water in the wake of the retreating savages. For some years reasonable prosperity walked at his side; then fate struck him a double blow. A rascally partner defrauded him of his earnings and illness attacked him; unmarried, and now of middle age, he had gone further west in a wandering pursuit of health and better fortune, leaving behind him as his only property the place where the boy Martin now lived.

Several years went by, and then came the report that John North was dead. Somewhat later there appeared in Altamont the woman who was now within the house, bringing Martin, then a few months old, with her, and announcing herself as the widow of North and the mother of the child. People who had known John had wondered that he had married a woman such as this, but gossip held her tongue within her cheek until it was loosened by an untraceable tale.

From out of the haunts of rumor came the report that this woman who claimed the name of North had not been his wife, and though so intricate and baffling was the trail of the scandal that none could follow it back to its source, it persisted until it became crowned as a generally accepted truth. And though there were some more generous-minded spirits who gave the woman the benefit of the doubt, in the eyes of the community as a whole, the scarlet letter was upon her. And, wholly guiltless in any event, Martin was branded with equal shame.

THE boy's hands unclasped his ankles, and he slowly arose from the slough of reverie into which he had been plunged. A glance at the clock showed him that it was nearly nine, and the schoolhouse was a mile away. Down the path through the warm sunlight he now started at his usual dog-trot, his thoughts upon the cool schoolroom, filled with the drowsy hum of lips and the wings of vagrant insects as they fluttered against the panes. And in the sweetness of the morning his spirits arose at each pat of his bare feet upon the earth until his lips puckered themselves into shape for the shrill whistle which sometimes betokened his happier moments. But the whistle piped but a blast or two. From behind a fence arose the venomous face of old man Arnold, the anchorite, sour as a crab-apple, wrinkled as the palm of one's hand, a dwarf of body and a rodent of mind. Hated by all and hating the world in return with usurious interest, nothing was too sacred or too defenseless to escape his malice. The passing boy offered a fair mark upon which he might spew his poison.

"Mushrat!" he gibed at the passing one, his mean soul writhing in envy of the other's whistle, youth and straightness of form. The face which had grown unclouded in the glory of the morning darkened.

Again the human reptile behind the fence hissed out an insult—this time that deadlier word. Always heretofore having endured such insults without outward show of resentment, Martin now felt a rage arise within him that tore at his vitals with the claws of a wildcat. The name in history that he most loathed leaped to his lips at the wanton epithet.

"Benedict," he screamed, "Benedict Arnold!" And before the one so branded could grasp the meaning of the lightning movements of the other, a

whizzing stone caught him fairly upon the mouth, crimsoning his gray chin. White of face and tense as a drawn bow, the boy aimed one finger like a hostile pistol at Arnold's head.

"I'm going to kill you if you call me that again," he said fiercely.

Like a whipped jackal, evil-eyed, malevolent but craven to the core, for a moment the dwarf faced the sturdy figure before him and then slunk away muttering vengeance. Slowly relaxing, and with his anger cooling with the retreat of his foe, Martin resumed his way.

But his morning had been spoiled. His brief cheerfulness had been blighted, and once again gloom filled his bosom. He opened the door of the small schoolhouse on the hill and plodded toward his seat.

CHAPTER II

FORTY pairs of eyes were upon him, the eyes of boys and girls ranging from tall youths and nearly full-grown women to toddlers of the first-reader class. A peep at the clock told him that he was a full half-dozen minutes late, and beneath the rule of the martinet behind the tall desk tardiness was a crime to be punished along with theft, arson and other heinous offenses against the laws of God and man. Midway in his pilgrimage across the floor he heard the voice of the master, sharp as the slap of a paddle upon water; but the racket of a simultaneously falling pile of books obliterated the words. He seated himself at his desk as the sneering voice of the schoolmaster addressed the youth who sat next to Martin.

"Perhaps *you* will kindly close the door for Master North, seeing that he refuses to obey my request." Martin glanced entranceward. He had inadvertently left the door ajar, and the master had commanded him to close it, but the bang of the falling books had prevented him from hearing. Tardiness and flagrant mutiny all in one moment! The boy squirmed at the thought of the trace-strap which reposed in the master's desk.

He knew that dire punishment awaited him, and dully he pondered his case. Should he take his beating like a dog and then crawl away to lick his wounds? Should he fight back with some weapon, or should he bolt from the room? Of the three courses, the second seemed futile and the third folly, inasmuch as it offered but temporary escape. He determined to remain and accept as stoically as possible what fate might bestow upon him.

With his mind wandering afield, he sought to memorize his lessons. Over them he went again and again, vainly endeavoring to fix their phrases among the jumbled chaos of his thoughts. It was labor lost. Rules, dates and figures fled from him. His first recitation he stumbled through with the grotesque awkwardness of an automaton—the second like the same automaton badly out of order, sitting down at the end of it with the consciousness that were the master a basilik, he, Martin, would ere this have been converted into stone by the glare of the other's eyes. When noon came and he leaned against the schoolhouse to munch his sandwich, he found himself in the spotlight of notoriety, and he was glad when the bell summoned them back to their desks.

The morning had been one of disgrace; the afternoon dragged itself through laggard hours fraught with contemplative gloom. In the droning silence of the room a last calamity befell him. His slate, slipping from his idling fingers, fell upon the floor with the rattle and clatter of a scoopful of coal thrown into an iron trough. From all sides arose involuntary snickers and giggles—mirth that abruptly froze upon the faces of its wearers at the sight of the master's baleful eye. For a moment silence dead and leaden bore crushingly upon all; then the voice of the tyrant, Shinn, broke the stillness in a series of sharp, foxlike barks.

"Master North, I will attend to your case after school, that the rest of the pupils may not witness your humiliation. Until then take your seat among the girls." Barring only a whipping, this punishment with its long following train of jeers was supposed to represent

the utmost degradation to which an erring youth might be condemned.

MARTIN conned the situation. With a flare of shame he noticed that several of the lone young ladies were turning their small noses ceilingwards as they gathered their skirts disdainfully away from the vacant space at their sides where the despised one, now trebly disgraced, might seat himself. Then in the midst of his hesitation his roving eye fell upon the face of the one being in all the world whom he held in veneration. Hope Allardyce, her oval, bright-lipped face as serene as a society matron's in the presence of a butler's blunder, and her bluebell eyes composedly roving over the scene, met his look point-blank. And then Hope, the most aristocratic little beauty of the town, daughter of its wealthiest and most influential citizen and fearful of no pedant's wrath, almost imperceptibly but most certainly nodded to him. Then with a toss of her small head she cast a scornful eye of challenge about.

Martin arose and with recaptured slate in one hand and book in the other safely wended the gantlet of tripping toes surreptitiously thrust forth. Upon the edge of Hope's seat he placed himself in precarious balance, with half of his body overhanging the aisle, fearful lest he offend her by the proximity of person which a broader sitting-place would demand. Instantly the eyes of the pair dropped heavily to their respective books, hers demurely, his with a heart that fluttered like a humming-bird's wing. Often he had watched this dainty creature now at his side as she danced light as a wind-blown ball of thistledown among her playmates, and always he had told himself that she was the most exquisite thing he had ever beheld. In her bright beauty and flashing swiftness of flight she had always reminded him of his favorite bird, the oriole. He had never spoken or even nodded to her; once or twice, however, he had imagined that her face slightly clouded when their eyes chanced to join—clouded with an expression that was neither disapproval nor aversion, but rather as one engrossed with thought. Also she had never drawn aside when he inadvertently brushed her, as had many of the other girls. Mixed with his admiration had been a certain boyish awe of her that he accorded none other. That she had now indubitably invited him, the outcast and disgraced one, to share her seat was well-nigh unbelievable.

For half an hour he sat immobile with eyes glued upon his book. By his side he heard the mouselike squeak of his companion's pencil as it zigzagged across her slate, and he listened until the scrawl was finished. With infinite caution he thieved a glance at it from the tail of his eye. The slate was cunningly turned toward him to facilitate the anticipated word-larceny. In high, straight letters he read the words. *"You may come over just a little. I don't bite."*

With a series of snail-twitchings he worked himself gradually toward her until with a soulful sigh he at last reposed with the seat wholly beneath him. His gratitude was huge. Upon his own slate he traced the word *"Thanks,"* and then once more fell to staring at his lesson with uncomprehending eyes.

Presently the low scratchings of the pencil began again, not rhythmic now, as would have been the case had she been writing, but with short squawks, hesitating pauses and the scuff of erasure. This was followed by a short pause, when his acute ears told him that she was again writing. In the silence that ensued a second later he sensed her command again to view her handiwork. Cautiously he did so. A preposterous caricature confronted him, beneath which was inscribed the libelous label *"Shinn."* Following that was the question, *"Is he going to whip you?"*

Martin raised his eyes to where the master sat. A class was in the midst of its recitations, and the tutor's attention was upon it. The time seemed propitious for clandestine correspondence. *"You bet he will,"* was his scribbled answer. As her head bent slightly in perusal of the reply, Martin saw her lips compress until her mouth became but a thin, horizontal wrinkle, while a glow of indignation flooded her cheeks.

Upon her own slate she started to write rapidly, and in its turn Martin's head drooped, the better to follow the flying fingers—drooped until an outstanding puff of her hair brushed his temple. Delicious as the faintest of odors from apple-blossoms he scented its fragrance, the thrill of the touch running through him ecstatically. Oblivious of all save her presence, he squirmed an inch closer.

There was a buzzing as from an angry hornet, and something stung him upon the cheek. His head flew up sharply, conscious guilt in its poise. The ogre was glaring straight at them with arm upraised in the act of hurling a second fragment of slate-pencil. Together they had been caught crimson-handed in the crime of unlawful communication; and the girl, as an arch-conspirator, might be made to suffer some petty meanness. There was no danger of Shinn's whipping her; he was far too wise to do that. Still, he might say or do something that would humiliate her, and the thought set Martin's veins on fire.

ANOTHER hour droned past, and the master arose. The last class had finished, and the time for final dismissal was at hand. The voice of the tutor came stabbing through the silence. "The pupils will pass out quietly, except those occupying Desk Sixteen." Desk Sixteen was the one at which the guilty pair sat, and the command that the girl also remain was issued with the intent to mortify and annoy. Grimacing like young chimpanzees at the luckless two, the pupils passed out the door and went howling derisively into the distance, and as the last whoop tapered into nothingness, Shinn locked the door from the inside and drew from his desk a length of heavy harness-tug. He confronted them.

"For tardiness, for refusing to close the door behind you when told to do so, for disturbing the school by unnecessary noise, for failure to study your lessons and for whispering, you shall receive the punishment which such misconduct demands," he told Martin gloatingly. Then turning to the girl: "As for Miss Allardyce, for her actions she shall witness the punishment as a lesson to her not to lead others into temptation unless she wishes them to suffer because of her acts." Ominously he advanced.

With the quickness of thought the girl had bounded to her feet and was tearing at the window close by their side. A second, and she had thrown it up and was calling to Martin with the sharpness of desperate haste: "Quick, quick."

Instantaneously resolving that she must have the first opportunity to escape, Martin sat fast and glared back at the master, who, halted by the unexpectedness of the girl's movements, stood uncertainly. But it was only the pause before the leap, and well enough Hope realized it. Again her voice rang out, this time distressfully:

"Oh, quick—please—for *my* sake." The note of appeal stung Martin into action like a hornet. With a weasel dart, he was at her side. "You first," he commanded as he seized her arm.

Twenty feet away, the tyrant had already started his charge, but desks over which he must hurdle to reach his prey lay between them. Across the low window-sill the girl went as a chipmunk whisks over a log, and Martin, landing upon the outside close behind her with an acrobatic leap, had both sense and time enough to slam the window down in the very teeth of the enemy. The next second he found himself running side by side with her, and again he thrilled deliciously. For they were running hand in hand.

Through the hickory grove that lay along the spine of the hill they scampered until a glance behind showed them that no pursuit threatened. By mutual consent the run degenerated into a walk, and for a moment more they walked with no word spoken; then the girl laughed lightly, chucklingly.

"Glory, but how he will rage! We beat him to-day, but he will have his revenge. We will hear from this again."

"I will," the boy gloomed. "But maybe you wont." The momentous question that had been rearing itself steadily in his mind all the afternoon

came crowding irresistibly to his lips. He must know the reason for it all—why she had beckoned him to her side, written to him, planned his escape.

"Why did you do it? You must tell me," he blurted.

She had left behind the bronze cap which so perfectly matched her hair, and her bare head shimmered in the afternoon sun an opalescent thing of wonder. Never before had he seen such hair, wavy as a speeding brook and smooth as a brook's waters, shining with a light that seemed to emanate from within as does the glow of jewels. Now its head bobbed like a cork on a ripple.

"Because I don't like old Shinn," was her reply.

"And you did it to tease him?"

"No—not exactly. You see, I felt sorry for you because you were going to be beaten—and then too, I felt sorry for myself. I did not want to see you hop around and yell when he was whipping you."

Martin's head arose in fine contempt. "Fellows of my age don't cry. I am twelve. How old are you?"

A small frown flitted across her face. "I will tell you this time. I am ten. But you must never ask me again. Ladies don't like to tell their age, you know."

Of course he remembered that now, and squirmed beneath the cut of her reproof as she gazed at him in frank amusement.

"I will go the rest of the way alone, if you please," she announced lightly.

Intuitively his cap, which he had carried in his pocket during the day, and which he had thrust upon his head but a moment before, was dragged off much as a savage tears the scalp from his victim. Never had he doffed his cap to maid in the open before, and he now dangled it before her sheepishly.

"Guess I had better be hustling home too. You bet I am much obliged to you, Miss—"

"Jill," she laughed. "Of course my name is Hope, but my folks mostly call me Jill. Daddy started it. You know I have a brother Jack away at college—so Daddy said he must have a Jill too. So that's how it came about."

"But I have heard some of the girls call you Jill of the Moon. I thought it was a funny name." She acquiesced. "Oh, that just came about. I think the moon is just the most beautiful thing there is when it is big and round. When there is snow on the ground it makes the world look like a frosted cake. When I was little, I used to go out in the yard when it was bright and look for elves and fairies under the trees. So they said I was a regular Jill-o'-the-Moon. Have you got a nickname too?"

"No," he mumbled, thankful that she did not know the one that the dwarf had bestowed upon him—"Mushrat."

She had backed away until she was now a pebble's-throw distant. "Good-by," she called with a farewell smile and wave of the hand as she went hurrying along the way toward her home. For a full minute Martin gazed after her rapturously; then with a black thought of the home that he must return to, he plodded toward it with the leaden feet of a plowboy at the end of a long day's toil.

CHAPTER III

THE next day was Saturday, schoolless, glorious in the sparkling beauty of autumn at its ripest. Martin, loitering for a moment over some trivial task, scowled as the voice of his mother scorched him.

"Thought I told you to stretch them clothes-lines ready for Monday's wash," she shouted from the doorway.

The boy pointed to the lines already strung.

"Did that half an hour ago."

"Well, why didn't you say so! How about that pesky wood-box gawpin' at me empty as a contribution-plate?"

"Going to fill that next. Been doing something else."

"Bet you're lying. What was it?"

"Filled the boiler."

"What else?"

"Chopped some wood."

"What else?"

"Pulled up some weeds."

"What else?"

"Rested five minutes."

She snorted. "Stretched a couple of yards of line, tossed a pint of water into the b'iler, hacked a couple of chips off a log and yanked up a weed and then let on that you've been busy. Fine specimen, aint you?"

"I dunno."

"Well, I do. You're slower than a toad on a tar road. Make me think of old Tupper. Shot a deer and then set down and watched it till he starved to death. Too lazy to skin it. But I aint too lazy to skin you."

With the pounce of a mountain-cat she was upon him, but before the first windmill cuff had fallen, he had torn himself loose and now from a distance of two yards was confronting her with a face so set that it held her back as a strong hand from behind. "I aint going to take but one more licking, and that one wont be from you," he warned, cold as steel. And as she looked him up and down, his sturdy form and hard-drawn mouth, instinctively she knew that her long years of physical domination over him had passed forever, and from this moment on she would never dare lay hand on him in anger. Yet the whip of her tongue was still her own.

"Aint going to take but one more lickin', and that wont be from me," she mocked. "Then who is goin' to give you that one, Mr. Prince-of-Ne'er-do-well?"

Seldom had he shown her insolence, but this day recklessness rode him.

"It will be my own licking—so it is my own business."

"I hope it will be a good one. If you hadn't rolled in the smut, you wouldn't need your jacket dusted. And wont tell your mother! Shame on you for a gallivantin' Jack-o'-nothin'. And after all I've done for you!" Upset by his open resistance to physical force, and his vocal defiance, her apron flew to her eyes in self-pity. "But what can you expect from a boy that had such a father! Still-worm breeds still-worm, and the poorhouse is always nigh to a tavern. And me worn to the bone a-workin' for you!" She sank into a chair and buried her face in the apron.

Half angry at her for her insinuations against his unremembered parent, half sorry for her, hard worked as he knew her to be, and wholly disgusted with the whole occurrence, he hastily filled the wood-box and whistling to the terrier, took the trail that led to the woods. He must go the round of his traps, reset them and stretch the freshly caught skins upon frames for drying. With Tip at his heels he wended his way riverward.

THE sun hung but a yard high in the west before all his tasks of the day lay behind him. The shadows fell long athwart the dusty main street of the town, and its inhabitants began to stroll post-officewards for their afternoon mail. Martin, plodding through the warm dust, diffidently took a seat at the end of the long bench in front of Fifer's tobacco-store, the center of the loafing area of the town. Fifer, fat as a huge spider, small-eyed, gourd-nosed and with cheeks puffed out as though he were eternally blowing a horn, sat upon his place of vantage at the top of the steps above them. An atheist to the bone, quarreling loudly one moment and a great, quivering lump of roaring laughter the next, he was having one of his interminable passages-at-arms with Deacon Reeves. To-day their dispute was over religion.

" 'Taint so, by gum," barked Reeves. "The Lord takes care of His own, I tell ye, even to the sparrers of the air."

"And then sends forty thousand human critters to glory in one blast from Mount Peeley," roared Fifer.

"That there was becuz they was sinners."

"Weren't no more sinful than they be in Paree, was they?"

"Anyway, you ought to be thankful that He didn't destroy you in your sinfulness."

"Aint thankful nohow. Got the rheumatiz and gout and an ingrowin' cancer and you to pester me. I claim there aint no God, nohow."

"And I say there be, Fifer, there be. Who in tarnation made this here universe if He didn't?"

"Nobody. 'Twere allers made."

"You know you're lyin', Fifer. 'Twere made in six days and on the seventh He rested."

"What were He doin' all the time before that?"

"Thinkin' it out, of course. Couldn't expect to invent all them yere suns and stars and moons and comicks in a jiffy, could ye?"

"And what's He been doin' since?"

"Preparin' a place for us to abide in the future, one place for me and another kind of a place for sech as you."

"No sech thing. When old Fifer dies, that's the end of him, same's a dog. Where was I before I was born?"

"Nowhere, becuz you wasn't nuthin' yet."

"Same thing when I'm dead. Can't be nowhere, becuz I wont be nuthin."

"No sech thing. Your speerit has got to live to the end of time."

"Can't be no end of time. Everything allers was, allers will be."

"And His kingdom extends to the ends of space."

"Can't possible be no ends to space. What's on t'other side of it?"

Reeves arose, so shaken by reason of his rage that Martin imagined he could hear the dry bones rattle. He waved his cane wildly in the air. "Nice way for a penurious, pessimistic, paunchy old pig like you to be talkin' about his Maker. You'll regret this day when you're roastin' in the b'ilin' pit, Fifer." The storekeeper's huge abdomen swelled until the boy thought it must burst and scatter destruction broadcast even as had Mount "Peeley." Nervously he slid farther away as the great voice boomed forth in thunderous bellow.

"There aint no hell, and there aint no devil. There aint no heaven, neither. You take Fifer's word for it, you old penny-collectin' hypercrit. Get out o' here before I whock you on that there holler numbskull o' yourn, you old reptyle."

THE postmistress stepped out into the street, clanging a little bell as she signaled the loiterers that the mail had been distributed. As a man the grinning spectators arose and left the belligerents face to face and hurling vast threats at each other as they cut the air into ribbons with their canes. With hands sounding the empty depths of his pockets, Martin started homeward, his ears a moment later being filled with the bass-drum boom of Fifer's abdomen-born laughter as it proclaimed that the daily armistice between the ancient enemies had again been effected.

Within the boy's mind a great question was burning. Whether this awful universe he saw above him with its countless silently swinging constellations, its bewildering mazes of suns and moons, worlds, worlds without end, had always existed without a Creator to build it as Fifer roared that it had, or whether out of a black void of nothingness something had come and builded all from naught—this was a question which had begun to worry him. He determined to attend a place of worship upon the morrow, listen and make up his mind. A sudden thought made him catch his breath. Warm, thrilling, delicious, it stole over him. Hope Allardyce went to service every Sunday. He would go to her church and feast his eyes upon her during her devotions and while he listened to the sermon. Surely in the presence of one such as she he could not fail of being inspired aright.

All night long he dreamed of the day to come.

CHAPTER IV

SUNDAY morning in October, the woods aflame with scarlet and gold, the forest bronzed by the frost. In the meadows about the village each grass-blade was a sparkling diamond, while through the long reaches of champagne air the calls of the crows for once became almost music. Over all, the sun hovered with the mellowness of an old doubloon, and the breeze was as soft and sweet-scented as the breath of one of the clean grass-eaters of the fields. Close over the countryside peace hovered smiling.

With more pains than he had ever expended before, Martin set to work upon his toilet. Hands, face and calloused feet he scrubbed to a blushing luster, and his hair he polished and plastered until it outshone the sleek coat of a wet beaver. One suit of frayed and soiled clothes was all that he held title to, but this he groomed painstak-

ingly. Shoes he seldom wore until freezing weather came, and he winced as he forced his hard feet into leather as unpliant as the iron boots of the inquisition. His only celluloid collar he bent into a crackling ring around his brown neck, and having done all possible to embellish himself, he stepped before the small mirror for critical self-inspection. The image in the glass was not entirely displeasing to him.

"Reckon if they didn't know what I was they couldn't tell me from anybody else," he sighed. "But they *do* know, and they'll never forget it—never in this world. And if I do get religion and try hard to be a Christian and then don't get to heaven—well, I wont have had a fair deal. That's all I got to say."

Through the open door his mother viewed him with unfavorable countenance. She never attended church herself, had never known him to do so, and that he was now about to go did not enter her mind. "Where you goin'?" she demanded cynically. "Off gallivantin', I bet, after some snip of a snub-nosed Miss Muffit that ought to have her ears cuffed and be sent to bed. Been expectin' such lallygaggin' for some time past."

Martin scowled. "I aint either. I am going to church."

The woman's hands flew up. "What in the name of old Nick has got into you now? Goin' to be converted?"

"Mebby."

"And sing in the choir?"

"Don't know yet."

"And get down on your benders and holler hallylujy?"

"If I feel like it."

She turned away. "Well, I suppose you might as well be doin' that as loafing around out in the woods or fishing—except we need some fish." With which benediction she left him.

THE congregation of the little church had settled itself, while before it the minister was standing with his opening words lying ready upon his tongue. In the hush that prevailed, the squeak of a church-mouse would have been startling. Cautiously the door was thrust ajar and Martin entered, clumsily balanced upon leathern tiptoes. Had he been barefooted, he could have slipped to a rear seat with the noiselessness of a cat and with few conscious of his presence. In his rigid footgear, with soles of board thickness, iron nails and protesting squeaks, silence was a thing beyond all human craft. Lightly though he placed his feet upon the bare floors, his first step seemed to reverberate up the aisle like a ball bowled along an alley, and as though operated by a common lever, the heads of the congregation swung backwards with sternly disapproving suddenness. Dismayed and burning with embarrassment, Martin stood glued to the spot, a terrified suppliant before the austere judgment-seat.

For an instant the thought of incontinent retreat, a wild dash down the hill and a scurrying to his hiding-place in the wood beyond, possessed him. Then through his brain flashed the great reason for his coming, and before that reason the panic fled. Here he was and here he would remain, regardless of what those present might think. He cast a furtive eye about. Close to him was an untenanted rear seat where surely he could sit without offending. Thankfully he was slipping toward it when his glance caught the eye of Deacon Reeves, the church usher. Sternly the latter's finger was pointing to a vacant bench immediately beneath the pulpit of the one who was impatiently awaiting the seating of this loiterer before the throne of grace. It was a gesture not to be disregarded, and with ears and face crimson, he passed up the aisle in an ungainly effort at noiselessness, seating himself at the place designated in the very shadow of the pulpit. Behind him he could feel every eye boring into his back like a red-hot auger.

And then a terrible thing happened. He was conscious of a slight sound at his side, a scratching sound followed by a sniff, and he shot a sidewise glance. Horror and chagrin turned him dizzy, froze him like ice, burned him like fire. For Tip had sneaked in after him and now sitting on his haunches upon the seat, was surveying the preacher with open-mouthed levity and ears pricked

forward as though challenging him to begin. To the boy's ears came the pulpiteer's indignant snort—like the whistling grunt of an angry buffalo.

The Reverend Hoad was an uncompromising follower of the Lord, believing in no road to salvation save the narrow, thorny way. In an earlier age he would have been a leader of the rock-bound faith, a burner of witches, a banisher to the outer wilderness of the non-orthodox and a whipper of those who scoffed. Cold of nature and a believer in the Book from cover to cover, never was he so much in his element as when thundering forth the adamantine Mosaic laws. Eternal torment was his ever-favorite bludgeon, and to see his flock tremble beneath it was his idea of saving them. In the new hush that followed the boy's arrival he again cleared his throat for the opening prayer. Awesomely he rolled it forth; seated himself with bowed head as audience and choir went through the opening hymn; then he opened his great Bible, read the day's text and began his exhorting.

Self-conscious as a culprit in the stocks, his train of thought hopelessly derailed by the notoriety that had attended his entrance, thoroughly disgraced by his dog, Martin utterly forgot the great object of his coming. But presently his mind wandered to Hope. She must be present somewhere, and he wondered vaguely what she would think of him, after this. She had told him that she was sorry for him upon that other day when he had been marked for a whipping; perhaps she might even be moved by pity now that he was being pilloried. He watched his chance and cast an eye about. She was sitting not far away, with her gaze fastened upon him in that look he had seen upon her face before, steady and pensive as though pondering deeply. She made no sign of recognition, and at once he resumed his steady stare dead ahead.

A word that fell from the mouth of the minister percolated his musings and brought him to the stiff upright of attention. The Reverend Hoad was lashing the sinners before him with the most merciless knout at his command, and half-frightened by the fierceness of the attack, the boy sat breathlessly as the lash hissed and sang above his head. Terrible words were these that the speaker was uttering, words that chilled him with the cold fear that the death-sentence of a judge would have inspired.

Then in the midst of one of his sonorous sentences the big man in the pulpit paused. In the dead silence of the awed room he pointed one finger at the great book before him and with deadly remorselessness read:

> A bastard shall not enter into the assembly of Jehovah; even to the tenth generation shall none of his enter into the assembly of Jehovah.

Lights danced uncannily before Martin's eyes, and a roaring filled his ears. There could be no question about the words he had just heard. It was the great decree of the great book—indisputable, immutable, the law of its Maker. An outcast upon earth, Martin was even so denied the hope of paradise.

Thralled by horror, as one having roamed far into the evil haunts of the nightmare sits powerless to move, he sat through the rest of the service as in a hideous dream. As the last words were being spoken, he arose from his seat and slunk miserably down the aisle without daring to raise his eyes to the stern faces about him. With the door of the church left behind, he broke into a run, an incoherent cry of despair upon his lips. On he went with wild eyes that stared straight ahead, not pausing until the last house of the town was behind him. Then he threw himself flat upon his face in the meadow grass.

For an hour he lay with scarcely a movement, white-faced, dry-eyed, finally crawling up and with set mouth turning his face toward a home he despised and to an unnatural parent toward whom he felt almost an aversion. The wind which during the morning had been soft, now had a bite to it that caused him to scan the sky. "Going to freeze," he muttered.

That evening turned sharply cold, with Jack-o'-the-North prowling across the valley and leaving the mark of his

sharp teeth on many a green thing. In the tree-tops hordes of leaves shriveled and died, and upon the ground the small pools drew a thin sheet of ice over their freezing bosoms. Midnight came with a crackling sky sparkling with glittering jewels. A door of the North cottage opened, and out of it stepped Martin, clad only in shirt and trousers. For a long minute he stood barefooted upon the freezing ground as his gaze swept the glorious firmament. His head shook slowly.

"I can't believe it. No God who made all that glory up there would keep a poor devil like me out of it. Fifer is right. There isn't any God."

He crept silently back to his bed.

CHAPTER V

FOUR years slipped away into the irredeemable. There came to Altamont an itinerant quack with an overhanging paunch, swinish jowls and a huge contempt for neatness, who announced himself as a physician for man or beast.

"Professor" Duquesne also proclaimed himself to be half French-Canadian and half Indian, and in his dingy six-by-eight office he set up a long array of bottles filled with extracts of noxious plants and weeds, copious draughts of which he assured his callers would cure anything from cancer to glanders.

Ignored by the more intelligent lay element and denounced by his professional brethren though he was, he still managed to bring to him enough patients to yield a fair living. Some of these were merely credulous fools who deserved little sympathy for their wasted money, while others were despondents in the last stages of incurable diseases who having vainly tried the regular practitioners now turned to the charlatan in forlorn hope.

One day Widow North summoned him to lance a felon upon her finger, and from that moment, to Martin's infinite disgust, he became a daily meal-eater at the cottage. Despising him for his slouchiness, his quackery and ill manners, the boy would have driven him from the door with supreme contempt for the few dollars he now and then contributed to the family larder, had the woman permitted it. But take to the gross beast she did from the first, and as the weeks rolled on, she treated him with a consideration that drove Martin to the depths of anger and disgust. From then on he avoided the other's presence as a pestilence.

School closed with Martin graduating at the head of his class. For many weeks thereafter he worked steadily in the grist-mill by the river-side. Day after day he did a man's work among the heavy sacks of grain, filling them, carrying them, stacking them in tiers—all the manifold labor that goes with such a place. It was hard work, but wholesome, and already the muscles of his back and arms had hardened in response to the daily demands made upon them. He had not the slightest intention of making this his vocation in life, but it paid him a living wage and made possible books to be read at night.

The retentiveness of Martin's mind gave him great encouragement. Once he had thoroughly read a thing of interest, he seemed unable to forget it. And to his astonishment and delight he found himself, always heretofore silent and diffident, becoming a fluent speaker of well-chosen words. That the words were well chosen he knew both instinctively and because of the way in which they were received.

Then one day Martin heard a famous lawyer make a speech. The power and beauty of the man's words fired him with a new ambition. He would practice oratory. And thereafter on his long walks across the fields and beneath the stars, with none but the birds and animals to listen, he unlimbered his tongue in all manner of vocal flights. Had a sea with its breakers been at hand, he would have welcomed the opportunity to address it also. Embryonic and crude it all was, but it was the first attempt of the eagle to soar. He had discovered an unsuspected talent and was joyously developing it. As inevitable as the bird to the wing or the musician to his instrument, so must he practice for the sheer joy of it. And like the eaglet or musician he learned

fast. It was bred in his bone, was a part of him.

ONE morning Martin awoke with a start, the wheezing rattle of the alarm clock vibrating in his ears. Drowsily he counted the erratic strokes of the timepiece in the other room as they accompanied the whir, the whole effect making him think of an asthmatic person who pounded upon a tin pan with a wheeze between the strokes. Eight! He sprang up like a bounded rubber ball. In his abstraction of the evening before he had mis-set the alarm; he should have been up an hour ago. Now he would be late at his place of work. A fine beginning for a youth of his ambitions! But why had he not been awakened by his mother, who was an early riser?

While he was hurriedly dressing he became conscious of an unwonted silence in the room beyond his door. There was an absence of the usual rattle of dishes and other tableware, as well as of the odors which must accompany the cooking of food. Had his mother overslept too? Was she ill? He stepped hastily into the small dining- and living-room. Not even had the table been spread.

Going to the other bedchamber he rapped smartly. There was no response, and with a premonition of impending ill, Martin opened the door. The bed was unruffled, and to all appearances had not been occupied during the night. His first glance having made note of that fact, his next fell upon a sheet of paper pinned to the pillow. Rapidly he read it; then slowly he sank upon the bed, where he sat with the words of the note confronting him and seeming to dance in mockery. It was in his mother's stiff handwriting, and in but a few brief sentences she told him that she was about to depart and would not return. Whither she had gone it did not say, nor why—merely stating that he could do as he pleased with what she had left behind, and ending with the perfunctory hope that he would succeed in life. Of love or regret there was not a word.

Although she had been a harsh mother, the suddenness of the shock sickened him. After all, she had been the only one who had ever shared his daily life and the only bar between him and utter loneliness. He had clung to her skirts as a toddling child, and she had picked him up not unkindly after many a baby fall—cared for him in his childhood sicknesses and at times shown evidences of some slight affection. Her departure left him without kith or kin—without a home as well, since he could not prepare his own meals now that he was at work. In all the world no man, beast or fowl was more forlorn than he. And that his mother should turn from him in this manner was as bitter a sneer as fate had yet flung. For though he had never really loved her,—she had not seemed to care for it,—yet as his mother he had, except when driven too hard, accorded her both respect and obedience. And now to be abandoned like a half-grown baboon cub, for no reason.

He sprang to his feet with a great fear and horror gripping him. Could it be possible? Could one last damnable thing have taken place to cap the indecency of the whole mess of his life? The thought gagged him. Grasping his hat, he burst savagely from the door and went down the walk with steps that sent the gravel flying like showers of shot.

Straight to "Professor" Duquesne's office he sped, the scorpion of suspicion that hid within him stinging him more viciously with each step. Suspense filled his throat like a solid that could neither be swallowed nor disgorged.

He seized the knob of the office door and twisted it viciously. The door failed to respond. He peered through the unwashed windows into the unkempt interior. Bottles of nostrums, books, instruments—all the paraphernalia for the poisoning and mutilation of man or beast had disappeared. The office was abandoned.

MARTIN swung about with an oath both savage and profane. His mother had gone with Duquesne! No wonder she had given no warning, said no farewell word, left no address. And the community within which he and she had lived so long! Secrecy from it was

out of the question. The news of the simultaneous disappearance of the pair would be scattered broadcast by nightfall. Every mouth would be full of it, every finger again pointing at him. The human buzzards of the town would gorge again. Even the newspapers—Martin gritted his teeth.

If common rumor were true, Duquesne had a wife whom he had deserted in a distant State, and this being the case, no lawful union could result from the elopement. Would she live with a man to whom she was not married? He called to mind her indifferent attitude when his own legitimacy had been attacked.

Yet he had always intended to provide for his mother, to take her away as soon as he possessed the earning-power, and have her spend her declining years in comfort in some place where their history was not known. And now she had left him in the reek of this new infamy that she might run away with a foul creature and breed more spawn like himself, more— He spat the word from his mouth as though it had been a noxious insect that had flown there.

But there was one thing certain: not another day would he remain in this place where he was known to all. Always it had been an abode of unhappiness, and in the face of new events it would be intolerable. All the money he possessed was the wages due him for his labors during the past month, but the sum was sufficient to take him to some other place, and once there he would know what to do. With no one but himself to think about, he could begin his life-work immediately instead of next year or the year after that. As for the home and its furnishings, they were of no salable value. The building was old, rapidly disintegrating and not worth wrecking; the little patch of ground was unfavorably situated and of small value.

That night he made his decision as to where he would go. It should be to St. Peter. St. Peter was the State metropolis and was a city large enough to offer infinite possibilities to any man. It was only a hundred miles away, and the railroad-fare was but a trifle. That same night Martin left Altamont forever.

SIX days later Martin entered the office of Thomas Wade, lawyer, and after a brief wait was shown into the private office of that gentleman. For the forty-third time since he had arrived in St. Peter, nearly a week before, he made the same bow and use of almost exactly the same language.

"I am a boy from the country and have no parents. I am sixteen years old and a graduate from the high school of a small town. I graduated at the head of my class. I want to get into an attorney's office, study law and become a lawyer. I have had no legal experience, but am willing to work and expect only enough pay to keep me from going hungry." Then he stopped speaking and stood awaiting his fate.

Lawyer Wade, the forty-third attorney so addressed, leaned back in his chair and looked the applicant over. He was a good "jury-lawyer," and therefore a shrewd reader of physiognomy. The broad brow, thoughtful eyes and expressive mouth before him met with his approbation. He considered the matter audibly.

"H'm—let's see. I have a clerk at present, but he will be admitted to practice shortly, and then I will need him for more important matters. I think I can use you if you are the right sort. I will give you a chance. Bring me your expense-account at the end of the week, and if it is not too high, I will pay it. I might give you an extra dollar now and then for spending-money. What is your name?"

In the nature of things Martin had known that this question would be asked him, and he was ready for it. In a burst of confidence his mother had once told him that he had been christened "John Martin North," but that she had dropped the first name in favor of the second. In order better to hide his real identity through the years to come, Martin had decided to resurrect his first name and become John Martin North. But as yet he was too young for the middle initial. That could be inserted at his leisure later on.

"John North," he answered.

The lawyer made a note of it upon his pad.

"All right, John. Take your seat at that little desk out yonder."

CHAPTER VI

JIM McMANN, political boss of St. Peter, shut one eye tight as an oyster and focused the other contemplatively upon the end of his fifty-cent cigar. He was a man of twelve-score pounds, great height, enormous width and vast stomach. Years ago, in the prime of his young manhood, Jim McMann had been a boss foundryman; but a quick tongue, a quicker brain and a quickest fist had soon exalted him above the dead level of a toil that was great and a pay that was small. From president of his particular union he had arisen to become chairman of the council of the allied trades; from that he had climbed to the aldermanship of the gambling and red-light ward of his city; from that he had soared to the throne of general overseer of police—and from that he had sunk back to plain Jim McMann, political boss and capitalist. He was now in the neighborhood of fifty years of age, smooth-shaven, square-jawed and possessed of blue eyes that could twinkle like a colleen's or emit sparks like a forge—eyes that set deeply in the massive head of a Roman senator. Long years of prosperity and association with men far better educated than himself had smoothed and rounded the old roughness of his toiling days, as the fat of the land had smoothed and rounded the old bulging muscles, until now Jim McMann could be as urbane as a dancing-master. But he still retained his former reputation of being able to stagger a street-car with his fist, as well as much of the rich brogue that was a feast to the ear.

Through a ring of smoke which he had just sent spinning, "Moxie" Elliott, McMann's legal adviser and first lieutenant, studied his chief speculatively. "What's the answer?" he inquired at length. Slowly as a turntable moves, the boss swung his broad front around until it confronted the questioner.

"I was thinkin', me b'y, how pleasant it be for us old fri'nds to be able to sit all day an' smoke two-for-a-dollar seegars, whilst we toil not at all an' spin nothin' but yarns. 'Tis a fine, round old world."

"The round old world would be all right if it was only square," grumbled the other. "But what are you leading up to?" Understanding his master well, Elliott knew that the philosophy was but a preface to matters of import. McMann scanned him critically.

"Have patience, me son. 'Tis man's greatest virtue, as is chastity woman's. I am leadin' ye up gintly an' most seductively to our fri'nds the inemy. Heaven bliss thim, an' the divil take thim."

"All right. I am listening."

"In solemn conclave of their committee most secretly assimbled, last night at the hour whin graveyards and the rest of us begin to yawn, they agreed upon their candidate for mayor."

Elliott started slightly, whistling low. "And how did you learn that?"

"Hist, me child, and ye shall hear of the midnight tricks of the inemy dear. I had our fri'nd, Mike the Shang, planted where he could overhear ivery word—shame upon him for his eavesdroppin'. An' the name of the great gineral who is to lead them to vict'ry is swate Wilton Morrow. An' now I have told ye."

FROM out of Elliott's thin lips uncoiled a snakelike oath.

"That lady-killing, pap-drinking, penny-stealing, hypocritical, cradle-robbing dude!" he gulped as he leaned across the table until his face was close to the other's. "Why he would steal a corpse."

McMann nodded. "I should say upon refliction that ye have paid the gintleman a string of complimints. Yet nominate him they will."

"But when he was county supervisor, he robbed the Old People's Home of ten thousand dollars."

"But 'tis only the wise like oursilves that know it. Did they prove it?"

"No—the rat laid it onto our administration of the year before. And when he was president of the People's Bank, did he not carry it down to ruin and impoverish a thousand widows and newsboys?"

"But did he not wriggle out of it like a greased eel? He did."

"Yes, laid it on his innocent cashier and sent that poor devil to stir. Then he turned reformer, and ever since has been yelling his head off for a political clean-up and social purity. He is the rankest fraud in St. Peter."

"A most wonderful keen observer ye be, fri'nd Elliott. With your great powers of observation, assisted by me blessing, ye will yet die an unhappy millionaire. Reform will be their platform, an' the four R's their curriculem, but not the four R's of 'Readin', 'Ritin', Recitin' an' 'Rithmetic.' No. 'Twill be 'Reform an' Religion, Reorganization an' Referendum.' An' if elected, he will drive into black crime the poor b'ys who now do nothin' worse than take a sucker's dollar whin 'tis handed to thim on a platter, while the unfortunate down-an'-out wimmen he would drive like swine into the sea. Thin he would turn around an' whin all the good people were in church blissin' him, rob the city into black insolvincy." McMann's huge fist made the table hop like a toad, and his eyes turned to the hard, bluish glitter of a revolver-barrel. "Look me in the eye, Misther Elliott. Ye have known me well this twinty year through high tide, low tide, hell an' hot gravy, have ye not?"

"None better, Jim."

"I have never denied that I have not me faults,—great, glarin' faults,—the same as I have me loves an' hates. But of all things twixt the angels in heaven above an' the demons down under the ocean, I hate worst of all a hypocrite."

Elliott bowed.

"An' I ask ye, did I iver take one penny of the people's money of this city? I did not. Did I lower the taxes of the poor, make the rich pay their honest dues, make the city-hall gang treat the public like taxpayers instead of orang-outangs an' force the underworld to keep within its sty?"

"You did."

"Again I ask, did I pave the streets and turn its hog-wallows into bully-vards? I did. Did I take this benighted metropolis which at night was as dark as the inside of a crow an' turn it into a blaze of glory at a minimum cost to the people? I did. Did I account to the public for ivery dollar spent, like a bank-auditor? I did. Did I ever double-cross a fri'nd or forget the color of the eyes of an inimy? I did not. And"—McMann shook a finger as thick as a policeman's baton in his lieutenant's face—"did I first an' last out of me own pocket give fifty thousand dollars to the poor, the unfortunate an' the deservin'?"

"You did, Mac."

"An' whin I found a thousand-dollar bill in me mail with no writin' attached an' me not sure where it came from, did I burn it up for tainted money? I did not. An' whin this deginerate son of a pickpocket, Morrow, accused me of takin' thim lost, strayed or stolen sheep of thousand-dollar bills an' puttin' thim in me own fold,—an' there he was wrong, Elliott, for they were already folded,—did I arise an' deny it? I did not. An' for why, Elliott, did I not deny it?"

"Reasons," puffed Elliott sententiously.

"Ye have said it. An' the first reason was because I am no hypocrite, an' the second was because I have a sense of humor." McMann's voice dropped to a deep whisper. "Which, I ask ye, is the better man in a community, the strong-arm man who picks up a gambler once in a while an' shakes a hatful of coin out of him who has just won it from another gambler, or the man who prays his audience to sleep an' thin robs the contribution-box?"

"Give me the strong-arm man, Mac."

"Ye are a wonderful man, Moxie. For the good of this community, mesilf, you an' the great, fine machine which we have consthructed—more power to it!—must defeat the foul intintion of the reform goose which would hatch this bad egg Morrow." His whisper became huskier and his lips pressed close to the ear of the listener. "An' to foil the evil conspiracy of our opponents, we must put forward a real man who will lead us wherever we push him. With such a man an' our organization back of him, the cohorts of the inimy will have about as much chance of winnin' as a Dutchman at a Clan-na-Gael picnic."

"But who must he be, Jim?" The eyes of the boss half closed as he watched the struggles of a fly that had fallen into his beer. "Poor little divil," he remarked sympathetically, "to be a victim of strong drink at his age." He tooth a toothpick, fished the wretched insect out and tossed his glass into a corner.

"He must be a man with a good reputation, a clean man and a smart man. Somewhere have I heard that a body has but three dimensions—lingth, breadth an' thickness; but our man must have four—lingth, breadth, thickness an' sharpness. An' that means lingth of foresight, breadth of mind, depth of thought an' sharpness of tongue. Also he must be a man whom the people have nothin' against. An' he must be a new man, for the old-timers all have some spot upon their escutcheons—which is a most disgraceful thing for any man to have, Elliott. Thin too, he must be able to talk like an angel an' stand up on his legs like a man. With him to riprisint us, we will put him alongside that chatterin' magpie of a Morrow an' say to the good people as we point our fingers at the candidates: 'Ye are the jury, ladies an' gintlemen, so take your choice. Thankin' ye in advance for your verdict, we remain as iver.' "

ELLIOTT'S fist shook the table in its turn.

"You've written his name in letters a foot tall," he said. "North."

"Thin what is your objection?" demanded the boss as he eyed the countenance of his lieutenant.

For a long minute Elliott sat meditating.

"Lack of age only."

"Which is the better, me son, a wise young man or a foolish old one? An' what do the people care about age, annyhow? 'Tis the man they want. An' by the by, how old do ye guess Johnny North to be, considerin' his natural grayish hair, that thinkin' face of his an' the lack of records to the contrary?"

"About thirty."

"Thirty is old enough for the right man to be mayor, but 'tis not old enough for him to be a candidate. Let me think for a moment, fri'nd Elliott. I have it. Now it is that I remimber the date of his birth most distinctly. He is thirty-six to the second."

A thin smile crept from between the lawyer's thin lips.

"But I don't believe he will stand for anything like that—deceiving the public as to his age. He is on the square."

"He will have no say about it. Whin it comes to politics, me b'y, I can comb years from a candidate's head like ye comb out loose hairs on a mornin', or I can restore thim like the advertisement of a hair-tonic. As his campaign-manager I will talk to the b'ys of the press. Should they misunderstand me an' put in the wrong figures, what of it? 'Twould be a typographical mistake."

"But should you elect him, can you handle him?"

"Can I handle a red-hot stove? I cannot. Leave that to the stove. Can a red-hot stove handle me? It cannot. Leave that to mesilf."

"I guess he would take the nomination, all right," mused Moxie from the depths of deep rumination. The boss chuckled.

"Will a hawk snap at a June-bug? Will a lawyer snap at a nomination for a high office where if elected he can play judge, jury an' attorney to his heart's contint? Ye might as well ask if I would accept the job of Collector of Internal Revenue for the Universe."

"I understand he has no money."

"So much the better. Nobody can accuse him of having stolen it—which we can do of their man Morrow. The poor people will vote for him because he is one of thim, an' to attack a man runnin' for office on the ground that he has not wealth would be to insult most outrageous the most sacred pricidint of American politics. The populace would arise in rage an' rind the foul traducer as wolves rind a billygoat."

"Have you spoken to him yet?"

McMann arose ponderously, shook the ashes from his mighty front as a miller frees himself from flour and laid his hand upon the door of the telephone-booth.

"No, but I'll have him here in tin minutes."

CHAPTER VII

NORTH hung up the telephone-receiver and sat studying the floor with corrugated forehead.

"Now, what is the best guess as to why Jim McMann wishes the honor of having me call upon him at once?" he ruminated as his mind ran back over the short length of their conversation of the minute just fled. "Wouldn't give me an inkling. Just said it was too important a matter to discuss over the 'phone-wire—that telephone-instruments were invented by the devil for the especial benefit of the operators, scandal-mongers, blackmailers and the opposition party. Naturally, it has something to do with politics—but what?"

Five minutes later he found himself in the august presence of the greatest political wizard that St. Peter had ever found wished upon her, his palm engulfed in a hamlike hand which despite its heaviness could play upon the keys of the intricate "machine" which it had created, with the airy dexterity of a lightning typist upon her instrument. The face of the boss was beaming with an ecstatic smile that was almost cherubic; welcome emanated from every pore, and a great, fatherly left hand fell with the whacking caress of an elephant's trunk upon the newcomer's shoulder. Upon North's free hand the cold fingers of Elliott settled as so many icicles in an effort at warmth and good cheer. To imagine Moxie Elliott really warm would have been to imagine ice on fire. Between them they bore him to the chair which had been placed between their own, and into it they crushed him by sheer bulk. From the lips of McMann came his greeting, rich in rolling *r's*, benign, fatherly.

" 'Tis a great favor ye have conferred upon this magnificent an' iver growin' metropolis this day by condescendin' to come here an' sit with us lowly disciples of its destiny. An' in later years I shall near burst with pride as I point to ye an' say to mesilf, 'He is your b'y, Jim McMann, for ye made him what he is.' "

North accepted the flattery with a good-natured grin. "Fair Queen o' Blarney, thy swate tongue doth lure me," he chanted. Then more seriously: "Got my rabbit's foot with me, Jim, and you wont be able to hypnotize me. Also I am supposed to be some spell-binder myself upon occasion, and cute words like those charm not an audience made up of me. But something tells me that you have a load to discharge. Aim your gun and shoot it."

"To be sure, an' so I have, now that ye make me think of it. As ye command, I shall shoot, an' me aim shall be to bring down from his perch as fine a buzzard as iver ye saw."

"And the name of the buzzard?"

"To be revealed in the next chapter."

NORTH leaned back comfortably in his deep chair and gazed at the countenance before him with its pendant jowls, rock-hewn mouth and small eyes that in the waning light of the room seemed jades deep set in the face of a sphinx. Despite his practice and skill in the art of thought-fathoming, he might as well have tried to read the contents of a vault through its closed doors. He gave up the attempt. But he could reason, and now he did so shrewdly.

"I think I see. But before you can shoot your buzzard, you must have a weapon."

McMann's great head rocked slowly up and down in a ponderous affirmative. "I must—a straight-sighted, hard-shootin', rapid-fire piece of ordnance with a boom to its voice and plenty of fire in its discharge. An' it must look an' sound like a real cannon—no small pocket-pistol for this hunt. I want the

THE JOY-GARDEN

BESSIE R. HOOVER, who wrote "Pa Flickinger's Folks," and those delightful stories about *Milo Peebles* and his wife *Jule* and his son *Jasper* (remember them, in the 1915 BLUE BOOKS?), has been at work on a novel which we shall publish complete in our next issue. Be sure to read this captivating story, "The Joy-Garden," in the March issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

sight an' the sound an' the fear of the weapon to scare all thim other buzzards back to the dismal swamp of desolation an' despair. Which, by the by, reminds me that ye have come to us like the great rescuer of old who led the chosen children from out the wilderness of sin into the land of Canaan."

North grinned, the grin spreading. "Moses will go down in history as an immortal leader. You remember his grand saying—"

"I do. To the victors belong the spoils."

Inscrutable, the eyes of the boss shone in their caverns, unwinking, fathomless; and North, sitting silently before them, felt for the first time the power of the man. No longer he wondered at the other's success in the swaying of masses and driving them to do his bidding. Intangible, silent as a gale in the upper reaches of space, yet almost resistless, his force was magnificent. It emanated from him as from a great dynamo, gripping as the hand of an invisible giant.

"If by 'spoils' you mean the legitimate trophies of battle fairly won,—the enemy's flags, the prisoners of war to be exchanged and the confiscation of weapons with which they attacked you,—I am your humble follower," he returned quietly. "To return the things I have mentioned might undo the cause for which you fought, which, of course, is assumed to be the virtuous one. But if by 'spoils' you mean 'spoliation,' I will break a lance against you. You know me, my principles and my lack of principles, fairly well. So out with it: what do you want of me?"

"I do not want *of* you; I want *you,* John North."

"Instinct whispered that much to me when you called me up. But it did not answer my question: 'Why do you want me?'"

"To become our candidate for mayor of St. Peter."

DEEP in his bosom North felt a faint fluttering, much as though a moth imprisoned within him were beating its rapid wings against his vitals. Several times in his early career as a speaker to juries and other audiences he had felt a sensation not remote from this when he had arisen before them, and once again he was undergoing the smothering in his throat and vibration of the knees. It was a high office which was being held before his eyes, higher than he had ever thought of attaining for many years to come, the highest that could be offered by this the greatest city of his great State. Few men of his age had had so glittering a jewel dangled before them, and at first sight of it he had trembled a trifle. That the office could be his there was small doubt, for with McMann and his political juggernaut to clear the way for him, it seemed inevitable that the opposition must be crushed. But Jim McMann was not reputed to be in politics for his health, and therefore the tempted one had reasons to believe his terms would be high. First of all that point must be settled.

"Name your price," he demanded in a voice that was husky, despite his control over it.

"No price at all, me b'y. 'Tis yourself that may make the terms. Name thim."

North's hands shook like those of a drunkard as he placed them upon the table and leaned toward the great one. "I don't get you, McMann. In the name of mystery, why do you pick me out?" The metamorphosis of this man from the cool-headed, steady-nerved lawyer into the aspen pleader before him brought a twinkle into the eyes that a moment ago had been so metallic. Yet Jim McMann had seen the same transformation happen to other men more than once, more than once.

"Steady, me b'y, steady. Brace up and take a highball. I offer ye the nomination because ye can bring me what I most want."

"And that is—"

"Vict'ry. Did it ever occur to ye that to keep his own job a boss must keep on winnin'? 'Tis a sad but true refliction upon the ingratitude of the dear American people. I wish it be known to all that Jim McMann's name does not adorn the shaft of a cimitery as yet. An' ye are the man to make me dream come true once more—vict'ry."

"And be your jack-in-the-box to be pushed down out of sight at your pleasure and pop forth when you push the button," rasped North. McMann beamed upon him indulgently.

"Not at all, John, not at all. My only words spoken to ye now in private, afterwards to be repeated in public and finally whispered to ye again in private when ye are in office, are an' will be these: 'Be square an' honest an' decent in all your public dealin's. Keep yoursilf clean an' keep the city clean. Sweep your pavemints until they shine, but don't dig under thim. You'll be sure to find dirt if ye dig for it—an' besides, it spoils the pavemints. An' whin ye speak, give ivery man a show. Live an' let live, an' be not like thim people who would have everything their own way or else a howlin' desolation—or thim kind that's just as bad, the dogs in the mangers who don't want anything thimselves an' don't want anybody else to have it."

McMann leaned forward and let a palm fall on the other's knee.

"The prisent administration was of me own makin'," he went on. "Do ye think it has been on the level?"

"There have been few scandals."

"An' that bugaboo, vice, for which so many good people are always searchin' with a microscope while their own childer roll in the dirt of their homes! How often does anyone from the red lights hold up a finger to a man who keeps on his own side of the fence?"

"Very seldom."

"An' gamblin'. Ye know the town as well as the next one. Would ye know where to find a quiet little game to-night?"

"I would not."

"An' the saloons! How often do ye see a drunken man on the streets?"

"Maybe once a day, on the average."

McMann sank back. "An' all that in a city of hundreds of thousands! 'Tis a good average, as good as any city in the country—better than any place where they have tried to club people to death instead of just makin' thim behave. To find trouble in this town, ye must look for it, I tell ye, an' look hard—an' he who looks hard enough for it will find it the world over. Would ye be contint to head an administration as clean an' decent an' run upon the same system of restricted toleration of things that cannot be prevented?"

"I certainly should not be ashamed to."

"An' if I told ye I would be contint to bask in the reflected glory of your prestige, an' that I would do nothin' to embarrass ye, would ye be satisfied?"

"Yes."

"Thin, John M. North, the nomination is yours."

WITH chin hung low, the lawyer sat staring steadily at the wall before him. The room in which he sat was a favorite resort of the more prominent politicians of his party, and the walls about him were hung with the likenesses of its eminent leaders present and past. Mayors, governors, senators returned his gaze from every side, some of them born poor country boys as he had been, and who like himself had come to this metropolis and in this very room—yea, in the presence of this very man now across the table—had accepted the first nomination that had led to wealth and fame. North's eyes slowly roamed to the painting of "Farmer Jack." Here was a man whose boyhood had been curiously like his own. A bound orphan on a farm under a severe master, a boyhood wherein the days were filled with toil, poverty and abuse, the nights with study while lying upon his face before a stolen candle! And at the age of seventeen "Farmer Jack" had also run away and come to the city and read law, entered politics and made speeches. And when still a young man he had in this very room been nominated by this same machine for this same office of mayor. He had been elected, and now in the prime of middle life was a United States Senator and generally regarded as a presidential possibility. He was but one sample of the handiwork of McMann.

North drew a long, quivering breath. Even one term in the mayor's chair would be the making of him. With the prestige of an efficient and honest career in that high office back of him,

either still higher positions or a splendid private practice in the law would be his for the stretching forth of his hand. He would be a made man.

With a warning look at Elliott not to disturb the dreamer, McMann, who knew perfectly what was going through the other's brain, thrust his hands in his pockets and eyed the thought-lost one as a cat eyes a mouse. When North's glance roved to the picture of "Farmer Jack," and remained fastened there for a long minute, the face of the boss relaxed almost imperceptibly. "I've got him," he whispered to himself. Then he reached forward and clapped the other heartily upon the shoulder.

"Well, Johnny, me b'y, wake up. 'Tis the last call for dinner on the nomination train, an' a fine turkey-feed 'twill be for yoursilf, with the feathers for the opposition to feast upon."

North straightened himself. "I can't take it, Jim."

"What the—go easy on such jabber, son. Are ye losin' your mind?" he shouted angrily. Then his voice softened. "Sure, an' it is the best I have to offer ye at present, John. Mebby some other time—but that's neither here nor there. What has come over ye, ye young spalpeen?"

"I feel that I have not the age, and as yet have not had sufficient experience for so big a job."

The chortle of the one addressed echoed through the room. "Did ye iver stop to think of this? If ye were not the best all-around man that I could lay me hands on, I would not have offered it to ye?"

"Nevertheless it needs an older soldier. What is the matter with ex-Judge Pain?"

"Crooked corporation lawyer. People all wise to him."

"Or Mack Coyne?"

"Rotten record as District Attorney."

"Or Doone?"

"B'y, if he should die standin' up, he would be decayed before he struck the ground. We have got to beat Mr. Wilton Morrow or—"

North leaped into the air as though stung. "Do you mean to say—" he began hoarsely, glaring down upon the other while his fingers fastened themselves like talons in the broad shoulder.

McMann snapped the sentence in twain as scissors snap thread. "Did ye not know it? The other side is to nominate him as the snow-white lamb who shall lead thim down the lily-strewn lane to the altar of municipal virtue."

Up and down the room North began pacing with the quick steps of an angry bear. "Morrow! Morrow! Why, man, I happen to know from confidential sources that he is a liar and a thief, a demagogue and a pharisee, a jackal and a despoiler of women. Morrow the mayor of this city! Judas upon a throne! Munchausen in the pulpit! Better 'Single Lamp Martin' from Kelly's flop, for then the people would know that the Lord had forgotten them, that the hyenas were abroad and that they must stand double guard over their dead of nights." His voice took on an ominous boom, and with one finger shaking before the face of the boss and his strong face dark with a heartfelt passion, he stood the masterful figure that hushed great audiences to breathless silence.

"Jackdaw in the plumes of a dove, wolf in the wool of a sheep, serpent in the robes of St. Patrick. Tell me! Have the scales of blindness grown over the eyes of these people who are crying for purity in politics? Have their ears ceased to hear and their noses to smell? Disapprove of some of your political axioms as I have, McMann, yet when it comes to manhood you stand before Morrow as a Goliath before a cockroach. Man, with your power and your brains, your years and your arts, are you going to permit his election?"

THE big hand of the boss closed tightly around the accusing finger, and his blue eyes glinted close before the threatening face.

"Are *you?*"

North drew back. In his great indignation, all thought that he had been chosen as the best instrument to accomplish the very purpose he now cried out for had flown his mind. McMann, now tense with emotion himself, went on.

"B'y, this city is me pride. For the

last twinty years I have fathered it like 'twas me own child, petted it, spanked it whin it needed it, smiled in me heart as I watched it grow big an' strong. Honest mistakes I have made, and backsheesh have I took in roundabout ways that was to me discredit, but niver a cent have I filched from the people. I would rather have a cinder in each eye for the rest of me natural life than see that man elected. Ye are young, strong, honest an' brave, an' I call for ye for help. Do ye come?"

"One or two things more I must ask you before you get my final answer. Will you run this campaign on the square?"

"I will make our campaign the cleanest one this city ever saw."

"And you believe I am the only man who can beat Morrow?"

"I do."

"Then I accept."

McMann leaped to his feet and his bear arms closed around the neck of his protégé. "Bless ye, lad, an' I knew ye would all the time—old Mac knew it. Remimber all through the campaign that Morrow is the dog and that ye are the tin can tied to his tail. An' chase him yelpin' plump into the River Styx. Also, remimber this whilst ye are remimberin': I am your campaign-manager. Sind the newspaper-reporters to me for all information. Do ye promise not to open your head to thim?"

"Yes, Jim."

"Say nothin' to anyone except whin ye are speakin' from the platform. Leave all else to me. An' now I must be gettin' busy. Good night, Mister Mayor, an' let me do all the worryin'."

Out upon the street he went with Elliott at his heels. North followed a moment later, his brain awhirl.

CHAPTER VIII

THE week following the nomination of Wilton Morrow as the head of the opposition ticket, the Machine, with a graceful bow and a few apt remarks, introduced John M. North as its champion. Then ensued the usual pre-campaign armistice of inactivity, during which each of the great forces girded its loins and burnished its bucklers, while all day long the grindstones rumbled to the whine of the whetted snickersnee.

Then came the day when the enemy unfurled his bag of battle from above his main lodge, and early the next morning General McMann, at the head of his staff, marched up to the second floor of the dingy Central Hotel and took possession of the rooms which he had engaged as his campaign headquarters. From a window in the room which he had reserved for himself, the boss looked speculatively across the street and five stories up to where the flaunting banners of the opposition floated from the grand suite of the Morrow cohorts in the magnificent Hotel Imperial. And contrasting the squat, dingy edifice which he had chosen as his fighting place with the tremendous bulk of the sixteen-story structure across the way which sheltered the enemy, he grinned a bit and addressed Elliott.

" 'Tis the lowly submarine against the haughty battleship. We will now turn to and begin the joyous work of blowin' the bottom out of thim." He pulled off his coat, and seating himself at a broad desk began tearing open a pocketful of mail—reading one letter carefully, scarcely glancing at another, pigeonholing a third with the dexterity of a postmistress. McMann was in his element. As he worked, from time to time sharp orders were shot over his shoulder to his office assistants, while from his lips " 'Tis a Long Way to Tipperary" fell in broken fragments. Suddenly he whirled upon the lounging Elliott, and beckoning him close, breathed against his cheek:

"Go and find Mike the Shang. An' whin ye get holt of him, tell him that I am in no hurry to see him, but that I am an impatient man. Also tell him that I am waitin', and that 'tis a siveral-thousand-dollar conversation I would have with him."

A glacial smile crawled across the glacial wrinkle which passed as a mouth upon the face of the lawyer. "And it is to be a clean election," he breathed almost inaudibly.

McMann's face clouded.

"I told Johnny North that it would be the cleanest election that ever took place in this city, an' I meant it. If thim people across the street will fight above the belt, so will I, usin' only me ring experience an' the legitimate tricks of the profession. But if they hit a foul blow, I'll meet thim dirt with dirt. Now be off with ye." And Elliott swung away with head held low as a hound swings along the trail of a fox.

AN hour later Mike the Shang puffed into the office of the boss with the cool freshness of a north breeze. Mike was about forty years old, his face boyish and his manner casual. A thin yellow mustache adorned a thin face, which was still further ornamented by a thin mouth and a thin nose. A delicate yellowish-gray suit hovered about his thin form, and his vest was the hopeless envy of the negro population of St. Peter. He was as chipper as a flea, exuded as many odors as the perfume-department of a drug-store, and as he stood beside the boss the cigarette-smoke streamed from his nose and mouth as from a veritable dragon. With a windmill wave of his hand McMann sent everyone else from the room, and by the same movement fanned the visitor into a chair.

"Mike," said McMann, "the game is this: I am goin' to pull off this vict'ry on the dead level if they will let me, but if they wont—well, I'll pull it off just the same. Anyhow, I want to be ready for whativer divilment they start. Do ye see, ye blackguard?"

Mike tossed forth a nonchalant nod.

"Well, thin, this is what I want ye to do. Ye have got a list of ninety per cent of the b'ys that are bummin' through the State an' know how to reach thim. I want ye to sind out the huntin' call of the pack. Make it sound so they will know that the game is worth chasin', and that if they want to get in on the kill, they must be here before it is pulled down. A week before election-day will be their last chance to register. Mebby I'll vote thim an' mebbe not; anyway, 'tis none of their business so long as they get their soup an' suds. Can ye take care of that little detail for me?"

"Sure," returned Mike easily.

"An' sind in your bills from time to time an' I'll check thim up. Mind ye, this is but a precaution on me own part, an' nobody else is in on it. I am out to fight square by priference, but I'll not be backheeled if I can prevint it. An' I want that immaculate, ottar-of-roses, prize-ribbon corps of yours, the flower of the late Gineral Coxey's army, at me beck an' call whin the battle rages. Now on your way, lad, an' don't bother me any more until I bother you." Away went Mike, with a commission that would keep him a "live one" for many a day to come.

DETERMINED though he was to make the fight a clean one in the generally accepted sense of political cleanliness, there was one defect in his candidate's qualifications which had more than once made McMann's forehead as wrinkled as a ram's horn. This was the age of North. Had he been a few years younger, it might have been possible to conduct a pyrotechnic campaign under the guise of furthering a prodigy and win by sensationalism, but North was too old to be cast for a juvenile part, while not old enough to stop the head-wagging of the generation which pins its faith to years rather than to youth and vigor. The realization from the beginning that the politically unfortunate age of his man would be one of the vulnerable places in his armor, coupled with the knowledge that North himself would countenance no deception in that regard, had been McMann's chief reason for insisting that the other should do no talking except from the platform. The first small clash between the boss and his protégé was born of this fact.

One day North, angry-faced, strode into his manager's office with a newspaper in each hand and flattened them out before the other's nose. Upon each sheet was a large picture of himself, while beneath them were the words "John M. North, Candidate for Mayor of St. Peter. Age thirty-five years." The fist of the newcomer beat a heavy tattoo upon his own profile.

"What do you mean by handing out such misinformation?" he barked. "I

told you from the beginning that I would not sail under false colors. It is deceiving the public. What would it say about me if I were elected and this question of my age came up?"

McMann appeared to be greatly agitated. "Well, well, well! An' what do ye think of that! Thim indacint newspaper divils. 'Tis not out of sight that ye can trust thim. Plain an' distinct did I tell thim your name, age, sex an' previous condition of servitude."

"But we must undo it, Mac. We cannot let that stand as it is."

Twice McMann, distressfully rumpling his hair, paced the length of the office; then he halted before the indignant one.

"But what can one do with a destiny which shapes our ends as well as our middles? Thank your good luck that this deplorable mistake is in the favor of ye. 'Tis one of fate's rarest blessings—like an ornamintal nose." He placed his hands upon the other's shoulders. "Now listen, Johnny: Ye will find, as the campaign progrisses, so many mistakes in the public press that ye will begin to doubt the divinity of its inspirations. An' mark ye this: most of thim mistakes will be against ye. Why, thin, be so ungrateful as to throw into the discards this one blessed little piece of manna which the gods have showered upon ye by accident? 'Twould be an insult to thim an' a slap in the face of fate. Anyhow, 'tis but a trifle. Let it pass, b'y, let it pass."

"But I wont stand for misrepresentation."

"Ye wont! Just wait till the other side gets after ye an' see whether ye will or not. Anyhow, can ye with all your talents recall thim papers from the places where they have been distributed? Ye cannot. Can ye get out an extry an' send it howlin' down the streets an' alleys screamin' 'Horrible mistake in our paper! Mister North is not thirty-five years old?' Ye cannot. Can ye not accipt a misdirected bouquet as gracefully as ye can, an' will, many a well-aimed brick? Ye must. Brace up an' be brave. Take good luck like a man, for 'tis as rare as a frog fannin' himsilf with a banana leaf beneath a palm tree in old Ireland."

NORTH thought rapidly. The literature sent out by his adversaries was packed with lies, bold and brazen, in which Morrow was all but deified, stuff that—having inside information about the man—sickened him. "I will correct the matter from the platform and let it go at that," he said, partly mollified. McMann, ignoring the remark, picked up a card and held it before him.

"An' now we come to a matter of exceedin' great int'rest. 'Tis about the ladies—bless thim! Much against me natural instincts must I now talk about thim behind their fair shoulders. This November, for the first time in this great State, a woman may meet a ballot-box face to face in a gineral election. 'Tis a new toy which a bald-headed legislature has given thim to play with, the right of the ballot; an' the desire to step up to the box an' vote like a man is sweepin' over thim like a pestilince. They will register almost to a man, an'—it bein' a new plaything—will vote heavily. The wimmin, me b'y, the wimmin! 'Tis a splendid grand year for a fine-lookin' lad like yoursilf who is runnin' for office to be makin' sheep's eyes at the wimmin."

"How do you figure them out, Mac?" questioned North thoughtfully.

For his reply McMann selected from a pigeonhole a paper upon which were arrays of figures confronting each other in threatening columns.

"Like this, son: In this city there exist, live an' prosper one thousand an' two saloons, each owned by a male biped. Each one of thim on an average employs three other male bipeds—say two bartinders an' a porter. Each one of thim four male bipeds is good on the average for the support of one woman voter, wife, mother, sister or sweetheart, who is as much interested in his business prosperity as he is himsilf, since upon him they depind for their grub, garmints an' gayety. We have, thin, also, several breweries employing some thousands of other men, an' the same rule holds true. We have hundreds of coopers who make the barrels for the brewers, an' the same rule holds true with thim. We have thousands of waiters in restaurants and gardens;

we have a great bottle-blowin' plant—an' the same rule holds true with all their employees. I could name ye a score of other great industries, each one whose bottom rests like a beer-glass upon the bar of a saloon; an' thin I would be just beginnin'. Nearly all of these thousands of men have wimmin, an' nearly all of thim thousands of wimmin are going to vote for ye.

"Now let us take up most gintly the wimmin thimsilves. There are some thousands of thim in this city whose food, clothes an' drink come directly from men who are more or less in liquor. They are not good wimmin, but their votes count as much as though they were society queens. Thin, there are more thousands who are good wimmin and who like a cold bottle or a cocktail for their own thirst after the theater or with their meals or at a garden in summer. Thin there are thousands more who are indifferent, but who do not believe in the curtailment of personal liberty, an' all these will be with ye. I have the figures."

"I will go over them later. Now just who will be against me?"

"A newly formed and great organization of the ladies' clubs of the city. 'Tis composed of some scores of organizations of as fine wimmin as there are upon the footstool, who are opposed to the liquor-traffic root an' branch, who would stomp it beneath their high heels like a serpent and chase the saloon-keeper into the sea. Now, this big organization just mintioned is for ye as a man, but ag'inst ye because ye are the candidate of a party which believes in regulation instead of attimpted abolition; as for Morrow, they are ag'inst him as a man but for him because he stands upon a platform of absolute prohibition. Their committee was around to see me, but me most specious argymints an' winsome flattery produced about as much effect upon thim as a ball of putty shot ag'inst Gibralter. Therefore I turn thim over to you with me complimints. They will call upon you at elevin o'clock this day. I wish ye well."

"What will they want?"

"Nothin' excipt that ye put yoursilf in their apron an' leave the rest to thim. If you will promise thim to do that, we can close up the shop an' go home an' put our feet up on the marble-top table. For then you will have thim with ye; all the others that I mintioned will be with ye anyhow, an' whin election day comes, ye will ride over Morrow the way a caliph in his gold-mounted howdy on the top of a lily-white iliphant rides over a mud-turtil. As for keepin' that promise after ye are elected—that is up to ye. I have no advice to offer, but may the Lord abide at your elbow whin you meet."

North nodded, and out he went.

ELEVEN o'clock arrived, and North's clerk, entering his office, announced the incoming of the visitors. "Show them in," the candidate commanded; and the clerk, opening the door, bade them enter as North arose to receive them. A dozen of them there were, and from out of the foremost rank stepped a large, well-dressed woman around whom an air of resolution and command hung as drapery. Had he been obliged to classify her offhand, North would have guessed that she was a teacher of the high schools.

"I am Miss Smythe, secretary of the Federated Ladies' Clubs," she began with perfect assurance of manner. "We intend to take an active part in the campaign and vote all our members upon election day. We are confident that we have enough votes to swing the result either way, and we have come to have a personal interview with you before casting ourselves into the balance. Permit me to introduce our president."

From out of their midst a young woman came slowly, her wide-open, wonder-brimming eyes fastened upon his own; and North, feeling his knees turn to water and with his brain a whirligig, involuntarily put his hand upon his desk to steady himself. For in the fullness of that beauty which twelve years before had begun to signal its onward rush, Hope Allardyce was advancing toward him.

HEART pounding, breathing hard, he watched her slow approach through a period which seemed minutes, and yet

which in truth was but a second or two. At twenty-six years of age Hope Allardyce had more than fulfilled her girlhood promises. Throat and shoulders, arms and bosom, waist and hips—all the perfect details were molded into a flawless composite that to North's eyes surpassed that of any woman he had ever seen before. In the sunlit room her bronze hair was iridescent as an opal, her wide-set eyes brimming with soft wonder, her mouth sweetly grave. Except for the fact that her face was now that of a highly cultured woman who had seen much of the world and understood what she had seen, Hope's expression had changed little during the years. Looking straight into his face, she spoke, extending her hand as she did so.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr.,"—she hesitated—then continued in a barely audible voice,—"John M. North." The words awoke him, and he felt the color come back to his face.

"And I you—" He in turn halted with a tight compression of his lips, not knowing what her name might be now. Miss Smythe, either assuming that he had heard of her as their president and knew her name, or through a lapse of the tongue, had not mentioned it, and he knew not how to address her further.

"Miss Allardyce," she said quickly.

He laughed with uncalled-for loudness. "Of course. Ladies, please be seated." In the soft rustle of skirts which followed, North, his temples throbbing like smitten drums, found himself whispering over and over as rapidly as his silent tongue could fly: "Hope Allardyce—not married. Hope Allardyce—not married."

Miss Smythe, middle-aged, authoritative and of business mien, had evidently been chosen as their spokesman. She addressed North in a voice that had the ring of a Damascus blade, its vibrations bespeaking both edge and temper.

"We, as a political organization consisting of a large percentage of the intelligent women of the city, and with the best interests of our community at heart, have come to you as the chief candidate of your party to hear from your own lips what your policy will be should you be elected. We must know this from you, yourself, before we decide upon our own course; therefore we desire to ask you a few questions. Do you care to reply to them fully and plainly at present?"

"I will answer you."

"Very well. As you probably know, we are unalterably opposed to the public sale of liquor. You, being a lawyer, are thoroughly aware that our laws regarding the regulation of the liquor-traffic are loosely drawn, contradictory and susceptible of different interpretations. If you were mayor and reciprocated our views, you would have the power practically to abolish the public sale of intoxicants. Liquor-licenses expire annually, and cannot be renewed without the signature of the mayor. No one could make you sign. Would you refuse to do so?"

NORTH glanced at Hope. She was leaning forward with head slightly tilted in that birdlike posture of long ago. Her brows were slightly contracted, and her clear eyes were fixed steadily upon him in that intensity that he had so often noticed before. Once again she was striving to read his soul.

"While what you say is true," he replied, "as a lawyer I believe that it is as much a mayor's duty to sign a liquor-license when the applicant has complied with our ordinances, as it is for him to sign the license of a grocer. And should he refuse arbitrarily, I believe the mandamus would compel his signature. Those are my views as a lawyer.

"As a man, I believe that, operated under proper surveillance, the saloons are at the present time an unavoidable evil. I have been in communities where the men, unable to drink elsewhere, did their drinking at home. They drank more there than they did in public when open drinking was the rule. Their wives, who had never drunk before, drank to keep their husbands company, or because the liquor was constantly at hand. Their children saw all this, and stole it from the shelf. When drunkenness occurred, it took place in the home instead of in the saloon.

"As a politician, I am allied with the so-called 'personal-liberty' element. If you had a practical plan to abolish the manufacture of whisky, I might be with you; but as long as it is made, I believe it best to keep as much of it in the saloons and out of the homes as possible."

"But the abolishing of the saloon is but the first step toward the suppression of the manufacture of liquor."

"I believe you are attacking the tail instead of the head. Kill the head, and the tail will not wiggle long. Wipe out the manufacturer, and the salesman will perish."

"Then in your saloon policy you are inflexible?"

"I believe myself to be, madam."

Miss Smythe's prominent chin rose aggressively.

"In that case, we have but one more question to ask. We believe in the utter wiping out of the vice-district. In this, I assume, you are also against us."

"For reasons which I consider practical. As things now exist, you must go to the den of vice to find it—it is not permitted to come forth and seek you. Vice is as firmly imbedded in some natures as is virtue in others. Therefore, I say, confine it, chain it to the wall, and since you cannot kill it, keep it cowed beneath the lash of its keeper, put a sign upon the door as you do upon a pesthouse—'Danger'—that none will enter except those who seek it. Would you open the door of its den and let it prowl the streets? Would you loosen the wolves in the zoo and let them seek you? Would you turn the inmates of the levee upon the highways and byways to waylay decent people from behind the ambush of respectability? Again I believe your ideals to be right—your methods wrong."

HE sank back in his chair and stole another glance at Hope. She was sitting erect now as she drew on her gloves, her face placid and expressionless save for her eyes. In their clear depths he fancied he saw lurking the same soft light of sympathy which as a boy had made him feel toward her as he had toward none other. Once again Hope Allardyce was sorry for him, pitying him.

Dully, indifferent as to what his audience might say, think or do, he turned his head away. The committee, now upon its feet, was leaving the office in ominous silence. They were good women, for the most part, wives; women fighting for high ideals and the betterment of the world. And of them all, none was sweeter than Hope. Yet he must fight her plans to a finish, oppose her and her friends before all the people; and should he win, he must daily countenance things which revolted her. In an effort to steel himself he again repeated that his mind was as clean as theirs, his ideals as high and his ideas more practical. He believed in an upright man first, with theories to follow; they in theories first, even though an unfit man must be relied upon to execute them. Yet this was kismet, inevitable. She must go her way, he his. The gulf between them had been uncrossable from the beginning, and a little widening of it made no real difference. Yet it hurt, hurt.

He closed the door behind them with a formal bow to which there were few responses; then, sinking into his chair, he dropped his throbbing head into his palms. Himself and Hope Allardyce opposed to each other in a bitter campaign! Never dreaming of more than her friendship and respect, he must now lose even that. Hereafter she would view him as one who had been weak and unmoral enough to bury his manhood, that his ambitions might fly. In the fight to come, Hope, as the leader of an opposition force, would be exposed to slurs and comments which he could not prevent, and which would hurt her to the quick. She would learn things about politics which would disgust her, and some of those things she would attribute to him. No matter how clean he might fight, whether victor or vanquished, he would emerge from it a contemptible thing in her eyes. It sickened him.

Another thought: How had it been possible that one of her undoubted social prominence, and who was undoubtedly so often upon the streets he

trod, in the theaters he patronized and in the dining-places he visited, could have been in the city for any length of time without his becoming aware of it? Then there were the newspapers. Surely he could not have overlooked her everywhere. Yet overnight, like a morning-glory, she had burst into full flower at the head of a powerful organization of well-known women. It was inexplicable.

But with an unbridgable gulf between them and their lives running at cross purposes, what mattered it—what mattered it?

CHAPTER IX

BENEATH the simmering political pot, McMann stuck a blazing fagot in the shape of a fiery orator; the opposition responded with a mass of red-hot literature, and the great caldron began to boil. The newspapers slid into their respective ruts, most of which led away from McMann and his machine; preachers hammered their pulpits; mass-meetings gathered nightly; the campaign began to roar as a distant volcano. Nightly North and Morrow scurried from hall to hall in automobiles and made their speeches, often three in an evening, and at the end of the first week McMann, whose eyes and spies were everywhere, thus summed up the situation:

"Ye have spoken to twice as many people durin' the past week as has Saint Morrow," he announced with a cheerful rubbing of his grappling-hook hands, "—which same shows that Providince is on the side of the heaviest vocal artillery. But 'tis goin' to be an ixpensive fight, an' we must have plinty of the staff of life for our brave volunteers—meanin' by the staff of life the dough, of course. All of which has led me to assess the poor Irish saloon-keepers tin dollars a head for the cause, while I let the plutocratic Dutch beer-makers off at the bargain price of one thousand dollars a blockhead."

North frowned. "I don't like that, Mac. It looks too much like a shake-down."

The boss whistled his amazement.

"Shake-down, ye call it! Thin in the name of Miss Justice, how about the opposition with their ladies—bless thim—in their white caps beggin' money from strangers at the street-corners? An' how about the preachers passin' extry contribution-boxes with sticky fly-paper in the bottom of thim an' no change returned, for Saint Morrow at the ind of divine service! An' what do ye imagine the ladies thimselves pulled off at the armory last evenin'? A bazaar where in open violation of all the gamblin'-laws which they want to enforce, they had wheels of misfortune an' a score of other brace-games.

"I wint down to see what was doin'. A sweet little thing steered me up against a roulette-wheel, an' I played it to get campaign material. Sivin dollars did I put into it at fifty cints a throw, and thin, be golly, it come my number. 'Ye win,' says the little girl. Thin she gave me the capitil prize. 'Twas a fine stick of candy! An' over on the south side they had a beauty show, where fifty of the prettiest girls in the ward sold kisses for twinty-five cints a smack, or six for a dollar, to ivery man that had the cash or could put up a note that was negotiable. An' all under the direction of an' for the binifit of Saint Morrow.

"'Tis a shame an' an outrage, an' thim nice young ladies an' their mothers should be spanked an' put to bed."

McMann bit off the end of a half-dollar cigar and glanced at North wrathfully. "Now remimber, me b'y," he went on, "whin ye fight a woman, look out for her. She will bite, scratch an' hit below the belt in a way that would disgrace a barroom fighter. She knows no more about the rules of Queensberry than she does about parlimintary procedure. Of course, most of thim aim to be fair, but they are not good shots. An' whin they get their hair pulled, their good intintions go flyin' along with their rats an' hairpins. An' there's some bad ones among thim—so bad that old Nick himsilf is ashamed of them. With Miss Smythe an' Mrs. Magill against ye, ye must keep your eye on the little ball all the time. Bolt your door of nights, sleep with one eye open an' the other watchin', an' keep your shillelagh under your

pillow. An' remimber that eternal vigilance is the price of office."

THREE days later North, entering a well-known café where he frequently dropped in on his way home at night, was accosted by one of two women who were lunching alone at a table. The one who addressed him was middle-aged, well gowned and refined-looking.

"Don't you remember me—Mrs. Gordon?" she smiled engagingly. "No! Well, I was at the Burton reception about a year ago, and we had quite a chat together. But you famous men are so forgetful of us uninteresting women."

North hastily overhauled his recollection, failing to recall the incident. Yet, there was nothing strange about that. He had met scores at the reception whom he had since forgotten, and other scores whom he could not recall spoke to him daily upon the streets. It was more than probable that she spoke the truth, and he bowed in acknowledgment.

"Permit me to present you to my friend Miss West," she said with a nod at the handsome young woman by her side, who smiled sweetly as she extended her hand. Mrs. Gordon purred on: "We have just come from the theater, and dropped in here for a wee bite. My husband is to call for us presently—Robert Gordon, of Gordon and Company, you know. Wont you join us for a little moment? Your speeches have interested me intensely."

North scanned the situation in a flash. The place they were in was eminently respectable; the women appeared to be ladies; he was courteous by nature—and he was running for office with hordes of women for him, as well as opposed to him. To be agreeable to all classes was both a pleasure and a duty, and therefore he drew out a chair.

"Just long enough for a sandwich and a cup of tea, and then to bed. I am working pretty hard these days, you know," he apologized.

Mrs. Gordon frowned becomingly.

"I think it is horrid the way that ladies' what-do-you-call-it organization is fighting you. I think your views are quite right. Anyway, we shall vote for you—wont we, Mildred?"

"Indeed *I* shall," quoth Miss West heartily. "And so shall all my friends, if I can make them." She raised her dark eyes admiringly to North's strong face; then, meeting his glance, dropped them demurely.

Mrs. Gordon clapped her hands softly. "Good for you, dear girl. I know you will. And as for me, I have already converted my husband and my brother. While the ladies' what-do-you-call-it may be sincere and even right theoretically, I think that Mr. Morrow is an—well, an old fraud. Don't you, Mildred?"

"Oh, dear, yes," murmured the girl with another downward sweep of her long lashes. "I think he is a regular old thing."

"He probably has his good qualities," interceded North, who never belittled his opponent publicly except upon the platform. But Mrs. Gordon's shapely head shook itself in quick dissent.

"I don't believe a word of it. I think he is a chattering demagogue, seeking political preferment for the sake of personal aggrandizement." She leaned back in her chair with a satisfied air. "Now what do you think of *that* for a campaign speech?"

"I think I recognize it," grinned North.

"Of course you do. I heard you say it once about somebody, and I wrote it down and memorized it. I wish I could invent things like that all by myself."

"I think he is an old thing," reiterated Miss West absent-mindedly, with a third falling of her eyelashes.

"Telephone call for Mrs. Gordon," announced the waiter in a soft voice as he bent over that lady. She arose.

"It must be from my husband. I wonder why he has not called for us!" Then with a smile and a shake of her finger at North: "Talk to her real nicely until I come back." And with a soft rustle of skirts she was gone, leaving the pair to entertain each other.

WITH some interest North observed his companion as she chatted while he finished his caviar. She was

about twenty years old, stylish without being extreme, large-eyed, full-lipped and beyond question pretty. Outside of her eyes, which she used effectively, she was quaintly demure in her manner. Her talk was about the caliber of a high-school girl's.

"Mamma and I live alone together," she confided. "Mr. and Mrs. Gordon are great friends of ours, and they often take me to the shows with them and then drive me back home. He is in the real-estate business, you know. They are awfully nice." She looked around with a small frown. "I wonder where she is all this time. I think she is mean to run away like that."

"Yes?" interrogated the man.

"She must have been gone nearly half an hour. She can't be talking into an old 'phone all that time just to a husband." She signaled the waiter who had announced the call to her missing friend. "Please tell the lady you sent to the 'phone to hurry back," was her command. The waiter scraped his feet with an apologetic bow.

"Ah, ma'm'selle! I was just about to approach. I have been so much in deman'—so many order' to fill I have 'mos' forget. Ze lady she hear ze bad news on de 'phone. Her husban', he get hurt by automobile an' they sen' for her to come queek. She mos' faint. She hop in de car an' go away. I guess she forget to tell you—she tries so hard to make speed to her husban'. I beg pardon. I was so busy to tell before."

"Oh!" gasped Miss West.

"Ah!" echoed North.

She seized her purse hurriedly and arose. "Then you must excuse me, Mr. North, for I must go right home. If you will just accompany me as far as the street, I will get a taxi."

"Delighted," murmured North.

THEY passed out at once, and at the curb he opened a cab door for her as she extended her hand. "Good night, Mr. North. I am awfully glad to have met you." She placed one foot upon the step and half arose upon it as she turned her face to him with a farewell flash of her eyes. "I hope—"

There was a sudden turning of a slender ankle upon a high-heeled shoe, a low cry of pain from Miss West—and the next second she fell heavily against him. Instantly he caught her, preventing her from sinking, by an arm around her waist.

"Hurt!" he inquired solicitously.

Her face was twisted, and she began to cry softly, plaintively. "My ankle! I have sprained it. Help me. Help me inside." Bodily he swung her to the seat, her arm clinging close about his neck during the transit.

"Do you wish a physician?" he asked as he gently released her. Upon her seat she was swaying and moaning.

"No, no. Take me home quickly. Mamma has studied osteopathy, and I want her to attend to it. Don't let me go alone—*please*, Mr. North. I'm faint."

"All right. Be back in a minute." But she cried out plaintively.

"Don't leave me alone. Where are you going?"

"I forgot my change. I will return in a moment," he called over his shoulder as he hurriedly reëntered the café. Two minutes later he returned and took his seat beside her. "And now where?"

"241 East Wood Street," she called faintly to the chauffeur, and that gentleman responded with a burst of speed that brought down a vivid Irish curse upon his head from the barely missed corner policeman. Then with the motor purring like a contented cat, they whirled into the street for a straightaway four-mile violation of the speed-ordinance.

The girl was evidently suffering. Slowly her head fell sidewise until it rested lightly on North's shoulder, while from time to time a half-suppressed "Oh" escaped her. With a hand resting lightly upon her shoulder he held her in place as the taxi swayed drunkenly over the rough places. Several times he spoke to her, but her only reply was the invariable "Take me home quickly. I want Mamma to treat me." There being nothing more that he could do or say, North attempted neither.

With the roll and pitch of a tug in a seaway, the cab halted in front of a somber three-story building, ancient, and yet still respectable of appearance. In years gone by it had been the home

of some man of success, but long since had been converted into a flat-building for the salary-earning classes. Standing as it did in the middle of the block, it was dark, no midnight lights shining from its windows. A dozen stone steps led up to the entrance, and North, lifting the girl from her seat and supporting her as she stood upon one foot and leaned against him, addressed her inquiringly.

"Well!"

Her hand fell upon his sleeve. "Ours is the first flat," she explained. "Mamma must have gone over to the Longs' for the evening and has not yet returned. We must get her." She addressed the chauffeur. "Go at once to 1496 Gross Avenue and tell Mrs. West that her daughter is at home injured. Bring her back at once."

Then as the machine darted away, she looked up appealingly at her escort.

"I can never repay you for all this trouble and kindness, Mr. North, but I am a frightfully helpless thing when I am hurt. We cannot stand here, can we?"

"No," he instantly agreed. "Your latchkey, please."

SHE fumbled in her purse and handed it to him, and hoisting her bodily once more, he carried her up the rather long flight and into the apartment she designated. It was dark within, and he blindly followed her directions. "Straight ahead—and for goodness' sake don't fall over a chair with me. This is my room. Now let me down, please." He allowed her to slide until she stood upon one foot again. In the darkness he heard her feeling for something, and the next instant she had switched on the light. He looked around.

They were in an ordinary bedchamber, rather prettily furnished, a bed close before them. The girl sank upon it with the sigh, "Oh, I am so glad to be home." She removed her hat and tossed it upon the dresser, a moment later unfastening her dress at the throat. "I must have more air," was her apology. North nodded, saying nothing.

She drew her skirt midway up a shapely calf and looked down at her feet. One slim ankle was bent well inwardly, and at it she gazed ruefully. "Just one more little favor, and I will let you depart with a thousand thanks and begging a thousand pardons. My ankle pains me dreadfully, and I must get that shoe off at once. I know I could never do it alone. Would you mind unlacing it for me?"

"Not in the least," responded North without hesitation. "Glad to be of any service to such a charming young lady." He bent upon one knee, and carefully unlacing the shoe, drew it from the foot with all gentleness. From Miss West broke a cry, sharp and loud.

"Oh!"

THE door behind him blew open as before a hurricane-blast; and North, darting a glance over his shoulder, saw three men spring into the room, the foremost of whom bore a revolver. He arose deliberately with the shoe still in his hand and confronted them. They were fairly well dressed and not badly featured, but from the face of the revolver-bearer shone the malignancy of a jealous devil. His first glance was at the now cowering girl with her bosom half exposed and one foot shoeless; his second was at the man before him.

"So I have caught you two at last, have I?" he sneered with a malicious uplifting of his lip which showed his teeth. "I have been watching you lately. Pretty pair of birds, aint you?"

"Yes," agreed North. "How did you manage to catch up with us?" The voice of the other grew more menacing, the snarl more wolflike.

"Because I was put wise to you and was laying for just this thing. I was shadowing her, and I saw you meet her in that restaurant and pick her up in your arms and put her in that cab. I and my friends got another cab and followed you here. That's how I got you, you skunk."

"Good work! But may I be so inquisitive as to inquire what business it is of yours?"

The other advanced a step, his evil face thrust forward, cocking the revolver as he came.

"You know well enough, you hound, and for a cigar I'd plug you where you stand." He broke into the snarling laugh of a hyena. "Didn't know that she was my wife, did you? Oh, no! Of course not."

WITH a shrug of his shoulders, North turned to the girl. "Is this true?" he demanded quietly. She had burrowed her face in a pillow and was sobbing softly. Receiving no response, he again turned to the man.

"What's the answer—how much coin of the realm do I owe you?" He dropped the shoe and thrusting a cigar into his mouth, deliberately lighted a match. Its blue light flamed up brightly as it ignited.

"Money! Curse you—I aint that kind of a man. Do you think that money could repay me? Not on your life. But I'll tell you what I am going to do: I am going to ruin you, you fake politician. I am going to expose you in the newspapers. You wont come within a mile of being elected when this little affair comes to light. How do you like that, you home-breaker?"

"Not very well." North chewed reflectively at the end of his cigar as he meditated his answer. "Now let's get right down to bed rock and see just what your proof is. Of course, I will deny it, and my word counts for quite a bit in this community." Over the other's face there crawled a cunning leer as he jerked his thumb backward.

"There are three eyewitnesses here, not counting that woman, and I'll make her come across and confess or know the reason why. You needn't be afraid that she wont do it, either. Also I have a couple of other friends who saw you pick her up in your arms and put her in the cab. Then there is the chauffeur who drove you and her here. We used to work side by side in a factory years ago—I should worry about him. Also I have got a copy of the register of a disreputable hotel where you and she stayed under false names, and the clerk will identify you as the man who registered. I guess that will be evidence enough against your lone word, wont it? What town do you expect to move to?"

"Clever young man," returned North coolly. "Exceedingly clever. Wish you were on my side of the fence this campaign." Then raising his voice a trifle: "The scene is all set. Come in, boys."

From out of the hall and into the room through the door which the three had left ajar, two men leaped, tall, broad shouldered, capable looking. "My friends, Detectives Casey and Schmidt," introduced North blandly. "Arrest all these people, Officers."

THERE was a scream from the girl, a genuine one this time, and she pulled the pillow over her head like a child who hears a goblin. From the men came a couple of oaths and a backward step as a pair of revolvers flashed in the hands of the policemen. In an instant the officers had disarmed the leader and herded the three into a corner. North seated himself upon the bed and addressed them cheerfully.

"Since you were so entertaining as to tell me about your cleverness in catching me, I will attempt to be equally kind and recount my little efforts in beating you to it. I suspected that this was a frame-up from the moment our delightful 'Mrs. Gordon' disappeared and failed to return. When the 'sprained ankle' episode occurred at the precise psychological moment, I became positively and most ungallantly suspicious.

"Therefore, upon the pretext of returning for my change, I stepped back into the café and gave the lodge-sign to my good friends Casey and Schmidt, who have rather taken it upon themselves to linger around me and see that I do not stub my toe and fall in the dark. Naturally enough, they followed us in still a third cab and hid themselves conveniently hereabouts. At the flare of one of these blue matches, especially contrived for such occasions as this, they understood that they were to enter the house, by force if necessary, and receive any little instructions I might give them. By the way, boys, how did you get through that self-closing front door, anyway?"

"Me jimmy," grinned Casey, holding that instrument up to view.

"Yah, dot's how," corroborated Schmidt.

"And you listened to my conversation with these three gentlemen from the hallway?"

"Iv'ry word, yer honor."

"Und I heardt it too—bet your life!"

"Thanks, boys. If I am elected, I'll make you both sergeants."

North's voice suddenly rasped like a saw that strikes a knot, as he turned upon the captured four.

"Now see here, you! It is either a case of you four coming out and making a clean breast of it, or else learning the lockstep in that big stone institution of which you have heard so much and perhaps even seen the inside of. You have told me that you did not want money for this attempted blackmail—that all you wished was to ruin my political career. Now, of course, I know that you don't care a cent about my political career. Who put you up to this job?"

From the girl's heaving bosom sobs unmistakable and distressful were being shaken in rapid succession, and North laid his hand upon her shoulder. "Come, now. The truth," he said impatiently. "I don't want to make war on a woman, but this thing has got to be cleared up."

Slowly the tear-streaked face came into view.

"And if I do tell the truth, Mr. North—the whole truth—"

"I will be inclined to overlook this matter if you behave yourself in the future."

"Then I will confess everything." She shot a defiant glare at the one who had borne the revolver. "Anyway, I was dragged into it. For a week all four of us and Mrs. Gordon—only that isn't her real name, of course—had been trying to get a chance at you in that café where we knew you went so often in the evening. Well, to-night the chance came. You know the rest. That is all there is to that part of it."

"And who put you up to it?"

"Miss Smythe and Mrs. Magill and that hound Morrow."

North had already suspected the connection of these women with the affair. But the venom in the girl's voice as she applied the epithet to his rival for office required an explanation. "Why do you call him 'that hound Morrow?'" he demanded.

Into her eyes sprang the fury of a wounded wildcat.

"Because he did me a terrible wrong when I was his stenographer."

"Another one, hey!" mused the questioner. Then: "What were you five to receive for this dirty work?"

"They promised us two thousand dollars if we succeeded. And we were to have good city positions if he won."

"Were the women with him when he engaged you?"

"No sir. He made the proposition to me privately, thinking I was at his mercy, you know. But they were just outside the door listening. Of course, the three of them were to outlie me in case I double-crossed them. They could do that easily enough, and I knew it."

"And what are Miss Smythe and Mrs. Magill to receive if he is elected?"

"I don't just know, but I have heard it talked that they will each get a very good office."

"Did anyone else know of the plot?"

"I don't think so, sir. Most all of the Ladies' Federation are real ladies. They wouldn't stand for rough work like this if they knew about it."

"And is this man your husband?"

She looked at the one indicated spitefully.

"I am sorry to say that he is. Morrow married me to him to get rid of me. If it hadn't been for that hound, I might have married a real man."

"I think that is all from you for the present." North turned to the cornered three. "Do you precious scoundrels corroborate this?"

Their heads bowed sullenly.

"You outplayed us, Mr. North, and you are the boss," returned the girl's husband. "What she says is gospel, and we would be fools to fight you any further. Don't be too hard on us, that's all. We didn't have anything against you. It was a plain case of needing the money."

North approached them. "And now," he announced sharply, "here are my terms, and you will either agree

to them or you go to jail from this room. Go back to your sweet employers and tell them that the plan failed—that I did not fall for it—and tell them that you refuse to make any further attempt. Say nothing more unless you hear from me. These officers will keep their eyes on you until after election day."

"Indade we will," grinned Casey.

"You shust bet your life," echoed Schmidt.

North picked up his hat and left the room. It was a long walk home, but he wanted to think. And these were the kind of people Hope Allardyce and thousands of other good women were consorting with, working with hand in hand to defeat him. Should he expose the whole villainous plot? It would be certain to elect him. Should he tell her personally? He could not. Should he make the exposure public, it would humiliate her to the depths to know that she had associated and worked with such vermin; and should he tell her privately, she might distrust him and think it was but an attempt to force her out of the game. For her sake he would hold his tongue.

Should he tell McMann? He bit his lip. Knowing his friend as he did, he was afraid that the boss in his anger would retaliate by some method which he, North, could not countenance. A moment's deep thought decided him. Win or lose, he would ignore the ugly business. He would keep his lips sealed to all.

Head bowed, lost in thought, he went swinging with wide strides along his homeward way.

CHAPTER X

RISING, ever rising, spinning more dizzily each moment as a tiny whirl of dust mounts into a roaring sandstorm, so the campaign reached its zenith. As rival armies of old, having first shot their arrows at long range and then thrown their spears at shorter distance, at last closed in upon each other in hand-to-hand conflict with swords and daggers, so did the two forces of St. Peter now make war. And as in civil conflicts, wherein because of the very nature of the issues involved, families are split in twain and sons find themselves bombarding the houses of their sires, so now were fathers, mothers, sons and daughters battling each other relentlessly.

Almost ceaselessly the blare of bands rolled down the cañons of the city, and oratory clogged the atmosphere of hall and auditorium. Aroused to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, the women of the readjustment movement paraded in long columns, many with babies in their arms, while the Machine, oiled to perfection and therefore running noiselessly, worked with silent swiftness day and night. McMann was in his element.

"'Tis a gran' battle, and above all things do I love a hard fight. The wimmin—bless thim!—are fightin' for Saint Morrow under the belief that he is for their homes an' families. An' whin a woman gets that notion in her head an' begins to show the whites of her eyes, thin, b'ys, 'tis time for the men to don their ancistral armor, gird thimsilves with shield an' buckler—an' thin take to the storm cellar." He turned indignantly upon his listeners. "Think of it! Even Norah, me wife, whom I made love to whin she was milkin' cows in Hogan's Flats, whom I have loaded with jewels an' preshus stones an' made the mistress of a great mansion, is divided against both me an' hersilf. She is for the saloons an' against the 'District.' An' I'm blessed if this very mornin' she didn't let fly a dinner-plate at me with almost her former accuracy. But we have thim, b'ys, we have thim. There will be fifty thousand votes polled, an' we will win by five thousand at the lowest. An' now ye have loafed around here long enough. Get out an' go to work, ye scutts, or ye'll see crape on the city hall come November."

"How about my Coxey's army?" whispered Mike the Shang as the others filed from the room. "Are you going to use them?"

McMann picked up his desk-telephone.

"Keep thim lined up an' markin' time as should the gineral of an army. As

I told ye before, I'll fight decent as long as that crook Morrow does. But if I hear of his tryin' to turn a dirty trick, I'll turn loose your mongrels of war— an' before I do it, I'll inoculate each one of thim with the rabies. An' while three is a crowd an' two is company, at prisint I desire the name of this concern to be 'McMann' an' not 'McMann and Company.' An' if that is not hint enough for ye to clear out, presintly I'll tell ye to."

IN the very midst of the battle the thing occurred for which both McMann and North had been most ardently praying—a challenge to North to meet Morrow in joint debate. Fully cognizant, in his calmer moments, of the folly of the thing, an impulsive leader of the opposition in the midst of one of his impassioned addresses dared the Machine champion to come forth and meet his leader upon the same platform and upon the same night, and there before all who might come to listen, defend himself "and the bunch of crooks, drabs and drunkards" who were behind him.

McMann, who was in the audience, was upon his feet in an instant, his great voice drowning the other's as the roar of a lion drowns the squeal of a rat.

"In the name of honest government, the business man, the workers, the poor an' the oppressed, we accipt your challenge," he shouted. "Back out of it if ye dare."

The crowd, wild with delight at the prospective battle, roared its approval until the roof quivered. There could be no withdrawing by either side now, and thus by the foolish sentence of an overenthusiastic lieutenant, Morrow was shackled to a contract from which he would have given thousands of dollars to escape. For specious talker though he was, he feared the quick-brained, full-throated North as a poodle fears a mastiff.

Instantly the newspapers took up the challenge and acceptance, and the clamor rolled into a public demand loud and insistent. Realizing that there was no way of retreat and that he must make the best of it, Morrow assented with feigned alacrity. Quickly the seconds were appointed, the time and place agreed upon, and the great political duel became a certainty. Commensurate with the importance of the event, the Coliseum, vastest of the city's auditoriums, was to be the scene of conflict, and the air hummed like a wire in the wind with the vibrations of the coming battle.

WHEN the eventful night settled portentously, St. Peter, accustomed to great crowds though it was, stared at itself in bewilderment. From street and boulevard, alley and terrace, hovel and mansion; on foot and in carriage, street-car and auto; from north, east, south and west, there came sweeping toward the vast building a multitude of humanity which choked the thoroughfares. Slowly, as great rivers move, it converged into the space where the giant building stood, and sweeping a hundred policemen from its path, rolled into the huge interior. An hour before the debate was to begin, the building was packed to the doors by ten thousand earnest-faced men and women, while thrice as many more, like the waters of a dark lake, lapped its sides without. And almost as awesome as this tightly drawn mass of two score thousand of humanity was its uncanny silence.

UPON her insistence, North had consented to go to the scene of battle in the car of Mrs. Gertrude Cramer-Ogden, a young widow whom he knew well. In accepting her invitation he had been governed by several reasons. In the first place, thousands of women were working for him, and he desired to show his appreciation by publicly recognizing their sex upon this night. Furthermore, Mrs. Cramer-Ogden had been a veritable dynamo of energy in his behalf, and had done some exceedingly clever and effective things. And—well, he liked her. A better acquaintance had shown him that behind her simulated girlish innocence she possessed both cleverness and tact, and she amused him immensely. Therefore, there being no other woman in his life, he had of late devoted to her as much

time as he could conveniently spare. He had not made love to her and did not intend to, viewing her purely in the light of a zealous adherent and amusing companion.

Gertrude, quite swept off her dainty feet by his personality, vain to be seen with him as her escort and loving flattery as a mouse loves cheese, had little difficulty in convincing herself that he was paying her desperate court. Acting upon all this, she lost no opportunity to claim him by insinuation as her private property upon every possible public occasion, and above all when by so doing she imagined she could shoot into the bosoms of her fair sisters the direst of woman's weapons, the dart of envy. To have captured him upon this great night when the eyes of the city were upon him nearly suffocated her with satisfaction, and she nestled very close to him as the car honked its way through the mass that pressed the walls of the ampitheater.

They entered by a side passage sacred to the elect of the occasion. At one end of the building was a permanent stage with a full equipment of curtains, flies and properties, for upon these boards in times of carnival grand-opera stars sang or other performances upon a large scale were given. The curtain had been raised, and flanking one side of the stage some hundreds of chairs had been arranged for the prominent partisans of one side; upon the other were an equal number for those opposed. In the center, the fighting space was clear. Entering late, his companion by his side, North, accustomed as he was to herded masses of humanity, was almost appalled at its size and density.

With twenty thousand eyes upon him to note his every movement and twenty thousand ears to hear his every word, North once more felt the sensation that occasionally comes to the most experienced of public speakers and actors, a trembling of the knees, a quickness of breath and a slight giddiness. He turned to Mrs. Cramer-Ogden. She was weaving slightly in her tracks.

"Take hold of me. I am faint," she whispered; and North, grasping her arm firmly, stepped forward into the arms of the master of ceremonies, who with a wave of his hand at the audience led him to his seat. Seeing that he still retained his companion's arm, and thinking he desired to keep her with him, he drew up a chair and placed her at North's side.

With the wild roar of welcome from his followers which greeted North, all fear left him, and he gazed upon them with the same cool confidence as had they been a petit jury in their narrow box. And of all that multitude, the happiest person in the hall at that moment was Gertrude Cramer-Ogden, for her little scheme had worked to perfection. By pleading faintness she had forced him to take her by the arm and lead her to a seat beside him in the face of all St. Peter, the only woman sitting among the men upon the great stage.

CHAPTER XI

NORTH surveyed the arrangements. The several hundred notables who occupied the stage had been arranged in the form of a horseshoe which opened upon the audience, several rows of chairs being required to accommodate them. His place was near the center, with his supporters to his right, while not far away sat Morrow with his friends to his left. The women of both factions were given sections by themselves on opposite sides of the horseshoe at its extreme ends. He ran his eyes over the Morrow feminine contingent. Seated in the midst of them, as befitted their leader, was Hope Allardyce.

In common with all her companions, Hope was dressed in white, this color having been officially adopted by the Federation to symbolize the purity of their cause. The beauty of the outlines of her figure as revealed by the trim, plain garment was idealistic, but Hope's face, though undoubtedly as pretty a one as could be found in her committee of one hundred good-looking women, to his eyes which had known it so long, seemed older than when he had last seen it, so short a time before. Also it looked graver, haunted by an indefinable look which bespoke amongst

other things the manifold sensations of earnestness, worriment, regret and weariness. In four weeks she seemed to have aged as many years. North, a wave of compassion sweeping over him, knew that his prophecy at their last meeting had in part, at least, come true. Beyond doubt she had already learned much of the heartless game of politics, and instinctively he knew that as she sat there she repented that she had ever consented to play at it—at the same time knowing that her spirit would never permit her to weaken until the last ballot was cast.

For a moment he saw her eying Mrs. Cramer-Ogden coolly and critically from head to toe with woman's eyes that he knew missed not the slightest detail of face, form or raiment. Then slowly her glance turned to his own, and again he saw settle in her eyes that calm, thoughtful look as though she were reading him, reading him to his innermost depths. He bowed to her with neither formality nor friendliness, a bow of mingled courtesy and respect. Changeless of face, not the slightest glint of emotion showing, she nodded an acknowledgment and then averted her face. Nor did he catch her eye again, though he tried his utmost upon a hundred covert occasions.

THE master of ceremonies, immaculate in his evening suit and swollen with importance, stepped forward and struck the speakers' table a thunderous blow with his gavel. The rumbling surf-voice of the audience stilled, and the brooding silence of the vast coliseum with its packed thousands became that of a mammoth cave. Through the tense, vibrating air his high voice crackled like crumpling tin as he started to announce at length the object of the meeting. A mutter of impatience warned him that they would have none of him, and waving Morrow forth, he retired in disappointment.

Briskly the candidate stepped forth, bowing to the right, to the left, to the balconies, down.

And then ensued a scene seldom witnessed even in this land of bizarre campaign-methods and Yankee political ingenuity. As though shot from a marksman's trap, scores of pure-white doves, each with a white ribbon floating from its neck, were simultaneously launched from as many places in the hall, and at that signal and to the crash of a band, thousands arose to their feet, and the thundered bars of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," shook the very walls of the building as might the deep tones of a hundred pipe-organs. From all sides, singly, in pairs, in dozens and in whole sections, men and women stood upon their chairs waving hats and handkerchiefs as they hugged each other frenziedly, while beneath the vast volume of human voices the drums and cymbals of the band were drowned as by the thunders of a storm.

North shot a glance at Hope. With face alight with fervor, she in common with all her contingent was standing upon her chair, waving an American flag in one hand and a white one in the other as she sang with the rest. All weariness and worriment were gone now; naught but zeal and earnestness remained, and he turned his eyes away with a dull pain throbbing within him.

As the song was finished and the measured roar changed to volleying cheers and "John Brown's Body," the tributes began to arrive. Over the footlights by handfuls, basketfuls and wagonloads the flowers came until the smiling and bowing orator-to-be waded amongst them almost knee deep. And at the moment when it seemed that human throats had done their utmost, a baby in a basket, a tiny white flag in its fist, came over with the flowers, and a thousand fresh voices arose in a new tidal wave of enthusiasm.

Smilingly Morrow lifted the infant from its receptacle, held it aloft that all might see and then passed it to its mother among his women adherents. It was five minutes later before the last scattering yells permitted him to utter his first words.

WILTON MORROW was about forty years old. He was of medium height, slender and dapper, with a manicured polish of person and manner. In evening dress he might, upon the floor of a dancing academy,

have been mistaken for one of its tutors, but when he spoke, he displayed a power which none, not hearing him, would have suspected lay latent in the man. In action his face was expressive, rather handsome, apparently sincere. His voice, rather deep for one of his size, was perfectly trained and pleasant to the ear. His manner tended to convince. His sentences were couched in simple, well-selected words and bore a superficial polish, while his wit was ready and his powers of mimicry excellent.

Morrow's catch phrase, insistently hammered into the ears of his audience, was "The Home and Clean Politics, versus the Saloon and the Machine." Each completed argument was followed by an apt story as an anticlimax, stories that caused the audience, irrespective of its politics, to laugh delightedly; each anticlimax in turn was immediately overcome by an argument more telling than the one which had gone before.

Much experience upon the platform told North that the speaker had won the respectful attention of the entire crowd, and that he was rapidly mounting in its favor. Seeing what he would have to overcome, he began bracing himself for a much greater effort than he had anticipated he would be called upon to make.

For an hour and a quarter, the time allotted each contestant, Morrow held his listeners with a skill and logic that would have been a credit to any man, and at the end of that time, with his final and extremely well-done climax ended, he stopped and with the first notes of the welling applause, turned with a smile and a gracious wave of his hand toward North and sat down. Put to a nerve-racking test, Morrow had done well, exceedingly well; and in that moment North, knowing the other for the hypocrite he was, could not withhold certain admiration for the man.

For many minutes pandemonium reigned. It was heartfelt and audience-wide, and North knew that unless he could counteract the enthusiasm which his rival had generated, he would lose thousands of votes by this night's meeting. Impatiently he bit his lip as he waited through the seemingly endless round after round of applause that kept crashing one upon another, each sounding more thunderous than its predecessor. For the hundredth time he turned his eyes toward Hope. Her white-gloved hands were still clapping as rapidly as they had five minutes before, and when Morrow passed by her chair, she arose and taking his hand, shook it warmly as her face beamed its approval. Sick at heart, North looked away.

Interminably the applause strung out until with a final wild outburst it ceased, and the hall stilled itself for the new voice which was to play upon its emotions. Once more the immaculate gentleman of the gavel took his place at the speakers' table, and, grown wiser now by humiliating experience, introduced the next orator in a brief sentence. And then it was that the Machine, oiled to the last ball and bearing, smooth-running as a grayhound, perfectly adjusted, feeling the touch of its master, Jim McMann, began to work.

FROM one side of the coliseum a stentorian voice roared the name "North." From the other side a kindred throat echoed it. From each of the other ends fellow-spirits took up the call, and within ten seconds the great building was rocking as a ship in the trough to the thunderous beat of thousands of feet and voices as they chorused their demand of "North, North, John M. North." By his side, the one whose name was being bellowed heard Mrs. Cramer-Ogden screaming hysterically.

Louder, heavier, growing in volume each moment like the roar of an oncoming cyclone, pulsating in the ears as the throbbings of an engine inconceivably vast, deep-throated and ominous in its warning of resistless power, it rose and swelled until the building swayed in unison to the pulsations of the monster imprisoned within it. Then from the hilltops which surrounded the city in huge bulwarks miles away, and adding their majestic tones to the throbbing beat, cannon began to boom.

Awsome in their solemn cadence and volume, they pounded with Titanic blows. No flag fluttered; no band blew; no bird took flight, and no one left his seat. It was not the frenzied call of an individual or a sect, but rather the deep-toned voice of a mighty multitude sweeping on its way in a solid mass and resistless in its organized might, crushing as a juggernaut in its weight. It was the onward sweep of a veteran army that would brush its unorganized foe aside as the mammoth swept his way, the jarring tread of the gigantic man-made machine.

For ten minutes to the second the clamor beat; then it stopped to a silence wherein a single belated voice echoed shrilly from wall to wall. North, casting his eyes over the human sea, saw frightened women, appalled by the growling menace of the monster that had just ceased, clinging to their escorts, while nervous men cast anxious glances toward the doors. And this was just the effect that Jim McMann had played for and won—to frighten the timid who were opposed to him and draw into his net those irresolutes who are always eager to be upon the side of might and victory. To compare the opening ovation accorded North with that given to Morrow would be to compare the jingle of sleigh-bells to the voice of a deep-throated iron monster in a cathedral tower.

IN a hush that was deathlike, North arose. Tall and broad of shoulder, strong of face and limb, he slowly paced the length of the footlights before his opening word came to him. Then he began. Low-voiced at first, yet each word carrying to the furthest wall, he uttered his formal thanks for the impressive greeting that had been accorded him. Then with one biting sentence that hopelessly crippled the first and weakest of his opponent's arguments, he cast it contemptuously aside and settled himself to his work.

Step by step, as unerringly and remorselessly as a bloodhound on the track of its quarry, he followed the trail of the other's speech. From the alluring baits which the one whom he sought to run down had strewn behind him, he tore the skin and exposed the cunning poison-mark of the fugitive who would have tricked him. The twists and doublings of the other's tracks he ignored, cutting with the sureness of instinct straight across the main trail again as he made a mockery of shallow subterfuges. The real places of danger where the crust was thin and the waters ran swift below, he trod so lightly that few realized the consummate skill with which he stepped, only knowing that somehow he had gotten safely over them and that they therefore must not have been so threatening, after all.

Morrow had been light, graceful and pleasing, fencing prettily with a foil; North was an iron-muscled gladiator with a two-edged sword which despite its weight he handled easily. His opponent had but thrust and pricked; North not only lunged to the hilt but cut right and left with sweeping blows that hewed his way triumphantly where the press was thickest. His defense was a lightning play of skill, his attack murderous. With a voice sometimes as low and musical as the lowing of distant cattle, again clanging like an anvil smitten with a sledge, he battered down the walls that his enemy had built, as though they had been of clay, and trampled the ruins remorselessly.

Turning to underscore a point in the middle of a sentence, he found himself looking straight into the eyes of Hope. She was leaning far forward in her chair, her hands gripping its arms, her lips parted, staring at him as though spellbound and helpless to move. He had spoken an hour already; yet during that time he had addressed an audience that had been as silent as the dead. Half-awed by the elemental power of the speaker, half-fascinated by his voice and clashing sentences, they had sat as beneath a wizard's spell. North was making the greatest speech ever heard between those wide walls.

Once more North turned upon them, and with but a few brief moments remaining to him dropped all else and with logic cold as ice and sarcasm that bit and stung, drew deadly parallels between his cause and that of those who opposed him. Then with a dozen crisp

words he gave them thanks and good night, and turning his back, sank into the nearest chair, limbs trembling and flooded with perspiration, his collar a sodden rag.

FOR a few seconds after North had seated himself, the spell of silence which he had cast upon his audience remained unbroken. Then over the surface of the horde ran a ripple of sound that in the wink of an eye burst into a thunder-clap wherein men screaming into each other's ears remained unheard. Not in peals did it come as had the applause which followed Morrow, but in a solid crash without break or quaver, a solid wall of uproar that lasted until it seemed that throats must crack. "Nine minutes by the watch without a break," a friend told him afterwards, and to North upon his chair it seemed thrice that long. Then as it lulled through sheer exhaustion of lungs, he felt a pair of huge arms from behind dragging him to his feet. Opening his eyes, he found himself in the embrace of McMann, who with tears of joy and pride trickling, was crushing him with the power of an anaconda.

"Me son, me son!" cried the boss between hugs and poundings. "Ah, 'twas great, 'twas grand, 'twas hivenly. Ye are the greatest speaker in St. Peter, in America, in the world. An' old Jim McMann will make ye, and ye will be me own b'y. Bless ye, lad, bless ye!"

"Go away, Jim, and don't bother me to-night. I am all in. See you tomorrow," expostulated North as he pushed his friend away. So with a final thump upon North's back, the boss went scurrying off to join his cronies in celebration of the greatest evening that St. Peter had ever known.

Behind the flies where she was waiting him impatiently, North saw Mrs. Cramer-Ogden; and finding his hat he hastened to join her.

"Oh, you dear, *dear* man! It was as lovely as it could be. I never took a breath from the time you began until you seated yourself. Do you think you could ever teach me to talk like that?" Her china-doll blue eyes were a-sparkle, and an unwonted color bloomed in her fair cheeks as she seized both his hands and standing on her toes, turned her face upward dangerously close to his own. North, about to reply with some small flattery in kind, chanced to raise his eyes and saw Hope Allardyce hurrying toward them with a radiant face. But at the sudden seizing of his hands by Gertrude, and the uplifting of her face, Hope altered her course abruptly and passed them at some distance without indication that she was conscious of their presence.

Forgetting his companion as though she had never existed, North freed himself from her fingers and went hurrying in pursuit of the retreating one, leaving Mrs. Cramer-Ogden staring after him with sky-blue eyes in which the lightnings were beginning to gather, and a small round mouth suddenly grown thin and straight.

"The wretch!" she screamed to herself with a click of her small sharp teeth. "To insult me—tear away from me and leave me like that without a word. And when I brought him here and he has been making love to me! And for that woman who is trying her best to defeat him! And after all I have done for him in this campaign!"

Waiting but long enough to make sure to see North put his hand upon Hope's arm and walk deliberately away with her without even so much as a backward glance, Gertrude dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief and went tripping across the stage with high-heeled shoes that clicked like angry castanets. As she was about to leave the stage-entrance, there came to her ears the cry of an angry man in the midst of the departing throng. "Who is John M. North, anyway?" From somewhere else a couple of other voices took it up: "Who? who?"

She paused upon the instant, her brow suddenly wrinkling as does a placid pool into which a stone is cast. "Who *is* John M. North, anyway?" she whisperingly repeated. Then starting forward, she dived into her electric and banged the door behind her.

NORTH, overtaking Hope in a dozen long strides, laid a detaining hand lightly upon her sleeve. She looked up

at him with an elevation of her brows and a cool nod, without changing her pace a whit.

"Pardon me," he began lamely. "I saw you coming toward me as though you were about to speak; then suddenly you changed your course as though to avoid me. I wondered what suddenly frightened you. So I hurried after you."

"I have already observed that," she returned indifferently, her face averted.

"But you were intending to speak to me, were you not?" he pleaded hopelessly. Again the eyebrows arched.

"Speak to you! Why should I follow you up and speak to you?"

"For no reason, perhaps, except to tell me how much you disapproved of my speech."

"I would scarcely say that I disapproved of it. You are running for office, and I suppose it is but natural that you make the most of what ammunition you possess."

"I thought that perhaps when you saw Mrs. Cramer-Ogden congratulating me, you feared you would be intruding, and therefore turned away. She has been very enthusiastic in my behalf and is one of my clients."

There was a heartless ring in Hope's low laugh. "Friends and clients are very desirable."

They had approached close to an excited bevy of members of the Federation, and Hope halted, offering to take him no further. Knowing full well in his heart that she had been coming in search of him with a face alight with eagerness, and that she had been diverted by the ill-timed movements of Mrs. Cramer-Ogden, North, berating his ill luck, cast about desperately for some method by which he might thaw her. He made a lame effort, forcing a smile as he did so.

"And how does it seem to be a political leader, the head of a powerful civic body?"

"You should know."

"Of course I mean to a woman," he floundered on hopelessly, feeling her slipping farther from him with each passing moment. Hope, who seemed to be favoring him with but a small part of her attention, bowed and smiled at some one departing from the midst of her friends. Several seconds passed before she answered him; then it was nonchalantly.

"I feel that I do not care for politics. I shall never take part in another campaign unless I think that it is my imperative duty."

Her frigidity was unwarmable, and he gave her up in despair. "I beg your pardon if I am intruding or compromising you politically," he told her more coldly, as he became aware that some of the more prejudiced of her organization were eying her tête-à-tête with him with disfavor.

"It was no intrusion, and I don't care how others view it," she replied in the same accentless voice and without even so much as a glance at him. Half angry at her, wholly miserable, he took a backward step.

"I wish you happiness and success, Miss Allardyce. Good night."

"And while I cannot wish you success in this campaign, I wish you happiness. Good night also."

With the smallest of inclinations of her head and the briefest of meetings of their eyes, she was gone; and North, for the first time conscious of the shabby manner in which he had broken away from the fair companion who had brought him here, hurried back in search of her with an abject apology upon his tongue. A brief search assured him that she was not there, and an inquiry at the stage-entrance disclosed the fact that she had departed some moments before.

Disgusted with himself for his discourtesy toward her, and utterly despondent despite his magnificent triumph of the evening, he chartered a taxi and went speeding homeward, purposely avoiding the revel which he knew would be by this time in full swing downtown.

CHAPTER XII

McMANN looked up from the next morning's papers with a chortle of glee, while up and down his vast expanse of front, tidal waves of satisfaction chased each other.

"They had to give it to him—hand it to him on a silver platter, fri'nds an' inemys alike," he told the grim Elliott. "Thim that came to scoff remained to pray, an' to-day all classes of society are standin' on their bended knees before Johnny North an' acclaimin' him as the greatest orator since me late fri'nd Mark Antony. Even that hide-bound, blackguardin' shin-plaster, *The Despatch,* admits between its groans of mortil agony that it was a most remarkable, unanswerable an' classical oration—an' thin attimpts to copper its own admissions by intimatin' that 'tis not so much brains the city needs at its head as it does a nice little b'y with lace on the bottom of his pantaloons an' a Sunday-school certificate instead of a lawyer's diploma. *The Mornin' Echo* says that he is an extraordinary young man an' evidintly well meanin' despite his affiliations—meanin' me. An' best of all, the bettin' is now three to one on him in O'Rourke's conservatory of illicit speculation. 'Tis dollar cigars we will all be smokin', fri'nd Elliott, for the next two years, come the Ides of Novimber, which same is to-morry."

Having thus delivered himself, McMann sent his lieutenant out loaded to the muzzle with his final instructions to the ward bosses.

In a general analysis of the situation, matters were practically as the boss had stated. Few men would have been more contented than North, had it not been for one thing: Desperately, helplessly, hopelessly, he was in love with Hope Allardyce—craving her with a hunger that naught on earth but herself could assuage, with a singleness of desire for which no office or wealth could offer a substitute. Rise to what height he might, achieve what wealth or fame the gods might see fit to bestow upon him, marry whomsoever else she might, well he knew that as long as he drew the breath of life and possessed the faculty of memory, so long would there be in his heart a gnawing cancer of regret. The fact that he had never for a moment hoped to win her made no difference to him. He would always revere her memory and carry pinned to his heart the thought of her when back in his bleak boyhood days she alone had a smile and a kind word for him. Had it not been for the bar sinister of his birth, he would have fought for her with a grim determination that would tolerate no such thought as failure; but with his brand of shame, for him to seek her hand would be to insult her.

Out of the whole situation North derived but one comfort. Of all the people in this great city where he stood a man among men with an honorable if loveless career before him, she was the only one who knew of his foul brand. But with her alone with whom to share it, it was as safe as though he himself were its sole keeper. Though they might disagree and even quarrel, Hope Allardyce would no more betray him than she would thrust a dagger into his back.

NORTH'S head had gradually sunk until it rested upon his arms, which lay crossed upon his desk. There was a faint tinkle at his side, and the next second the whir of the telephone-bell startled him into erectness. He removed the receiver and answered the summons. He heard a woman's voice which in its first sentence demanded to know if he would keep this telephonic conversation forever confidential. He would. Would he meet two ladies upon business of great importance that evening, no one else to be present? With no doubt in his mind as to who the speaker was, he replied that he would. Would he meet them at one of their homes? He would not. Where would he meet them? Nowhere except in his office. Would he promise as a gentleman to have no one else present in the office? He would. Would he be there alone at eight o'clock? Yes. Very well; they would not fail to keep the appointment.

He hung up the receiver and left the office, telling his assistant that he would return no more that afternoon.

At a quarter of eight that night he was at his desk again. A few moments later the door opened, and two heavily veiled women entered; yet concealed as their faces were, he had no trouble in instantly recognizing them as the pair which he had confidently expected.

As to their reasons for coming, however, he had no conception. Offering them chairs, he reseated himself and awaited their opening words.

MISS SMYTHE spoke: "Of course you know who we are, but if there is no objection upon your part, we prefer to retain our veils."

"None at all, madam."

"Very well. We have come to see you, Mr. North, upon the eve of election, to make you a straight business proposition. Are you ready to listen to us?"

"That is why I am here."

"Then we will not beat about the bush. I suppose that even you will admit that there is a chance of your being defeated?"

"Most certainly. No election is decided until the votes are counted—often not until they are recounted."

"Naturally, as we view it, you would like to know that your election was absolutely certain.

"Naturally enough. I might sleep a trifle better to-night."

"As mayor of this city, you would have much patronage at your disposal. This, I take it, you will distribute principally among your friends who exerted themselves to elect you."

"That is the law of recompense."

"Very well. We can elect you, to a certainty."

"Rats deserting a sinking ship," was what North thought. What he said was: "I have no doubt you can affect the figures materially."

"We can do more than that. Our proposition, plainly stated, is this: Mrs. Magill and myself are the only practical politicians among the women who oppose you. Half of them are in such a flurry over you after your really great speech last night that they need only a leader to make them bolt to your party. Mrs. Magill and I can bring over thousands of the sentimental things—enough to make your defeat impossible. Do you believe us?"

"I do."

"And if we do so, what about the law of recompense?"

"What would you desire, Miss Smythe?"

Miss Smythe drew up her veil, displaying her face. That she was the president and dominating force of the "Women's Teachers' Association," and that Mrs. Magill occupied a similar position of influence and power in the "Dressmakers' League," both affiliated with the "Federation," North had learned early in the campaign, along with many other interesting facts concerning the pair. And that they could make good their boast he did not in the least doubt. Miss Smythe pursed her thin lips.

"Well, there is the superintendency of public schools. I have had twenty years' experience as a teacher, and believe that I could fill that position to your satisfaction."

"Four thousand dollars a year. And you, Mrs. Magill?"

That lady lost no time in stating her choice. "I think the superintendency of the House for Erring Women would be about my size, Mr. North."

"Three thousand, five hundred. Now what?"

Miss Smythe appeared to be a trifle nonplused.

"Why, what more is there to it? We agree to vote the mass of the Federation for you and thereby insure your election. You agree to give us these positions. Isn't that the compact?"

"No," snapped North.

FOR a moment there was silence; then Miss Smythe spoke once more. "Why, I do not see why not. It is perfectly fair, is it not?"

"There is no semblance of fairness about it, and that is the reason why I do not care to make the deal. It is dishonest, treacherous—rotten to the core, and I'll have none of it."

"And all this while I thought you were a politician," sneered Miss Smythe as she began readjusting her face-screen, "—a far-sighted, clever political Moses."

"I am not a politician, madam. I am merely in politics."

"Well, you wont be very long. Any man in politics who will turn down a sure thing for a dubious principle is too good for this world. His place is among the elect of heaven."

"Which place I hope to occupy upon this earth."

"Much chance you will have when we begin crossing out your name to-morrow."

"You may cross me, madam, but you cannot double-cross me."

Mrs. Magill, arising, faced him wrathfully. "Then what is the meaning of all this nonsense—of leading us along in this manner if you did not intend to do business? Why did you have us come here?"

"I had a certain curiosity to know what you had to say."

She laughed derisively. "And I suppose with the idea in the back of your head of gabbling our little conversation just had, to the public, in order to pose as the only original little honest politician!" Her manner grew threatening. "Well, go ahead and try it, and see where you get off. In the first place, we are two ladies of good reputations, and we are two to one against you.

"In the next place, we came here with our veils drawn, and nobody who might have noticed us enter the building could swear to our identity. In the next place, we were not fools enough to come without first arranging perfect alibis—you may be sure of that. In the next place, there would be damage suits for libel and defamation of character, and you may be sure of that also. And last of all, if you should win, what good would it do you to start trouble with us? And if you should lose, what good then?"

"You ladies seem to have the better of the argument. Shall I open the door for you?"

They shot him a mutual look of scorn, of contempt, of hatred so piercing that he could see the flash of their eyes through their veils.

"Perhaps you had better. I might sully the door-knob," sneered Miss Smythe.

"Keep it as clean as your own bright little conscience, Northie," jibed Mrs. Magill as they swept out into the corridor to his grossly exaggerated bow of respect. A moment later he heard them walking down the stairs in order to avoid the night elevator-boy.

WHISTLING softly, North crossed to a wall of his office and pushed aside a picture that hung against it. An orifice three inches in diameter leading into the next and unoccupied suite stared him blackly in the face. "Go around to the front door and come in, Pancakes," he called softly. Then he seated himself at his desk, with chuckle after chuckle bubbling from his lips.

The office door opened, and a man of about twenty-five entered, a vast grin splitting his face. He was small and weazened, the cunning of a fox in his eyes and the impudence of an ape stamped upon his face. His movements were weasel-like. In his hand he carried a stenographer's notebook, and a pencil was thrust back of his ear. Pancakes Merkins was one of the best news ferrets on *The Gazette,* one of St. Peter's largest newspapers and a strong supporter of North; and Pancakes and the present candidate had been political affinities for years.

Pancakes thrust his book in his pocket, seated himself impudently upon a pile of papers in the center of North's private desk and began rolling a cigarette with fingers that were as yellow as a Chinaman's.

"Say, old scout," he grinned as he expelled twin smoke-streams from his nostrils. "That was about the richest stunt I've got next to this campaign. Wise me up a little bit on the details. Whee! but what a scoop it will make for the good old ship *Gazette* in the morning! And maybe I wouldn't like to see the faces of those two dames when they read their sing-song word for word in holy writ." He chuckled like a mischievous schoolboy.

"Got it all in shorthand, did you?" queried North. Immediately Pancakes became indignant.

"Ever see me fall down on the hen-track writing-stunt yet? You bet I got it, commas, periods, expression of their faces and all."

North nodded comprehendingly.

"Good boy, Pancakes. But I have a horrible disappointment in store for you. That story is not to go to the press—at least, not yet."

"What!" yelled the reporter with a leap to his feet. "Going to let a scoop

like that die on me? Trot me over here to play 'I spy,' and then hand me a citron! Nothing doing! Slap in she goes to the city editor within an hour."

"No, she doesn't, my boy. Those little marks on your notebook are my personal property. Now, you just make me two copies of that conversation for my files, and keep your mouth shut. If I am elected, you get the first tips on all the real stuff as it comes along. How is that for a bargain?"

"Suppose it will have to do," grumbled the newspaper man. "But I'd rather run it out of professional pride. And why in sin don't you let me? It's red-hot campaign stuff, taken down verbatim by a listening expert-stenographer, signed, sealed and sworn to. Vox Populi will arise in a roar of indignation. You'd get a bunch of votes out of it." He looked at North disgustedly. "You're batty," he concluded.

"Maybe so, but I am making a decent, above-board campaign, and am not going to throw any dead cats."

"They are cats, all right," muttered Pancakes. "And if I were you, I'd throw them—and throw them hard."

"Then too, I have reasons—private reasons—for not wanting to expose them now. But I did want to get them on record. And to bore that hole through the wall was the only way, since I promised them I would have no one else in the room. That comes about the nearest to lying and deception I have done during the campaign. But I didn't have anyone else in the room, and that was all I promised."

"You're a mutt," snorted Pancakes. "The nerve of those two old she-bears trying to switch their bets and double-cross their friends at the last moment! Say, North, give me a chance at them in the *Gazette*. I'll make them look like two fried eggs in a pail of soot."

"Nothing doing again, son."

Pancakes arose. "Well, it goes as you say, boss, but you're squandering good ballots on a rotten theory. But that's your funeral—and I guess you've got them nailed to the mast, anyway. Got to get back now." He tossed away his cigarette and hurriedly made his way out.

What would Hope think if she knew that two of the leaders of her organization were guilty of such infamies as this and the attempt to blackmail him? He wished her, for her own safety and peace of mind, to let politics alone. And she was in danger yet. These women would spare her no more than they would him, could they gain anything by slandering or betraying her, and there was no telling what they might do upon the morrow. Would this exposure, if sent to her privately, put her upon her guard and make her more cautious, or would it simply anger her into recklessness? Should he send it to her, or should he keep hands off? Her coldness toward him of the night before had left no resentment; and it was only for her good that he wished to influence her. What should he do? Perhaps it was safer to let things shape their own way.

Head bowed, eyes fastened upon the floor, he sat thinking, thinking.

CHAPTER XIII

ELECTION morning, November fifth, unfolded itself beneath clear skies, a horizon swept clean by a rain and an air that snapped at noses and cheeks. No matter what the result of the fight might be, it was apparent that the loser could not blame his defeat to lack of condition upon the part of the weather. Six o'clock in the morning, the hour when the polls opened, found a long line of men and women in front of each polling-place, patiently awaiting their opportunity to cast their ballots before the day's work began. These were mostly lunch-basket carriers, whose legions were largely of foreign birth, working-people in whom was imbedded the germs of "personal liberty," the "family" entrance, where they could gossip and drink their beer after their day's labor. These people were nearly all in favor of North and the machine.

McMann, coming down to his headquarters at seven in the morning, spoke affably to the griffinish Elliott at his side. "I'll call up the third precinct of the eighth ward. That will be the first

precinct of the city to get in its vote. Thim people go to work at siven, and practically the entire ballot of the precinct will be cast by this time. An' it should be solid for us. All we need to win is to get out our vote. If three hundred have voted out there by this time, that means that our people are comin' out with a whoop an' a hurrah; an' that we are once more the chosen instrumints of destiny." He picked up his telephone and grunted a few monosyllables over the wire. Then he laid the instrument away and reported to Elliott.

"Clancy, me watcher there, says that ninety per cint of the entire precinct has already voted, a record-breakin' performance. Five per cint of thim that have not showed up are sick, an' the other five will be around whin their headaches are more plisent. He has got his eye on thim, an' no man or woman shall escape him. 'Tis a walk-over for the grand old constitutional perogatives of truth, justice, humanity and the pursuit of liberty. An' barrin' your presence, fri'nd Elliott, 'tis a fine mornin' we're havin'."

ALL forenoon the reports came in with unvarying uniformity. The Machine vote was coming out in a solid body, and in the strictly residence wards, which by the nature of their environment belonged to the foe, North was running much stronger than had been expected. In Morrow's headquarters the leaders had abandoned hope and were beginning to talk of things foreign to politics, and as twelve o'clock arrived, McMann, thoroughly satisfied and preparing to shut down his desk-top and go home that he might rest up for the evening's celebration, cocked his ear alertly as a newsboy ran beneath his window shrieking like a fiend fresh from the pit: "Extry, Extry! John M. North—" The rest of the sentence was lost in a maniacal howl, and McMann, spinning like a top in his swivel-chair, roared at his nearest subordinate:

"Get me that paper within two minutes, or the Lord have mercy upon ye!"

Out of the door bounded the hatless youth, and returning a moment later, laid the still clammy sheet before his master. At his first glance at it, the boss leaped as though stung by a serpent; then with a face growing grayer second by second and with the perspiration popping in beads from his forehead, he raced over the article as a grayhound races a prairie. Finishing it, he leaped to his feet and with a vicious oath seized Mike the Shang and started on a headlong rush with him for the elevator.

Midway in the hall, they ran fairly against North, who was entering. His face was the color of wet ashes, his lips twitching, his eyes filled with the dull stare of one just recovering from a blow that stunned him. In an instant McMann had hurled both him and the Shang bodily into a vacant room of the suite, and locking the door, stood with the newspaper held close before North's glazed eyes.

In black letters inches tall and stretching across the full width of the sheet was the hideous caption. Beneath it in bold type and filling the whole page were the damning details of his birth and early life. Nothing had been omitted—even to his mother's elopement with the half-breed quack.

With a sweep of his hand North tore the paper from McMann, and crumpling it into a ball, sank in a chair, a pitiful thing to look upon.

Tigrishly the boss shook him by the shoulders. "Wake up, man. Are ye drunk or crazy, to be moonin' there? Be that damned falsehood true or not? Speak to me, b'y—'tis me—McMann."

In a faint and hollow voice North spoke.

"They have always said so, Mac. That is all I know about it, of course."

With the perspiration flying from his face, the boss raged up and down the room.

"Oh, the divils, the vermin, the liars! The scutts, the blackguards, the hypocrites! May they perish by thirst an' by drownin', by freezin' an' fire, by starvation, disease, treachery an' accidint! An' may the tares grow thick on their graves an' poison-ivy run over their headstones! To think of him sayin' that about ye! True or false, 'tis a black lie—an' ye not to blame if it's

true! Talk about your dirty politics! I'm a lily-white lamb beside thim. Get on the 'phone, lad, an' deny it—deny it. Deny it by all the divils of heavin an' angils in hades. Call up that foul sheet an' tell thim you'll prosecute thim for everything from libel to grave-robbin' an' shoot thim as full of holes as a lace curtain if they do not get out a double extry on the minute denying that black slander. Leave the other papers to me—I'll handle thim."

NORTH shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"I can't do it, Mac. They'd only laugh at me. I have no proof of my legitimacy. Everything points the other way."

"Thin by heavin' I'll save ye in spite of yoursilf. I'll pay dirt for dirt with pawnbroker's interist. I'll show thim dirty politics as is dirt. I'll vote every cimitery in the city limits. I'll vote the saviges who were here before Columbus. I'll vote the babies yet in the arms of their mothers. I'll vote the dogs an' the very fleas upon thim. I'll vote the halt, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the dead an' the dyin'. Come on, Shang. We'll turn your dogs loose—"

In an instant North was upon his feet, his back against the door. "No, you don't, McMann. I am in the fight to fight on the square, and the more mud they throw, the more shame to them. How I was born was beyond my control; what I am now is within my own keeping. If I hear of your starting out your floaters and repeaters, I'll withdraw upon the instant. And that goes to a finish."

Blubbering like a huge boy, McMann threw his arms around the other's shoulders.

"To think of the black shame of it, Johnny, me lad, whom I love like me own son! I wanted to see ye go up, lad, up—up until ye sat enthroned among the seats of the mighty. I wanted to see ye Mayor, thin Governor, thin Senator—yes, an' thin President. An' by the grace of your talents an' manliness so I would have made ye, that old Jim McMann might point his proud finger at ye an' say to all the world: 'He is me own lad. I put him there!' 'Tis not that I mind in the least bein' beaten—though 'tis the bitterest pill I iver yet swallowed—but I love ye, lad, an' after that speech ye made, I knew I could put ye anywhere. An' so I would but for—but for—"

Words failed him, and he collapsed crashing into a chair, while North, unable to listen longer, burst from the room and went leaping down the steps.

FROM his apartment in the St. Charles, he looked down upon the street in the blackest despair of his life. The last ray of hope had abandoned him. Swept from him as by a lightning-stroke were his ambitions, his long efforts, his honor, his business prospects—all that life held worth having, and once more he was an outcast and a thing of scorn in the eyes of mankind. And far bitterer would be his lot now than it had been in childhood, for then he had been but a lowly thing with sensibilities of lesser development, while now with a strong man's pride and the best known name in a great city, there would be a thousand scorning fingers to point him out where before there had been but one.

And the blackest thought of all was that Hope had betrayed him—Hope, who alone had shared the secret with him and who had always been his goddess of kindness and purity. He bit his nails in his agony. He could not endure it—could not, would not. The cards of fate had been stacked against him in the beginning, and he had had no show to win. He was among the accursed of the world, blood-brother to those born mad and the leper. He had fought the fight and had kept the faith, but from now on it would be useless. The brand was upon his forehead, and all men would read it as they ran. He could fight no longer. Utterly crushed, he threw himself upon his bed.

AT midnight North summoned a bellboy and sent him down for the latest papers. As he had known must happen from the time the exposure occurred, he had been beaten. But the figures plainly showed that had it not been for the publication of the story of his birth he would have won over-

whelmingly; even had he permitted McMann to give the Shang free hand he would have been the victor. But to that he gave scarcely a thought. Had he been elected, he must have resigned out of sheer shame and for the good name of his city; therefore it was better that he had been defeated. From the moment when his dishonor had been proclaimed he had been hopelessly ruined.

He looked at himself in the mirror. He was deathly white, bloodless of lips, a his black-encircled eyes stared back at him strangely. There was a roaring in his head, and his temples felt as though in the embrace of a vice. The electric light in his room danced uncannily, and the furniture was moving. His mind was in a blur; dizziness was creeping over him. He must be sick—must have something at once to brace him up and sweep the gathering cobwebs from his brain.

Scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he went to the telephone and called the operator. "Send me a bottle of whisky," he ordered in a voice which he did not recognize. From the quickly arrived flask he poured half a tumbler and swallowed it in two gulps. Steadying himself, he glanced about the room. His head was gyrating, his eyes blurred. For a moment he fought it; then balance deserted him, and he fell crashing to the floor. His head struck against the iron radiator.

CHAPTER X

HE stood upon the ragged edge. Across the bar in the burnished mirror he saw an inflamed face with bloodshot eyes that stared drunkenly into his own. Before him was a half-empty bottle of champagne, beside him an unknown companion who shared his bottle and lurched as he continued his endless, unheeded story. The place was ablaze with brilliant lights. Men in evening dress sauntered in and out, smoking, chatting of the theater and the news of the day. None spoke to him or favored him with more than a passing glance; he recognized none of them and had even forgotten the name of the city he was in. Vaguely he remembered a week ago—or was it two weeks?—he had found himself in this strange place, and here he had remained ever since. At times he had a haunting sense of being pursued by somebody or something; mostly he was as one walking in his sleep and conscious of little except a dull pain in his head. At times there were half-remembered visions of fleeting telegraph-poles and fields that leaped backward, as with listless eyes he rested his head against the cool car-window. Interspersed with these were dimly recalled awakenings in strange hotels—then the fleeting poles and backward leaping fields again. Eventually he had reached here, and for some reason which he could not now remember, he had gone no farther. He raised his glass. . . . .

HE stared across the bar. The mirror into which he now peered was dimmer, the face that he saw in it more fiery, the eyes which stared back at him redder. Before him was a half-empty bottle of whisky, and the unknown companion at his side who shared the liquor lurched heavily against him and cursed as he wandered the maudlin lengths of an unheeded story. There was a card-game in full blast in one corner, and sharp-faced men with narrow-set eyes crept in and out, speaking of pools and race-tracks between their drinks. Each one gave him but a single glance, but that one glance was a Roentgen ray which pierced him through and through and valued him with a scrutiny which nothing escaped. Dimly it came to his mind that a week ago—or was it two weeks?—he had found this unfamiliar town—had gotten off the train here because his bottle was empty, and had remained here ever since. But why not here as well as elsewhere! What mattered it? He raised his glass. . . . .

HE glanced across the bar. Before him was a mirror thick with grime, and he did not recognize the bleared, stubble-covered face with slits where there should have been eyes that seemed to be mocking him. A half-

empty bottle of gin stood before him upon the bar, and the unknown companion at his side who shared his bottle, stumbled and fell flat upon the sawdust floor in the midst of his incoherent, unheeded story. A woman with painted lips came beside him and reached for the bottle to help herself, but he pushed her roughly aside and took a firm hold of it. With a shaking hand he refilled his glass and raised it.

He stood upon the ragged edge.

CHAPTER XV

SIX months from the day when North, defeated and disgraced, had drunk, fallen and disappeared, he opened the office door of the exceedingly prosperous firm of Lord, Trimble & Southern, attorneys and counselors-at-law, in St. Peter. He was as immaculately dressed as he had been in the days preceding his aberration and flight; his eyes were clear and bright, and he walked with the springiness of one who treads upon rubber. Mentally, physically and morally he was himself again. Financially he was not.

He inquired if he might have a moment with the junior member of the firm, was told that he could, and thereupon walked into Mr. Southern's private office with the ease of personal friendship. That gentleman arose, seeming to be both surprised and pleased to see his caller.

"Johnny North, by gum!" he grinned. "How do you do and where have you been and when did you get back and what is the news? Have two chairs." They shook hands warmly.

"Fairly well—up north a ways—yesterday—nothing much." He grinned back as he made sequential answer. They seated themselves.

"Anyhow, we missed you. Going to tell me all about your trip?"

North wagged his head.

"Not much now. The fact is, the crack they took at me election-day made me a bit flighty for a while—*poco loco*, as our friends the Mexicans say. So I wandered away. Then presently I woke up and wandered back again. Now I sit before you. That is the story."

"Glad to see you. Anything I can do for the prodigal upon his return—kill a fatted calf, take you down to the Gayety, split a cold bottle—anything?"

North's grin burrowed into his mouth and disappeared. "Well, that is what I came to find out. You see, the facts are these: When I left,—not being strictly compos,—I did what no reputable lawyer in his right senses would do—abandoned my affairs to my assistant and let him take care of them as best he could. You know that was serious."

"Under other circumstances I positively would not forgive you. But knowing the strain you were under, I absolve you. Proceed."

"I therefore appear before you in the guise of a mendicant. My former practice has flown upon the winds; most of my money has secreted itself where I cannot find it, and I have got to start all over again. It occurred to me that inasmuch as you are very busy people, you might farm out a case or two for me to try so that you might turn your minds to other things. You used to tell me that I was a pretty fair trial-lawyer."

"Best in town in your line. Now, let's see." Southern's face became thoughtful, and he rummaged his hair with his fingers as though seeking for an idea there. Then he frowned.

"Can't think of a thing now that amounts to anything that the office is not going to look out for personally. . . . . . Hold on. There is one thing we might give you a chance at, if you want it on a liberal contingency basis. Big thing, if you win it, but can't offer you much encouragement along that line. In fact, it looks so hopeless, and we are so busy on sure things, that we don't want to bother with it."

"What kind of a case is it?"

"Well, it is"—Southern's tongue hung fire for a moment and then went on—"a case something similar to your own—legitimacy questioned, you know, old man, and all that kind of stuff. The suit was started about a year ago, and we have been continuing it from time to time in the hope of getting

enough evidence to warrant going to trial. But the evidence does not materialize, and we had about decided to throw it up. Unless somebody appears upon behalf of our client, the plaintiff, and is ready for action at its next call, it will be dismissed."

"Give me a synopsis of the facts, please."

"Briefly they are as follows: A little over a year ago, old Peter Millikin died, leaving no will and, as was supposed, but one legal heir, a nephew about twenty-five years old. The nephew heir-apparent at once starts proceedings to get possession of the estate, and all goes merrily as a wedding-bell until one day, lo and behold, up springs a new claimant in the shape of an obscure fiend of a stage super, name Paul, who unfolds before us a wondrous tale, the wondrous tale being as follows, to wit:

"When old Peter Millikin was young Peter Millikin, he was some Peter. Among his other feats was the carrying away by force of arms of a fair, frail young creature then known and designated as one Miss Leclair, at whose altar he worshiped at intervals for some years. Then of a sudden his devotions ceased, and people forgot about it until some months after, when the aforesaid Paul was born, now some thirty years ago. The world rolls on. A few years after the birth of the boy Paul, his mother dies; the boy raises himself by hook or crook—mostly crook, I guess—and develops into the aforesaid obscure fiend of a stage super by the natural and just laws of evolution. Then old Peter dies, and presto! the miracle. Paul unearths a doddering old wreck of an ex-shoemaker who lived next door to Miss Leclair, knew her well and claims to have been present when she was mated secretly in the holy bonds of matrimony with Peter, some six months before the young hopeless, Paul, was born. The rambling tale of the eighty-year-old cobbler is the sole evidence of the legitimacy of Paul. All else is food for the imagination."

"Are there no records?"

"Nary. The marriage-certificate, if there was one, has flown this vale of tears. The public records of the license, and so forth, were destroyed in our great fire years ago. The minister who married them, if he did, has gone to his just reward, and the other alleged witnesses, if there were any, to this supposititious ceremony, did it take place, have shuffled off the mortal coil. Such is the plaintiff's case. And now for the defendant:

"He is, barring Paul, the only kin. If possible, he is even more disreputable. But he has scores of respectable witnesses who will swear that old Peter always spoke of Miss Leclair slightingly, never alluding to her as his wife —that the lady in the case never called herself other than Miss Leclair, and even went so far as to allude to the boy contemptuously—that she and Peter never made any pretense of living together as husband and wife, and for years before his death they ignored each other.

"Synopsis: On behalf of the plaintiff we have this: the weak story of a forgetful ancient that he was present at a secret marriage of the pair some time before the new claimant was born, the mere inference that Peter was the boy's father, the fact that Peter never was married unless at the time above stated.

"For the defendant we have: Lack of detail in the old cobbler's story, his rambling memory and confusibility upon cross examination—lack of probability that a jury would place any credence in his mumblings—absolute dearth of marriage-certificate, record of license, minister himself and other witnesses—lack of evidence that Peter and Miss Leclair ever lived together as man and wife—Peter's slighting allusions towards her—lack of claim of wifehood on part of Miss Leclair—evidence that she frequently called Paul an unpleasant name—unprepossessing appearance of Paul himself."

SOUTHERN leaned back in his chair and idly swung his legs. "Well, what do you think of your case?"

"Looms up as cheerful as a moving-picture film of Inferno. What is the amount of the estate?"

"A mere bagatelle of three hundred thousand dollars."

North puckered his lips into a whistle. "You interest me strangely. Have you tried to compromise with the enemy?"

"Yep. Tried browbeating, bulldozing, bushwhacking, cajolery and all the other recognized methods of legitimate practice first; then, being turned down, we fell back upon our dignity and offered compromise. Result was that they first laughed in our faces and then offered a sum so insignificant that we laughed back in theirs. Anyway, our client says he wont compromise now—whole thing or nothing, with him. Saw him once on the stage. He appeared for a moment in a hospital-scene where he drank rare old wine out of wooden bottles in company with a Red Cross nurse who wore pink tights."

"A chance in a hundred," mused North, scarcely above his breath. Southern promptly agreed with him.

"Exactly. Longest shot on the boards, but with the possibility of making a killing. I will tell you what we'll do. We told him we would take it on a contingency fee of fifty per cent of all we recovered. If you will work it up and try it, we will give you fifty per cent of our fifty. Want to take a flier?"

"Give me all your papers and files, and I will see friend Paul and the cobbler and give you my answer later."

NORTH plunged into the case with the energy and concentration which had made him one of the most feared opponents at the St. Peter bar by the brethren of his profession. First he read and reread the different written statements made to the firm of Lord, Trimble & Southern by the aged shoemaker; then he called upon that worthy. Infirm and toothless, shrunken by years, the old man mumbled garrulous responses. Plainly he was in his dotage and with a memory as dim as his old eyes.

"Yes, I was there when they were married. The weather was hot. I think it must have been in June or mebby September. I remember it was warm, because I was settin' with my feet on the stove when they came after me to be a witness. A man don't set with his feet on the stove when there is a fire in it, and I used to keep the stove a-rippin' in cold weather. So it must have been hot. Mebby it was in July. It was dark when they came for me, because I had a lamp burnin', and I didn't uster burn ile only after dark. I don't remember who came after me—mebby it was a man and a woman, and mebby two women. Kinder think it was two men. That was nigh thirty or forty year ago, mebby twenty-five. I am gettin' along in years and don't remember quite as well as I uster.

"I remember Miss Leclair well enough. Her name was Jenny or Sally—can't say which now. Reckon mebby it was Lily. She lived just across the street from me, and Peter Millikin uster go there right smart. She uster say he was her beau, but he was a cross one and she was goin' to string him and then shoot him. Way she said it allers made me think of a cross-bow that you string and then shoot an arrer with. Reckon that's why I remember it. These folks took me over to her parlor, and Millikin and some others was there. There was a preacher I knowed there, but I can't remember his name now. Mebby it was Smith—hey! Montague? Well, mebby it was. I'm gettin' old. Remember he stood him and her up alongside each other and said somethin'. Don't remember what it was. Yes, I remember he called them man and wife and wished them a prayer or sermon or somethin' arterwards. Didn't pay much attention. Don't remember no marriage-certificate. Remember I marked my name down on somethin'—didn't want to do it at first, because I thought it might turn out to be a note or somethin' and I'd have to pay it. Don't remember whether she called herself Mrs. Millikin after that or not.

"This here Paul was borned the next winter. Might have been along Christmas or mebby March. Remember it was winter, because the snow was fallin', and the way they was howlin' over in her house made me think of the wolves out on the prairie when I was a boy. She used to call the boy all kinds of names when she got mad. Don't remember whether she called him those names you speak of or not. Remember

she said she called him Paul so as to have two apostles in the family. I'd plum forgot all about it until this here Paul got to joggin' me. Got any terbacker, mister?"

IN substance the old man had with fair fidelity reiterated his former statements made to lawyer Southern, and satisfied that he was telling the truth as he remembered it and that he had told all that his feeble mind retained, North summoned his prospective client to appear before him. Paul Millikin, if Millikin was his name, responded to his lawyer's cue with alacrity. He was a small man with a face as rough and pitted as a grater, his ensemble that of a second-rate actor. As for his features, they were a mixture of conceit, bluff, apology and weak sentimentality.

"A cocktail face—a little dose of everything in it," thought North as he waved his caller to a chair. "It certainly is unprepossessing enough to satisfy any opposing lawyer. But a lawyer doesn't make his clients—the clients make the lawyer. The only question for me to ask is if his cause is just and if I can make it prevail. Well, the jury will answer that." He faced the one who had come.

"Mr. Millikin, I have been retained by your attorneys to try your case, and of course it was necessary that I call you in. In the nature of things you can know nothing about the material facts of your case except by hearsay, and therefore it is not probable that I will call you to the stand. But for my information I wish to know when you first got the idea that you are the legitimate son of Peter Millikin. Also tell me all about yourself from your first recollection."

Millikin husked his throat of a cigarette cough, tossed the cigarette aside and began. "Well, sir, it was like this: I was only three or four years old when Mother died, and about the first thing I remember about myself I was hustling papers and shining shoes in the alleys. Then one day one of the bigger boys called me an awful name, Mr. North, a name that—well, you understand—that my mother—"

"I understand," said North, his face growing a trifle gray. "And you fought him."

"Yes sir, I fought him. I wasn't very strong, and he whipped me, and I remember I crawled behind an ash can and cried. Well, after that it was worse than ever. He kept calling me that same name, and after a while the other boys took it up and nicknamed me that. Even little 'Hunchy,' that we used to touch on his hump for luck, said that he would rather be him than me. It got so I couldn't stand it any longer. They pestered me day and night to make me mad and see me cry."

Already the tears of recollection were rolling down the weak face, but a great pity and feeling of kinship for the wretch before him surged in North's bosom. Unlovable though his client might be, the fault was not wholly his, and none knew better than the listening one the gall and wormwood that had been the other's daily portion. Fierce and strong, a resolve arose within him. "I'll win this case and make this wretch a man in name at least, or else fight until my last gun is silenced," he muttered grimly.

Millikin mopped his face.

"Well," he went on, "somehow I got through it and managed to get a little education. Then I took a course of acting in a school and commenced to get jobs in the chorus, because I can sing and dance pretty good. Being on the stage gave me a chance to take a professional name too, and I did—Delmont. Well, when old Peter Millikin died, leaving all that money and no will, of course it was in all the papers and I read about it. I had always heard that he was supposed to be my father, and after his death I made up my mind to find out all I could about it. So I went to the old people who had lived about our place before I was born and asked them questions. Finally I ran across old man Jenkins, the shoemaker. He had pretty near forgot about it, but after a while he remembered the marriage. Then I went to Mr. Southern's law-firm, because I had heard that he was on the square. Say, do you think there is any chance for us?"

"It is very slight. I would advise you to compromise at any reasonable sum, even at one-tenth or less of the estate."

Immediately Millikin commenced to bluster: "Not on your autograph! When I set in a game, I play it until I make the rest quit or lose my stack. No piker-business for me. If I can take down that whole pot, I will be a gentleman for life; I aint looking for my ante back."

"Very well; we will play the game to the limit. But you must not expect me to win for you."

Millikin threw up his hands, his courage faded, the bluff a farce. "Don't say that, Mr. North. You *must* win for me. Why, I have heard you speak, and you are a wizard—better than our leading man. And you know all about how tough it is and what a feller has got to go through when he gets into the world bad, because if what the papers said was true, you are one of them the same as me, and you—"

"Get out of this office and keep your mouth shut until you hear from me," bellowed North, and the little man scuttled out like a rabbit bayed at by a mastiff.

ANGRY and disgusted with his client, yet believing in the justice of his cause and sorry for him with that broad sympathy which makes all fellow-sufferers kin, North closed the door left open by the other in the haste of his flight.

He had kept away from his old office for reasons of his own, and now, locking the door of the dingy little place he occupied, he left for the room in the suburbs which he had secured for his living-quarters until he once more was prepared to announce his return into the arena.

He finished his evening meal and lighting a cigar, strolled across a couple of blocks to the boulevard which ran through the rather exclusive suburb which he had chosen in which to secure quarters. He had been gone nearly five months, and an unusually lamblike March was wearing to its end. A glorious full moon was already rising into the upper reaches of the sky, filling the air with a glow so bright that he might have read a newspaper by its light. For a mile he wandered along with face lowered, engrossed in thought. Then of a sudden, and acting through some impulse, he looked up. A woman was passing him, a woman who walked was a light and swinging step in which there was neither haste nor lagging. In the luster from above, her slightly uptilted profile showed as clear-cut as the head upon a newly minted coin. He thrust out his hand and caught her by the sleeve.

"Hope Allardyce," he announced quietly.

CHAPTER XVI

SHE uttered a little frightened cry—then for a moment stared at him with big, fascinated eyes, as one does who sees the supposed dead made quick again, a look that bordered close upon terror. Then she slowly thrust out both hands to touch his own and thus corroborate her eyes, which she feared were tricking her.

"You!" she gasped, her bosom rising and falling as though she had just finished running hard and long, "You—you!"

He took her fingers within his own, holding them firmly and smiling down seriously into her face. "There can be but small doubt of it. Did you think I was dead, or merely lost, strayed or stolen?"

"The first. Otherwise I could not conceive of your disappearing as you did with no word left behind you for your business acquaintances and anxious friends."

"Anxious friends," he returned with a little laugh as his hungry eyes ran up and down her once more. "Including yourself?"

The natural color was flowing back to her cheeks, and her voice once more took on the low, musical notes of a harp, exquisitely modulated. "Naturally! When one has thought of a person as a friend from childhood, how could such a disappearance as yours—feeling as we all knew you must have felt—do other than cause anxiety?"

Composite emotions were in her face.

Worry haunted her eyes, and pain hovered about the slightly fluttering lips that seemed to be trying to ask questions which they could not frame. Had it been possible that he had ever thought that a woman with a face of the sweetness and honesty of the one before him had voluntarily betrayed him so ruthlessly? From the moment of his mind's regaining its poise a month before, he had lived in the sackcloth and ashes of self-abasement that he had ever dishonored her by such a miserable suspicion. Had the secret escaped her, it had been but an inadvertent slip which had given the clue to the hounds who ran his trail. The first wild thought that she could do such a thing had been the most ghastly blow in his life. . . . . But whether exposure had come from a slip upon her part or not, he cared not a whit as he took her lightly by the arm. "Whither bound?" he queried.

"Nowhere. It is so early and so beautiful out of doors that I couldn't stay inside." For the first time her old smile came back, bright, broad and honest—in the whole world none sweeter. "I am still a Jill-o'-the-Moon in sentiment. But to-night I was not thinking of dancing beneath it—far from it. Most of all, I wished to be alone."

"Then I shall turn back."

"Not until you have told me where you went and why the dark mystery of your silent absence."

NORTH contracted his brows thoughtfully. There were some disagreeable facts that he must disgorge, facts which he would by all preference have carried locked within him to the grave. But there must be truth between them, for Hope Allardyce should know him as he was, no matter what he might be. Very slowly he led her along.

"It is a miserable story, but you shall have it. That night when the returns told me that I was beaten, some piece of my mental machinery flew off on a tangent. It was not the mere fact of defeat that undid me,—I was prepared for that,—but rather the way in which it was brought about and the things it carried with it. The agony of the old wound torn open afresh, the black horror of having to spend the rest of my life as I spent my boyhood, the ruin of my business and hopes, and blacker than all else, the great fear that one whom I had always glorified had wrecked my life—these combined with a big drink which I took with the idea of bracing me, caused a fall and a hurt on the head that made me for a time insane. I have a misty recollection of seeing myself in different places, hotels and doggerels, and always I was drinking. Then one morning I awoke in a cabin in the North Woods where I had been brought by the mail-carrier after having fallen in the snow. I could remember absolutely nothing of the past. Struggle as I might, all memory was obliterated. I was desperate, a lost soul on a strange planet, knowing neither name nor face nor which way to turn to find a friend or avoid an enemy. Drink was the only temporary surcease. I let myself drift."

HE ceased speaking, his dry throat refusing further utterance. His clasp upon her arm had tightened involuntarily until its fierceness pained her, but understanding the emotions that were controlling him, she made no sign. "I did not think that you could do such a thing, but you could scarcely be held accountable under such circumstances," she half whispered.

"You are merciful. That final attack was one straw too many."

"It was cruel and outrageous. It angered me more than anything else I have ever heard or read." She was conscious that her heart was pounding with hammer-beats. "And then?"

"Then one night I learned something. And out of that something which I shall some day tell you, but not to-night, memory returned to me and I left the woods immediately, sane once more."

"You learned who was responsible for your defeat?"

"I do not yet know."

"In the first shock of the exposure, your suspicion naturally fell upon the only one whom you believed shared your secret, one with whom you had quarreled and were at sword's-points.

It was but natural. Do you suspect her now?"

"No—nor have I, since I became rational again—unless it was an inadvertent slip of the tongue."

"It was not. And because you do not know, and because not knowing, you will have a lurking suspicion and general distrust covering almost everybody, I believe it to be my duty to enlighten you. I have it from Mr. Morrow, who says the woman herself is boasting that she defeated you."

North's voice held the growl of a mastiff. "Who?"

"Of course, you will make your own investigation as to its truth. I am told that it was Mrs. Cramer-Ogden. She says you and she were engaged, that she became suspicious of you and traced your past, that she then broke the engagement—whereupon you had a quarrel, and her servants overheard and did the rest." There was plenty of light for her to see the somber look that fell upon his face like a shadow.

"The lady is certainly afflicted by a diseased imagination," he commented. "We never were engaged, and we never quarreled. True, I did slight her that night at the auditorium, but the slight was unintentional. She was congratulating me upon my speech, when another woman passed us—whereupon I promptly and ungallantly forgot Mrs. Ogden existed and went in pursuit of the other woman—to get most properly snubbed by both ladies concerned. That was about the last acknowledgment that either of them bestowed upon me in the way of recognition of my acquaintance other than a mechanical-toy nod and a crack-in-the-ice smile."

Hope winced beneath the hot flush of shame and the sting of repentance. "I was absolutely mannerless to you that evening. I was conscious of it at the time and regretted it afterwards. I plead for forgiveness. Somehow that meeting upset me. I was between two fires."

"And those were?"

"The fire of my convictions, and the flame of your oratory."

"I fancied that because of my political affiliations and beliefs you had lost even what little respect you might have conferred upon me in times past. When I thought of our childhood days, when you were the only merciful one I knew, it cut deep to think that you mistrusted my motives and would have no more of me, even friendship."

"I never really mistrusted you in my heart," she returned slowly. "I was deeply interested in our cause, and thinking we were right, was forced to believe you were wrong. But I did not doubt your sincerity, in spite of the unjust words I used the last night you called. And since then I have grown to doubt if we were more than half right, after all. While I am still convinced that our ideals are beyond criticism, I half mistrust our method of cure."

"Wherein we differ not at all. My idea was and is that the time is not yet ripe for such drastic reformations as you proposed—that cleanliness of body, mind and politics is a matter of education and not of force. Had I been elected, I should have tried to minimize our greatest evils—to create a public demand for wholesomeness in politics and a wholesome city. Force cannot control the appetites of man except by putting him in chains—education can."

"You may be right. We will see what the new administration accomplishes. Mr. Morrow appears very enthusiastic when we talk things over together."

She averted her face, as she spoke, and a queer feeling ran up and down North's spine, creeping, clammy as a serpent, and for the first time in his life he felt the centipede-claws of jealousy.

OUR NEXT NOVEL

BESSIE R. HOOVER—who wrote "Pa Flickinger's Folks," and those stories about the *Peebles* family which our readers last year liked so well—is the author of a delightful novel which we will publish complete in our next issue. "The Joy-Garden" is the title, and we are confident that you will find it well named.

"So you see him often," he half asserted, half demanded with a forced attempt at disinterestedness.

She nodded.

"Quite. He has tried to be very agreeable."

"And upon the evidence as it now stands has succeeded. Otherwise there would have been no 'quite often.' "

"We are good friends."

NORTH squirmed. He had known that it was inevitable that sooner or later this glorious woman would select her mate—why she had not already done so was a constant marvel; but Morrow, with the soul of a flea and the conscience of a toad! He would almost as soon have seen her the bride of death. "I wont be here to witness it," he murmured bitterly, so deeply sunk in dark forebodings that he was unaware that he spoke aloud. She turned upon him quickly.

"Witness what?"

He aroused himself, chagrin that he had unwittingly betrayed his secret thoughts flushing his face a dark red. But having partly betrayed himself now, he would out with it.

"I mean that I have no confidence in your friend Morrow. In case of the happening of the event which I was imagining, I should"—the lash of jealousy whipped him on—"leave," he finished lamely.

Leave! It was her turn to squirm, and she did. As by a lightning flash she reviewed herself in the long period of absence from which he had just returned, her abstractedness, her uneasy days and restless nights. She did not want him to leave. And leave because of Morrow, for whom she had but a casual friendship! It was ridiculous. "Mr. Morrow and I will never be more than the mere friends we are to-day," she announced simply.

A GREAT tidal-wave of relief swept his gloom away, removing the last obstacle of doubt as to his right to loosen his heart and let it speak its will. As they turned into the shadow of her own home, where the shade lay deep, he drew her to him by a swing of his arm and held her close.

"Listen, Hope."

She struggled feebly to release herself. Her heart was choking her, her knees turned to water. Had her life depended upon it, she could have made no sound.

"Hope," he said, "for as long as I can remember, I have loved you more than all else in the world. From boyhood until this day you have been my inspiration for a clean life, the guardian angel to whom I have prayed, the only woman to whom I ever gave a second thought. With what I have had to contend against in this world, it is impossible to imagine what I might not have done if your face had not always been before me. Yet a month ago I had no more thought that I should ever speak to you like this than that I from this earth should behold the gates of paradise. But within that month I have beheld those gates, and now nothing can keep me from entering. For one month from to-night, you will not see or hear from me of my own volition; at the end of that time I am coming to you and tell you the rest. Do you promise that you will remain here and listen? It will save me the trouble of following you."

Mechanically she began plucking at his fingers again, weakly, scarcely knowing what she did or said. "Yes, yes. I will hear you—promise you almost anything, if you will only let me go. You must, must."

His lips pressed her cheek, and at their touch she cried out softly. Then his arms opened, and she darted out of them and into the house. With teeth tightly set, North turned abruptly away.

From behind the locked door of her own room she steadied herself as she looked at the white face that confronted her from the mirror. He had told her that he loved her, had kissed her, had held her in his arms and said that he was coming back. And the strength of his body and the power of his voice had held her as helpless as a baby, left her as impotent as a reed in a gale. And did she love him! How could she, when she had been in abject terror even when she knew that never before in her life had she been so safe as when those arms were around her. And even now,

frightened as she had been, she longed to creep back within them and rest, rest.

Love him! What if she did—what use? The bar-sinister was between them, and never could her pride, false though it might be, permit their marriage. What would her parents say to such an alliance should she yield to a mutual love? What would the world say? Even their children would hear of it in the generations to come. It was impossible. Helplessly she sank forward upon her dressing-table and buried her hot face in her hot palms.

CHAPTER XVII

THE case of Millikin versus Millikin promised to be the headliner in the press for several days. Peter Millikin had been a wealthy old scamp who had made his money by ways that were dark and tricks that were not in vain, and his escapades had been numerous, varied, disgraceful and highly satisfactory to the muckraking press. Therefore when he died in a suspicious manner at a suspicious hour in a suspicious place, the newspapers buried him with red-ink tears of regret, as befitted the passing of a much-valued though involuntary contributor.

Hence when it became bruited about that from his grave he would serve the eager world with one more tidbit of jackal-food, St. Peter arose to the occasion. At the hour of the court's convening, not only was every seat within the hall of justice filled, but a hundred excess citizens and citizenesses were ranged along the walls of the corridor. Falstaffian bailiffs bustled about, while even the honorable judge presiding donned a rose and his most ponderous armor of dignity and seated himself with judicial squatness well suited to the contemplative eye of the camera. From the reporter's table half a dozen newspaper men kept lynx-eyed watch over all as they listened and scribbled—or listening not at all, scribbled the faster.

In the three days which followed, North fought his client's case with the grim tenacity of a bulldog. Opposed by scores of sane witnesses whose testimony was almost unshakable, he nevertheless managed to score hard and deep more than once, and woe was it to the one who faltered, tripped or became confused. Night after night, as the gorged courtroom spewed its throng upon the street at the adjourning hour, the air hummed with the praise of his masterly efforts, and the press of the city told its tens of thousands of readers that John M. North, returned, was putting up a battle in the face of great odds that was little short of marvelous. As for North himself, the days were a nightmare of well-nigh impossible difficulties to be overcome; the dark hours were sleepless epochs of thought and desperate plannings for the morrow.

When the last witness left the stand and the evidence was closed, North arose unsteadily to his feet with the consciousness that little short of a miracle could bring him victory. The testimony of the defense had been negative, and had Kemp been a witness of strength and clarity, able to withstand the shock of cross-examination, he would have conceded himself a chance, but with only the ramblings and contradictions of a half-wit in his favor, and opposed by a score of clear-minded persons who had been in a position to know the facts, the weakness of his case was the weakness of the doddering Kemp himself.

Furthermore, North was confronted by the overwhelming possibility that his hearers would be led to believe that he or his client had with a handful of silver bribed the dotard cobbler into the weaving of the musty fabric of his tale of the long ago, and looking into the faces of the jurors, he felt that he battled for a lost cause. With but a few dozen words he reviewed the testimony and then sat down.

SEXTON arose with a covert sneer. Mercilessly he began his attack upon North, his case and his witness. Sparing neither invective nor ridicule, he mocked the lisped incongruities of the toothless shoemaker with venomous fidelity, attacked his opponent with savage insinuations as his probable

briber, and pointed with contemptuous finger at the cowering form of Paul Millikin as he ridiculed the probability of the marriage having taken place or that the claimant was Peter's son. For an hour Sexton stormed his adversaries from every angle; then thanking the jury in advance for the verdict in his favor which it must render, he sat down with his work finished. In the box the jurors were yawning and gazing about indifferently, impatient to be done with it all. Desperate, but cold as ice, North faced them for the last time.

In a voice low but resonant with power and feeling, he began his answer. Truth was gold, found only where it existed and only in such quantities as the Almighty had created it. And since man could not make gold, he must be satisfied with what his mine yielded, were it great wealth or but one tarnished nugget. In this case the mine of truth had given forth but the one tarnished nugget, Kemp, and that was all he had been able to offer them. Gold bricks were easily made in inexhaustible quantities, and had he been a counterfeiter he would have filled their laps with spurious but specious metal. Did it seem probable that had he wished to manufacture evidence, he would have stopped with the half-coherent utterances of one old man? Was it not more than probable that he would have overwhelmed them with perjured testimony? The charge was too contemptible to be longer dwelt upon.

IN tones that gradually arose till they filled the room like the voice of a deep-toned bell, North began his drawing of the mental picture of what had happened thirty years ago. Step by step he led them through the courting of the weak woman by the unscrupulous Millikin, and the shame thereof. Then he showed them how the woman's instinct drove her to force Millikin into marriage, followed by the necessity for money upon which to live that had bribed her into secrecy. After that came her sudden death and the miserable life of the outcast child.

North had forgotten his client now. With eyes that saw through walls and across broad fields, he was looking at a miserable cottage close-crowded by weeds among which a bare-legged boy was sobbing out his heart, one arm around a wondering dog. His voice caught, and the listeners, already leaning forward in breathless silence, marveled at the face they saw before them, grown soft as a woman's in its unutterable sympathy. Stopping not to choose his words, scarcely conscious of what he said, he raised the pictured boy upon his feet and sent him down the dusty path toward school. The dastardly epithet of the dwarf Arnold burst from his lips, and now with a face working with a pain that gripped his heart, he shrilled the insults of the boy's companions and fought over again his heart-breaking battles in his hopeless attempts to maintain his honor. With a vividness and power that once more fascinated, he drew the picture of the schoolroom with its humiliations and despair, the creeping into church shadowed by the terrier in a last search for consolation—then the awful words of the Old Testament which banished even the hope of heaven.

FORGETFUL of all save the bitterness of his life, North drew the past as no man could have done who had not suffered and endured as had himself. With slightly different perspective and shades, he followed the trail of the boy's life—his poverty and struggles for recognition and a nitch of honor in the world—the partial success and the hideous exposure that had ruined all and unseated reason itself. He took them spellbound on the dog-sledge through his half-crazed wanderings, the roar of the blizzard in their ears and the beat of the snow in their faces—then showed them the wreck of a man reeling across a sawdust floor to the whine of an accordion and the shuffling of moccasined feet.

Then came the revelation that it was all a mistake hideous and ghastly, and that a life had been ruined because men had condemned a man upon a hearsay tale that any court in the land would have flung headlong out of doors. Shaking with the emotions that had torn him, North finished with the cry that they give the branded wretch for

whom he pleaded the benefit of an honest doubt.

When he sat down, thirty seconds ticked their way into the irredeemable before a word was heard. Then the court, arising, charged the jury with the law and bade them retire. Silently the twelve filed out to cast their votes, shuffling their feet and holding their heads low.

The bailiff's hammer fell with a clang, and the audience awoke. Quietly they crowded through the doors, the spell still upon them. And North, turning his head their way, saw among them a figure that brought him upright with a jerk. Long-cloaked and veiled though it was, he recognized it upon the instant. Concealing her identity as best she could, Hope Allardyce had come to listen. And she had been crying—the nervous fingers and crushed handkerchief between them told him that. He thanked his stars that he had not known of her presence before; he could not have drawn the picture if he had.

The impulse to follow her was almost irresistible, but restraining himself, he went mechanically about gathering up his papers.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE speech of North's which won him the Millikin case and incidentally a monetary competence, was proclaimed by the press as the most remarkable effort ever delivered up to that time in the courts of St. Peter. Some of the papers printed it in its entirety—none but gave it much prominence. Now that the election was over and he had been buried politically for all time, as his opponents fondly assumed, even the papers which had opposed and exposed him during his candidacy now conceded his unusual talents, intimating in an offhand way their regret that they had been compelled in the course of their duty to say unpleasant things about him. And in a measure this was true, for of all things of mortal invention, none is so cold-blooded, so hot-fanged and so merciless as politics.

The evening following the close of the case, North, as he had promised to do, called upon Hope. He had not communicated with her since the night he had taken her in his arms, and he had seen her but once, that time being the fleeting vision in the courtroom. No one in St. Peter as yet knew of the magic documents in his breast pocket which had the power to remove the stain from his name; he had not even hinted of them to Hope, but in this as in all other serious affairs of life, he had been governed by what he deemed sufficient reasons. Conscious that his heart was beating two strokes when it should have struck but one, he rang the bell of her house.

She opened the door in person, and for a moment they faced each other without words. Her face was calm, but upon it he fancied he saw the tense hand of self-control. That she knew that this night he was going to ask her to be his wife he was also fully aware.

SHE smiled faintly and thrust forth her hand, and he took it with a brief, firm pressure. Laying aside hat and coat, he followed her into the library. "I have come, as you see, exactly as advertised," he smiled.

"Of course I knew that you would." Her voice was colorless, neither friendly nor distant, and her eyes flitted everywhere except toward himself. For a moment, as was generally the case when they first met, he preferred to remain silent as he absorbed her beauty with his eyes, pausing speechless before her as he would have done before a portrait by a great master.

"I had not expected to see you before to-night," he began. "But as always, you were full of surprises."

She darted him a lightning-glance.

"I am not sure that I understand," was her low answer.

"I saw you yesterday in the courtroom."

Slowly unfolding, a rose blossomed upon her cheek. "I did not intend that you should."

"But the glimpse did not come until you were leaving the room."

"I am glad. Otherwise I might have disconcerted you."

"Of which there is nothing more certain. My thoughts would not have been upon my case."

She shifted nervously, scenting what was about to come, but made no answer.

"Why did you go to listen?"

Again she made no answer, and he repeated his question. Her voice and manner indicated her distress.

"I do not know—anyway, now I wish I had not. It was a woman's curiosity, perhaps—that should be explanation enough."

"But it is not enough."

She bit her lip. What her next move would be in this game which next to life and death was paramount, none looking at her could have said; asked, she could not herself have told. Rent by the contending forces within her, she was but an agonized spectator of the battle of herself against herself, fearful to throw her weight upon either side.

"But it is not enough. When I saw you yesterday you had been crying."

Her lips closed tightly, but down her cheek a small glistening pearl crept. She shook it away with the consciousness of a rising, unreasoning anger—because of what, she could not have told, towards whom, she could not have answered. For a moment she regained possession of herself, and her answering voice was a breath from across frosty meadows.

"It is quite possible. I am very silly at times. I seem to be to-night. Did you expect me to laugh?"

"No. I know you too well—better in some ways than you know yourself."

Her answer was tainted by bitterness: "There is small wisdom in that, for I seem to know myself not at all. I cry when I should laugh, and laugh when I should cry. I am weak, sentimental, cold, impossible—"

"You are none of those. You are a woman—warm, sympathetic and exceeding proud. One question: was it sympathy again that moved you yesterday—that sympathy that has always overflowed for me?"

She sat quietly enough now, only a faint quiver running about her lips.

"I suppose so. While I had always known that your life had been full of bitterness, I had never realized it to the full until yesterday."

"And because the world has mistreated me, you would follow in the beaten path."

"Go on," she said coldly. "Since I promised to listen to you to-night and it is your pleasure to talk this way, let us have all and be done with it."

"We will."

With two quick steps he was beside her, sitting upon the broad arm of her chair and holding her closely as his lips pressed her own. As upon that evening a month before, with all her strength she struggled to free herself, but she might as well have fought against prison bars as the arms that held her. And those lips that seemed pressed against her very soul! For a moment she fought; then her resistance snapped, and she lay inert, looking into the face so close before her.

"You are going to marry me, Hope."

Slowly a white forearm stole around his neck. . . . .

The mellow midnight chime of the clock aroused them. They had been sitting hand in hand before the fireplace for hours, how many they could not have told, talking but little, dreaming much. Hope spoke. "But before you go, you must tell me why you did not let me know all this before, dear—your finding out that it was all a horrible mistake—that in your wanderings you stumbled upon the one man in the world who knew the facts of the case, that the woman who raised you was not your mother and that you were of legitimate birth."

He smiled faintly. "Because I wanted to win you against yourself—prove to both of us that you were a woman who, loving a man, would marry him for a' that."

CHAPTER XIX

THE following day North dropped in at the old familiar loitering place of McMann. He had not called upon the ex-boss since his return, and much aggrieved thereat, the

neglected one lost no time in letting the fact be known, now that they stood face to face once more. He let fall two ponderous hands upon the caller's shoulders and shook him roughly as his tongue began its work.

"So at last ye have condescinded to call upon old Jim, have ye? A whole month in town since your trip to the regions of myst'ry, an' not a sight of the ungrateful face of ye! Black shame upon it! One would think ye was the mayor of St. Peter, with the airs ye are givin' yoursilf. A month back, an' not once did ye come to see old Jim, the man who got ye nominated, defeated an' disgraced. Did I iver see such ingratitude! But 'tis the way of ye politicians. If you elect thim, they turn ye down, and if ye defeat thim, they pass ye up. It is in me heart to throw ye out of the windy." He ceased his shakings and his voice became gentle as a woman's.

"Ah, me b'y, me b'y! Me eyes have ached to see ye. An' that speech ye made yisterday! 'Tis the wonder of all the ages. Three times have I read it already, an' some day ye shall make it again an' we'll have it published in the Congressional Record, where nobody will read it."

"No, Jim, I guess I am out of politics for good."

McMann scratched his head as they seated themselves at their old table. "Outside of shootin' each other down with guns," he observed, "politics is the fiercest amusement man iver invinted. One day ye have turkey an' the next the feathers. But what else can an honest young man do, with all the other learned professions so crowded? Explain your absince, ye young rascal."

NORTH hitched his chair a trifle closer. "Jim," he said, "that is just what I came here for. But I wont tell you all now—it is too long a story. However, I will tell you enough. When that article came out in the papers, it knocked me out for the time being—I took the count."

McMann sprang up like a released spring, his eyes ablaze, his huge fists knotted. His voice was that of a speared lion. "If I could have found out who started that black piece of infamy against ye, I'd have turned the Shang's pack loose upon him with ivery tooth an' claw whittled to the point of a needle—an' that's something I niver did yet. I'd have—"

"Sit down, Jim," commanded North as he forced the other back into his chair. "Anyone would think you were addressing a caucus."

"An' I am—the caucus of the whole world." Gradually McMann's mumblings diminished, and presently North spoke again.

"Listen and be of good cheer. As I was saying, when that knockout landed, everything got dark for a while, and about the next thing I knew I was in a little log shack, 'way up in the woods. I am going to skip that part for the present, except to say that while there I heard something and afterwards verified it, a something that compensated me for my defeat and the exposure more times over than I can say. That article was the greatest blessing that ever stalked the earth in the guise of a curse. Had it never taken place, or had things happened in any other conceivable way, I would have gone through life under the brand or in lifelong fear of exposure. But as it turned out, through the wildest prank that chance — or providence — ever played, I came across the only person in the world who could wash my stain away. He did it. Do you understand?"

For a full minute the listener sat staring at the one before him, staring with bewildered eyes into which comprehension slowly crept. Then suddenly they blurred as a summer downpour blurs the landscape. His hand fell on the other's knee.

"'Tis enough! 'Tis enough! Tell me no more for the prisint. 'Tis not strong enough I am to stand the joy of it." His eyes cleared and his face beamed again. "An' what are ye goin' to do about it?"

North knocked the ashes from his cigar. "First of all, I am going to have a heart-to-heart talk with the papers that libeled me. They must either publish a full and complete denial of that

story or pay me damages that will pretty nearly bankrupt them. Therefore my guess is that they will publish the denial."

"Publish it! B'y, ye could make them pay ye half a million for the privilege. An' because of that fact, ye have the world at the feet of ye."

FOR the first time in his life, North saw McMann thoroughly excited. "Think, lad," the boss went on. "The entire press of the city an' 'most all over the State are your slaves forivermore. Make them publish the denial in full; thin hold over their heads the sword of Damascus or Damocles or whativer damn sword it might have been. We'll run ye for mayor next term, an' the press will fall fawnin' at your feet. We'll run ye for governor, an' the whole press that copied that infernal lie will strew your path with roses an' perfume. We'll run ye for Sinator, an' that same press in admiration of your genius and fear of your wrath an' lawsuits will carry ye on its back up the steps of the capitol at Washington. We'll run ye for Prisidint—"

"Stop. Morrow has two years yet in which to hang himself."

"Providin' the people do not take the job away from him."

"Anyway, we have time enough in which to talk things over."

"And lad, whin the people come to know the injustice they have done ye, they will rise in a solid body to make aminds an' vote ye anything ye wish by acclamation. Triumphantly will they carry ye to the temple."

"Which reminds me of something. I am going to marry, Jim."

"Whin?"

"When would you imagine? To-morrow, of course."

"If I was a lad of your age, I would have no such long courtship. An' do ye mind presinting me with the name of the unfortunate lady?"

"Hope Allardyce."

The cigar dropped from McMann's hand, and he sat staring. "'Tis me ears that be deceivin' me. That young creature with eyes like blue stars, a mouth like a rose an' a voice with the harp of old Erin behind it! 'Twas she that headed the cohorts that drove us out to the dismal swamp of destruction."

Then a great light sprang up in McMann's eyes. "Lad," he said suddenly, "ye have the makin's of a great politician. 'Tis genius that knows whin to compromise. With her beauty an' her wealth an' her love back of ye, I'll make ye—"

"Stop," yelled North. "She doesn't want me to go into politics."

"Just wait till I've made me little speech behind your back to the lady," retorted the ex-boss grimly.

HE was sitting upon the broad, strong arm of her chair, both her hands engulfed within his own. "McMann swears that he is going to run me for mayor again, whether or no. And he threatens other nominations more dire. I told him that he would have to come to you for my answer."

"I have lost my interest in politics."

"As have I, except as a matter of vindication. To-morrow the press of the State will apologize to me editorially. It will be unpleasant to them and unpleasant to us, but mistakes must be remedied. What are you going to tell McMann?"

Her head had drooped until it rested upon his shoulder. "I shall tell him," she answered, "that I have said to you: 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.'"

THE END

"Indoor cheer all the year!"

The first winter spent in a radiator heated home awakens the same keen delight that a tropic climate bestows upon the traveler from winter lands. Radiator climate soon becomes so necessary a part of the home life that the whole family wonders how it ever got along without their comfort-guaranteeing outfit of

AMERICAN & IDEAL
RADIATORS BOILERS

Radiator heating will work a wonderful transformation in your house. Its *living* space will then equal 100% of its *entire* space right up to the glassed-in porch.

There will be no more cold halls or frigid rooms on the windy side. Sweeping, dusting, scrubbing, and the frequent cleaning and washing of draperies, are all much lessened where radiator heating takes the place of stoves and hot air furnaces, because the heat does not come dust-laden from loose joints.

Benjamin Franklin said: "Beware of little expenses—a small leak will sink a great ship." Stoves and out-of-date methods of heating are extravagant, causing daily little wastes at the coal bin which for a season's warming represents at 6% much money that could have been saved by an IDEAL Boiler and AMERICAN Radiators.

Get the heat that costs the least

Insist on IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators which will give you indoor cheer as long as you live. They are fully guaranteed and cost no more than inferior makes. They need no water works supply, as same water is used for years.
Easily put in old buildings, without disturbing present heater till ready to fire the new IDEAL.

A No. 5-22-W IDEAL Boiler and 447 feet of 38 inch AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner $235, were used to heat this cottage. At this price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which vary according to climatic and other conditions.

Our catalog "Ideal Heating" (free) is a volume of concise heating and ventilating information which every owner or tenant—small or large—in town or country—ought to have. Write us today. All inquiries cordially welcomed. No obligations to buy.

$150 Stationary Cleaner

Ask for catalog of ARCO WAND Vacuum Cleaner. First genuinely practical Cleaner on market; is connected by iron suction pipe to all floors; and will last as long as your building.

Showrooms and warehouses in all large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write Department 32
816-822 S. Michigan
Avenue, Chicago

Introducing Three Remarkable Women

In all writing, there has never been in one novel such a trio of interesting characters.

Kedzie Thropp

KEDZIE THROPP, alias *ANITA ADAIR,* who came to New York from Nimrim, Missouri. She had never been anywhere, seen anything, or known anyone worth knowing. Yet within twenty-four hours her name won headlines on the front pages of all the New York newspapers, and before she had been there more than a year, her face was known in every corner of the land.

Charity Coe Cheever

CHARITY COE CHEEVER, who had always gone where she wanted, seen the best in the world, known everyone worth knowing. All she wanted was peace and happiness—and the love of her own husband.

Zada L'Etoile

ZADA L'ETOILE, who won fame as a dancer, and won, in addition, the thing Charity Coe wanted most of all: the love of handsome Peter Cheever. And yet she was not contented, for she wanted one thing she had had but had lost and seemed unable to regain: respectability.

These three women are central characters in

"We Can't Have Everything"

the new novel of New York

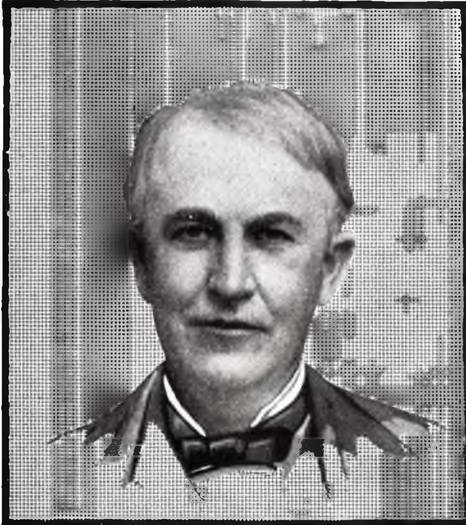
By RUPERT HUGHES

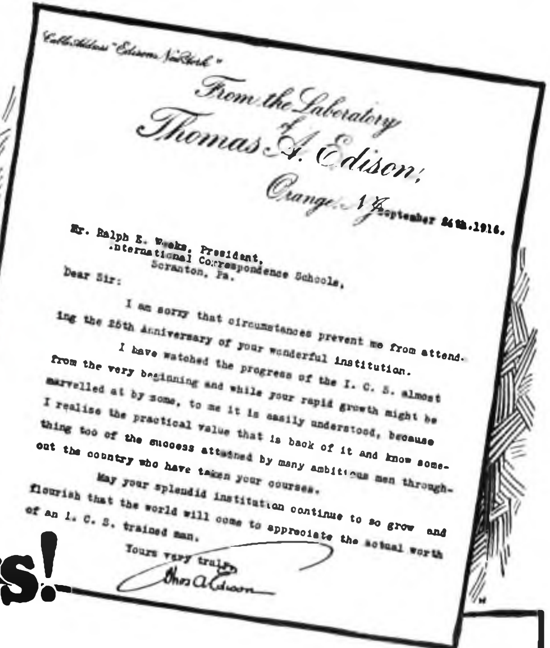
Author of "What Will People Say?" "Empty Pockets" and "The Thirteenth Commandment"

which has just begun as a serial in

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

January issue now on sale at all news-stands. Price 15 cents





Cable Address "Edison New York"

From the Laboratory of Thomas A. Edison, Orange, N.J. September 26th, 1916.

Mr. Ralph E. Weeks, President,
International Correspondence Schools,
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Sir:

I am sorry that circumstances prevent me from attending the 25th Anniversary of your wonderful institution.

I have watched the progress of the I. C. S. from the very beginning and while your rapid growth might be marvelled at by some, to me it is easily understood, because I realise the practical value that is back of it and know something too of the success attained by many ambitious men throughout the country who have taken your courses.

May your splendid institution continue to so grow and flourish that the world will come to appreciate the actual worth of an I. C. S. trained man.

Yours very truly,
Thos A Edison

Edison Knows!

HUNDREDS of thousands of men who have won and are winning success through the International Correspondence Schools will thrill with pride when they read this splendid tribute from Thomas A. Edison.

For Edison knows! He knows the worth of spare-time study. He knows what stuff men are made of who use their spare hours to train themselves for the bigger jobs ahead. And he knows what the I. C. S. will do for the man with the grit to say, "I will."

Wasn't it Edison himself who stayed up half the night to read every get-at-able book on electricity? Didn't he educate himself in spite of every handicap you could ever have?

All big men who have made their mark in the world had the ambition—the determination—to improve their spare time, to train themselves for big work. You, too, can possess power, money and happiness if you'll only make the effort. The reward is great—it's worth it.

Here's all we ask: Merely mail this coupon. Put it up to us without paying or promising. Let us send you the details of others' success through the I. C. S., and then decide. Mark and mail this coupon now.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2419, Scranton, Pa.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2419, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

- ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
- Electric Lighting
- Electric Car Running
- Electric Wiring
- Telegraph Expert
- Practical Telephony
- MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- Mechanical Draftsman
- Machine Shop Practice
- Gas Engineer
- CIVIL ENGINEER
- Surveying and Mapping
- MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
- Metallurgist or Prospector
- STATIONARY ENGINEER
- Marine Engineer
- ARCHITECT
- Contractor and Builder
- Architectural Draftsman
- Concrete Builder
- Structural Engineer
- PLUMBING AND HEATING
- Sheet Metal Worker
- CHEMICAL ENGINEER
- SALESMANSHIP
- ADVERTISING MAN
- Window Trimmer
- Show Card Writer
- Outdoor Sign Painter
- RAILROADER
- ILLUSTRATOR
- DESIGNER
- BOOKKEEPER
- Stenographer and Typist
- Cert. Public Accountant
- Railway Accountant
- Commercial Law
- GOOD ENGLISH
- Teacher
- Common School Subjects
- CIVIL SERVICE
- Railway Mail Clerk
- AGRICULTURE
- Textile Overseer or Supt.
- Navigator
- Poultry Raising
- AUTOMOBILES
- Auto Repairing
- Spanish
- German
- French
- Italian

Name ______

Occupation & Employer ______

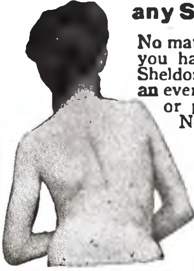
Street and No. ______

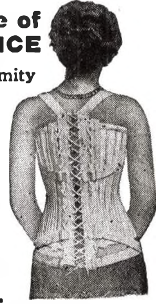
City ______ State ______

If name of Course you want is not in this list, write it below.

CROOKED SPINES—STRAIGHTENED

Cure Yourself or Your Child at Home, Without Pain or Inconvenience of any Spinal Deformity with the wonderful SHELDON APPLIANCE





No matter how old you are, or how long you have suffered, or what kind of spinal deformity you have, there is benefit and a possible cure for you by means of the wonderful Sheldon Appliance. It is as firm as steel, and yet elastic at the right places. It gives an even, perfect support to the weakened or deformed spine. It is as easy to take off or put on as a coat, causes no inconvenience, and does not chafe or irritate. No one can notice you are wearing it.

CURE YOURSELF AT HOME

The Sheldon Appliance is made to order to fit each individual perfectly. It weighs ounces, where other supports weigh pounds. The price is within the reach of all. Hundreds of doctors recommend it.

WE GUARANTEE SATISFACTION AND LET YOU USE IT 30 DAYS

If you or your child are suffering from spinal trouble of any nature, write us at once for our new book with full information and references. If you will describe the case it will aid us in giving you definite information at once.

PHILO BURT MFG. CO. N 246 Seventh St., Jamestown, N. Y.

Positions Guaranteed

Millions of dollars are spent yearly for beauty treatments. The demand for women who know beauty culture far exceeds the supply. Right now we have many urgent requests from Marinello Beauty Shops all over America for our graduates. This proves that beauty culture offers every woman her greatest opportunity of life-long prosperity, independence and happiness. Marinello graduates receive preference everywhere because the Marinello School teaches every branch of beauty culture on the most scientific, advanced methods. We absolutely guarantee to place you in a good position the day you qualify. Write now for handsome Marinello book and proof of success awaiting you.

Big Salaries

MARINELLO CO.
Dept. H-2, Mallers Bldg., Chicago

Would $150 MONTHLY as General Agent for $150,000 corporation and a **Ford Auto** of your own, introducing Stock and Poultry remedies, Dips, Disinfectants and sanitary products interest you? Then address **Royoleum Co-Operative Mfg. Co., Dept. 17, Monticello, Ind.**

BE A BANKER

Prepare by mail for this high profession, in which there are great opportunities. Six months' term. Diploma awarded. Send for free book, "How to Become a Banker." EDGAR G. ALCORN, Pres.
AMERICAN SCHOOL OF BANKING
418 East State Street, COLUMBUS, OHIO

FREE Wonderful Book

Tells how to learn taxidermy—how to mount birds, animals, game-heads, fishes, tan skins. Learn by mail. A necessity for hunters and nature lovers. Best methods, quickly learned, very fascinating. Success guaranteed. Decorate your home and den with splendid art. Make big profits. Write today for this fine illustrated, free book and our amazing offer.
Northwestern School of Taxidermy, 1172 Elwood Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

Copy This Sketch

and let me see what you can do with it. Illustrators and cartoonists earn from $20 to $125 a week or more. My practical system of personal individual lessons by mail will develop your talent. Fifteen years' successful work for newspapers and magazines qualifies me to teach you.

Send me your sketch of President Wilson with 6c in stamps and I will send you a test lesson plate, also collection of drawings showing possibilities for YOU.

THE LANDON SCHOOL OF ILLUSTRATING AND CARTOONING
1488 Schofield Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio

If you are earning less than **$50.00 PER WEEK** and like to draw—you should study **COMMERCIAL ART**

Leading Art Managers—the men who know—recommend us and employ our students. We will guarantee to make you successful—Learn at home in your spare time—or in our resident school—Day or evening. Write for FREE illustrated catalogue.
COMMERCIAL ART SCHOOL, 726, 116 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

VETERINARY COURSE AT HOME

Taught in simplest English during spare time. Diploma granted. Cost within reach of all. Satisfaction guaranteed. Have been teaching by correspondence twenty years. Graduates assisted in many ways. Every person interested in stock should take it. Write for catalogue and full particulars - - **FREE**

London Vet. Correspondence School
Dept. 79, London, Ontario, Can.

Diamonds Watches on Credit

Pay a Little Each Month

Special Selection of Diamond-set Jewelry, at a great saving in price. Gorgeously beautiful Diamonds, perfect in cut and full of fiery brilliancy, set in solid gold or platinum mountings. CREDIT TERMS: One-fifth Down, balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly. We pay all delivery charges. If not entirely satisfactory in every way, return at our expense and your money will be promptly refunded. Or, if you prefer, we will send C. O. D. for your examination. You will be under no obligations to buy.

110 $50 · 111 $30 · 112 $17 · 114 $40 · 115 $25 · 117 $30 · 118 $35

SEND FOR FREE 116-PAGE JEWELRY CATALOG

Over 2000 illustrations of the new styles in jewelry—rings, studs, scarf pins, ear screws, brooches, bracelets, watch bracelets, watches, chains, silverware, etc. A DIAMOND is the best investment you can make. It constantly increases in value and lasts forever. Our Guarantee Certificate, given with every diamond we sell, is the strongest and broadest ever issued by a responsible house. Send for Catalog today. It tells about our easy credit plan.

LOFTIS BROS. & CO., National Credit Jewelers
Dept. K852, 100 to 108 N. State St., CHICAGO, ILL.
(Established 1858) Stores also in: Pittsburgh; St. Louis; Omaha.

Nuxated Iron to Make New Age of Beautiful Women and Vigorous Iron Men

Say Physicians—Quickly Puts Roses Into the Cheeks of Women and Most Astonishing Youthful Power Into the Veins of Men—It Often Increases the Strength and Endurance of Delicate, Nervous "Run Down" Folks 200 Per Cent, in Two Weeks' Time.

A Wonderful Discovery Which Promises to Mark a New Era in Medical Science

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Since the remarkable discovery of organic iron, Nuxated Iron or "Fer Nuxate," as the French call it, has taken the country by storm. It is *conservatively* estimated that over five million persons daily are taking it in this country alone. Most astonishing results are reported from its use by both physicians and laymen. So much so that doctors predict that we shall soon have a new age of far more beautiful, rosy-cheeked women and vigorous iron men.

Dr. King, a New York physician and author, when interviewed on the subject, said: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron. Pallor means anemia. Anemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anemic men and women is pale. The flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails, and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. Sauer, who has studied abroad in great European Medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver, heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now at fifty a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring

matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, another New York physician, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron, that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 200 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

His Self Respect Restored

THE Keeley Treatment
For Liquor and Drug Using

THOUSANDS of men have been "put on their feet again" in business and among their associates by the scientific Keeley Treatment. Craving for liquor or drugs is removed without confinement or nausea; nature is aided in restoring normal health. Privacy for women.

Write for confidential information to any of the following Keeley Institutes

Buffalo, N. Y. 799 Niagara St.	**Hot Springs, Ark.**	**Plainfield, Ind.**
Columbus, Ohio	**Lexington, Mass.**	**Portland, Me.**
Crab Orchard, Ky.	**Los Angeles, Cal.** 2400 W. Pico St.	**Salt Lake City, Utah**
Dwight, Ill.	**Marion, Ind.**	**San Francisco, Cal.** 2420 Webster St.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 735 Ottawa Ave. N.W.	**Philadelphia, Pa.** 812 N. Broad St.	**Waukesha, Wis.**
Kansas City, Mo. 1919 E. 31st St.	**Pittsburgh, Pa.** 4246 Fifth Ave.	**West Haven, Conn.**
		London, England

EARN $2,000 TO $10,000 A YEAR

We will teach you to be a high grade salesman, in eight weeks at home and assure you definite proposition from a large number of reliable firms who offer our students opportunities to earn Big Pay while they are learning. No former experience required. Write today for particulars, list of hundreds of good openings and testimonials from hundreds of our students now earning $100 to $500 a month. Address nearest Office.

Dept. 509 **NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSN.**
Chicago New York San Francisco

LaGoutte-a-Goutte
RESTORES Color to Faded or GRAY HAIR

No matter how gray, faded, streaked or lifeless it may be, only one application of LaGoutte-a-Goutte will restore the color to any shade of black, brown, drab or red. LaGoutte-a-Goutte is harmless, does not discolor the scalp, **makes a lovely, rich, lasting color that does not fade or rub off on the pillow.** Makes the hair soft and glossy, with a natural, full-of-life appearance, and the hair can be washed as usual. **IT REQUIRES ONLY ONE APPLICATION and NO AFTER SHAMPOO IS NECESSARY;** takes only a few minutes, and can be applied by yourself in the privacy of your home. Any one of 32 shades you wish is given from the ONE package. Price, $1.25, postpaid. Order direct, or, if you'd first like to see how well it will appear on your hair

Send me a Little Lock of Your Hair—I'll Color It Without Charge

Cut it close to head and say what color you wish. I have helped thousands of ladies with dandruff, oily or dry scalps, falling hair, getting bald, etc. Write fully. No charge for frank opinion. **"SECRETS of BEAUTY,"** my new booklet, mailed free on request.

L. PIERRE VALLIGNY, Room 46, No.14 E. 44th St., New York

A Perfectly Developed Bust

Growdina gives wonderful results. Guaranteed perfectly harmless. Full six week's treatment $5.00. **Mlle. Koppel's Parisian Studio, Dept. T. T., 158 West Thirty-Fourth Street, New York City**

Would $150 MONTHLY, Auto of your own to travel in, as General Agent handling remarkable sellers, Lightning Patch Vulcanizer, Shock Absorber, and Anti-Thief Combination Auto-Switch Lock, thief proof, interest you? Then address

Dept. 19. U. S. MANUFACTURING CO., Wolcott, Indiana

A High School Course In Two Years

Learn in your own home. Here is a thorough, complete, and simplified high school course that you can finish in two years. *Meets all college entrance requirements.* Prepared by leading members of the faculties of universities and academies.

Write for booklet. Send your name and address for our booklet and full particulars. No obligations whatever. Write today—now.

American School of Correspondence, Dept. P1172 Chicago, U. S. A.

Don't Wear a Truss

BROOKS' APPLIANCE, the modern, scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that cures rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves. No lies. Durable, cheap. **Sent on trial to prove it.** Protected by U. S. Patents. Catalog and measure blanks mailed free. Send name and address today.

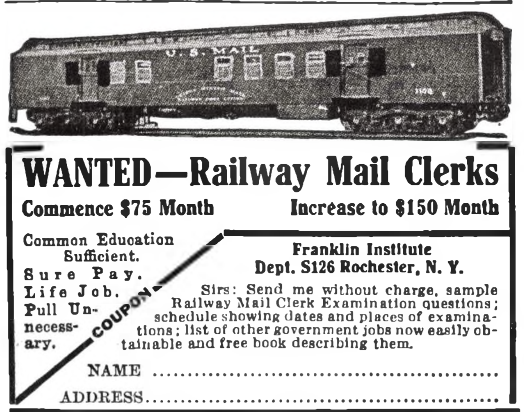
C. E. BROOKS, 111 State Street Marshall, Mich.

The Best Summer You Ever Had

An "Old Town Canoe" will make summer mean more than ever before. Canoeing brings you closer to nature—opens up new pleasures and surprises that put the joy of living into your blood. You can be sure of yourself with an "Old Town Canoe." It is safe, light, easily managed and good looking. **Send for catalog.** Pick out the canoe you want and get ready to enjoy life. $34 up. 4,000 ready to ship. Easy to buy from dealer or factory.

"Old Town Canoe"

OLD TOWN CANOE CO., 612 Main St., Old Town, Maine, U. S. A.



Look at my price on DIAMONDS

Genuine Blue White Perfect Cut Quality

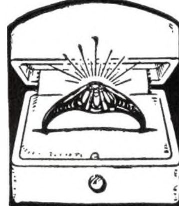
$88 PER CARAT

IGNATIUS BARNARD, President

14K. SOLID GOLD Mountings at Factory Cost!

We have smashed war-prices on Blue-White Gems!

1/8 Carat $6.25
1/4 Carat $15.50
1/2 Carat $40.25



Diamond Rings In velvet jewel cases. Blue White perfect cut diamonds. 14k solid gold hand engraved rings.
Baby Size...$1.88
Child'sSize. 2.88
Girls' Size.. 3.88
Ladies' Size. 4.88

Special! 1-2 C. Blue White Diamond. 14k solitaire ring, complete...$42.75

Special! 3-4 C. Blue White Diamond. 14k solitaire ring, complete...$67.13

Special! 3-4 C. Blue White Diamond. 14k solitaire ring, complete....$71.13

Special! 1 C. Blue White Diamond. 14k solitaire ring, complete...$92.50

These illustrations are greatly reduced in size.

If you expect to invest in a diamond between now and Xmas it will pay you to get my big free book. It will open your eyes to **diamond facts** necessary for you to know in order to buy safely and intelligently. Let me show you how my new cut profit plan has cut down the price for Diamonds of popular BLUE WHITE quality to $88 per carat. This startling direct import price is actually less than jewelers must pay **wholesale!** Learn how you can keep in your own pocket the 35% that represents the profits of brokers, jobbers and retailers.

We Ship For FREE EXAMINATION By Any Express or to Any Bank

I know and I want **you** to know that we can sell you the same diamond for less money or a bigger, better diamond for the same money. To prove it, I will **send you and let you examine** any diamond and mounting in our vast stock **at our expense.** You will not be obligated to buy. I get all my vast business in this way. Doesn't this prove my prices lowest and my values best? I will snip anywhere, **by any express or in care of any Bank.**

We alone give a BANKABLE Money Back Guarantee

with every diamond we sell. You can take it to any bank in America and cash in your diamond investment if you want to. No other Money Back Guarantee has this feature, which makes evasions and delays impossible. Here at last is perfect protection! And my guarantee gives you full value in exchange **forever!**

1917 DeLuxe Book of Diamonds gives you all the facts FREE!

Mail the coupon and get your free book even if you have not yet made up your mind to order. Get the true facts about diamond qualities and values, and thousands of beautiful illustrations of the 1917 styles in diamond jewelry. The only **bound** book on diamonds offered by any house.

Mail Coupon, Postal or Letter. Do It Now.

BARNARD & CO. Dept. 1488B, S. W. Cor. Wabash & Monroe CHICAGO

FREE Book Coupon

Ignatius Barnard, President,
BARNARD & CO.
Dept. 1488B, S. W. Cor. Wabash and Monroe, CHICAGO

Without expense or obligation please send me Free, Postage paid, 1917 DeLuxe Diamond Book.

Name............................

Address............................

....

"SCANDAL"

The story of "the worst spoiled girl in America," a girl spoiled by wealth and admiration, told in a novel as true and powerful and dramatic as his noted books "The Sins of the Children" and "The Blindness of Virtue"

By Cosmo Hamilton

is the serial feature for 1917 in

THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE

The new novel begins in the February issue, on the news-stands January 12th.

LUDEN'S

MENTHOL CANDY **COUGH DROPS**

Luden's great popularity is due to its being more than an ordinary cough drop. You'll find many new uses.

WM. H. LUDEN, Mfg. Confectioner, READING, PA.

A Superior Powder

A that we've learned in sixty-eight years as makers of good face powders is expressed in Pussywillow—the highest quality powder we have ever produced.

You'll like

Tetlow's Pussywillow Face Powder

because it is soft, smooth and transparent. Sifted through silk and scented with a delightfully delicate odor of our own creation. Your choice of five shades—White, Flesh, Pink, Cream and Brunette—50 cents the box.

A Miniature Box will be sent for 10c, or Trial Portion free.

HENRY TETLOW CO. Established 1849

Makers of Pussywillow Dry Shampoo

1011 Cherry St. Philadelphia, Pa.

This X Will Prove Your Ambition

THIS little "X" has marked the way to success for thousands of ambitious men. It marked the day when they stopped *dreaming* and began *acting*. Merely dreaming about the job ahead won't help you get it. But marking "X" in the coupon proves your ambition—and shows that you are ready to put your dreams into *action* to earn success.

The job you dream about *can* be yours. Not through favor or pull or some lucky chance—but through *training*. Thousands are proving it every day.

And it is easy for you to get that training.

It isn't necessary to make a drudge of yourself. The first step is to mark *your* "X" before the job you want, and we will show *you* the way to success.

Make Your Mark Now

Mark an "X" before the job you want, and mail the coupon to us now. We'll show you *your* way to success—more simple and easy than you have dreamed. You'll be under no obligation and for the sake of your ambition you should act today. Make your mark now. Send the coupon.

American School of Correspondence, Chicago, U.S.A.

Dept. G1172

American School of Correspondence, Dept. G1172, Chicago, U. S. A.

Gentlemen: Please send me booklet and tell me how I can fit myself for the position marked X.

....Electrical Engineer	....Lawyer
....Elec. Light & Power Supt.	....Business Law
....Hydroelectric Engineer	....Business Manager
....Telephone Engineer	....Auditor
....Architect	....Accountant
....Architectural Draftsman	....Cert'f'd Public Acc'nt
....Building Contractor	....Stenographer
....Building Superintendent	....Bookkeeper
....Heat. and Vent. Engineer	....Fire Ins. Inspector
....Structural Engineer	....Fire Ins. Adjuster
....Structural Draftsman	....Fire Ins. Expert
....Mechanical Engineer	....Sanitary Engineer
....Mechanical Draftsman	....Master Plumber
....Civil Engineer	....Plumb. & Heat. Estimator
....Steam Engineer	....Reclamation Engineer
....Shop Foreman	....Automobile Engineer
....Shop Superintendent	....Automobile Repairer
....Sheet Metal Draftsman	....High School Course

We also prepare for civil service examinations in all engineering subjects.

Name ....

Address ....

Heading drawn by Herbert Morton Stoops for "For the Sake of the Children."

Peter B. Kyne's Latest

"FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN" brings forward *Tib Tinker* again—*Tib* the wily, the simple, the unscrupulous, the soft-hearted—the one and only much-loved and much-feared *Tib Tinker.* The story is about a murder-mystery, but when Peter Kyne and *Tib Tinker* get together, you may be assured that the result will be something distinctly out-of-the-ordinary and wholly worth reading. Don't miss this latest and most attractive story by the author of "A Man's Man," "The Sheriff of Panamint" and the *Cappy Ricks* stories.

And—

"The Fixing Kid," a delightful darky story by Walter Jones; a "New Story of Tarzan," by Edgar Rice Burroughs; new *Jabez Bunker* and *Free Lance* stories by Ellis Parker Butler and Clarence Herbert New respectively; and many other notable contributions by other large-caliber writers like James Francis Dwyer, Robert J. Casey and Charles Wesley Sanders.

The March Issue of

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The Story-Press Corporation, Publisher, North American Bldg., Chicago

On Sale February 1st. *Price 15 Cents*

"The Joy-Garden"

A Complete Book-Length Novel

By BESSIE R. HOOVER

DO you remember those delightful stories by Bessie R. Hoover which appeared in the 1915 BLUE BOOKS?—the stories about *Jule Peebles,* her son *Jasper* and her husband *Milo?* Of course you do, for they were unique in their delineation of real American "folks."

We've always felt that Miss Hoover could write a novel that would be exceptionally attractive; for two years now she has been working on "The Joy-Garden," the story of a queer religious sect and of a deeply interesting romance; and the result is all that we had hoped for: a novel brimful of interesting people doing interesting things. Remember: "The Joy-Garden," book-length novel by Bessie R. Hoover, complete in our next issue.

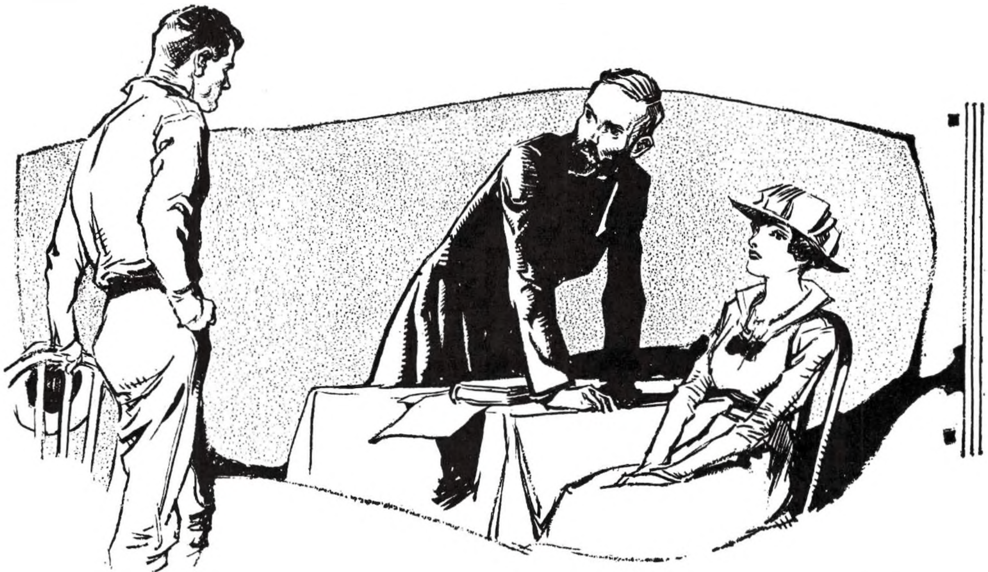
And These Fine Serials—

"Ransom!" By Arthur Somers Roche

The fourth installment of this notable mystery-serial by the author of "Loot."

"Vagabonds of Chance" By George Washington Ogden

Stirring episodes of pioneer days in Oklahoma are vividly described in this memorable story.



In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

The Luxury and Healthfulness of Daily Massage Brought to Your Home

This wonderful massage machine, by its soothing **suction**, opens and *cleanses the pores*. *Stimulates circulation*, and *builds up the tissues*, *smooths out wrinkles*, *removes blackheads*, and *clears away blemishes*, leaving the skin refreshed and glowing with health. Requires no electricity—low in price. Sent on free trial to prove it. See offer below.

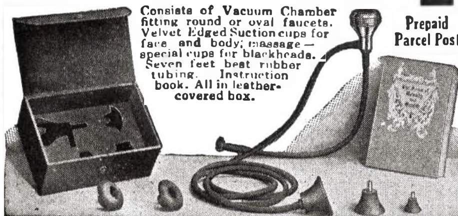
CLEAN-O-PORE

Price Complete **$2**

VACUUM MASSAGE OUTFIT

Consists of Vacuum Chamber fitting round or oval faucets. Velvet Edged Suction cups for face and body; massage—special cups for blackheads. Seven feet best rubber tubing. Instruction book. All in leather-covered box.

Prepaid Parcel Post



The "Clean-O-Pore" is a high-grade Massage Machine, indispensable to those who take pride in their appearance. *Fits on any wash basin faucet.* Its suction is produced by force of water passing through the Vacuum Chamber. No water touches the face. **Costs Nothing to Operate**—only running water required. No parts to get out of order. Spend 10 minutes a day massaging with it and note your improved appearance in a week.

A Luxury After Shaving

After shaving, a massage with the "Clean-O-Pore" is delightfully soothing and refreshing. *For Scalp Massage*, the "Clean-O-Pore" is unequalled. Rids the hair of dandruff and brings blood to the roots, stimulating them, and growing hair in Nature's way.

Develops the Bust

The flesh and tissues of the bust being so elastic and susceptible to development, "Clean-O-Pore" massaging will show surprising results in a very short time. You owe it to yourself to look your best. It is within your power to do so.

Special Offer— 10 Days' Free Trial

See the "Clean-O-Pore"—use it—note the wonderful results obtained from its daily use. Pin a $2 bill, your check, or a money order to the coupon below—mail to us—and a "Clean-O-Pore" outfit will come to you by Parcel Post. If not more than satisfied in 10 days' return it. Your money will be promptly refunded. *Improving your appearance is worth ten times $2, so send coupon — now, before you forget it.*

GUARANTEE COUPON

Enclosed find $2. Send me, prepaid, by Parcel Post, a "Clean-O-Pore" Massage Outfit on the understanding that if I am not entirely satisfied my money will be promptly refunded.

Name.......................................

Address.......................................

My Druggist's name is.......................

CLEAN-O-PORE MFG. CO.
251 Classon Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.C.

Makers of the Famous Clean-O-Pore Massage Cream

AGENTS If you have selling experience—Carry a small stock. Write at once.

Classified Advertising Department

RATE:—$1.00 per line—cash with order.
No advertisement of less than 4 lines or more than 12 lines accepted.

The March issue will appear on February 1st. Forms close in Chicago January 15th, by which time order, copy, and remittance must be in our hands.

THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION
North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

WANTED—Stories, articles, poems for new magazine. We pay on acceptance. Handwritten MSS. acceptable. Submit MSS. to COSMOS MAGAZINE, 1028 Stewart Bldg., Washington, D. C.

HELP WANTED

THOUSANDS Government Jobs open to Men-Women. $75.00 month. Steady Work. Short hours. Common education sufficient. Write immediately for free list of positions now obtainable. Franklin Institute, Dep't S46, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS—500% PROFIT, FREE SAMPLE Gold and Silver Sign Letters for store fronts and office windows. Anyone can put on. Big demand everywhere. Write today for liberal offer to agents. Metallic Letter Co., 411 N. Clark, Chicago, U. S. A.

WE PAY $80 MONTHLY SALARY and furnish rig and expenses to introduce guaranteed poultry and stock powders. BIGLER COMPANY, X 377, Springfield, Ill.

DO YOU WANT a sure job with big pay, easy hours and rapid advance? Write for my big FREE book, DW 43, which tells you how you can get a good Government position. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

WRITE FOR FREE CATALOG of best books on writing and selling photoplays, short stories, poems. ATLAS PUBLISHING CO., 814. Cincinnati.

OLD COINS WANTED

CASH PAID for old money of all kinds; $5.00 for certain eagle cents; $7.00 for certain 1853 Quarters, etc. Send 4c. Get Large Illustrated Coin Circular. May mean your large profit. Send now. NUMISMATIC BANK, Dept. 8, Fort Worth, Texas.

PATENTS, PATENT ATTORNEYS, ETC.

PATENTS—Write for HOW TO OBTAIN A PATENT. List of Patent Buyers and Inventions Wanted. $1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our Four Guide Books sent free upon request. We assist inventors to sell their inventions. Victor J. Evans & Co., Patent Attys., 696 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

WANTED—AN IDEA! WHO CAN THINK OF SOME SIMPLE thing to patent? Protect your ideas, they may bring you wealth. Write for "Needed Inventions," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 177, Washington, D. C.

INVENT SOMETHING. It may bring wealth. Free book tells what to invent and how to obtain a patent through our Credit System. WATERS & CO., Succeeded by Talbert & Parker, 4388 Warder Bldg., Washington, D. C.

1000 WOMEN WANTED
TO SELL NATIONAL DRESS GOODS

Silks, Waistings, etc. Steady income. The "NATIONAL" line is the best. Newest goods—big assortments—prompt deliveries. Our plan will appeal to you—WRITE TO-DAY.
National Dress Goods Co., Dept. M, 8 Beach St., New York

WHY BE STOUT?

To prove that **ADIPO**, a pleasant, harmless Obesity Treatment, will take fat off any part of the body, we will send a **50c Box FREE** to any one who is too fat. **Adipo** requires no exercising or dieting, nor does it interfere with your usual habits. Rheumatism, Asthma, Kidney and Heart troubles, that so often come with Obesity, improve as you reduce. **Let us prove it at our expense.** Write today for the **FREE 50c Box** and illustrated book. Address ADIPO CO., 3236, Ashland Building, New York City.

Immediate Results

Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or for 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff **Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

Let Us Send You Convincing Proof

If you're a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our **free** booklet on the deadly effect of tobacco on the human system, and positive proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you from the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company
Dept. 308, St. Louis, Mo.

Mail Coupon NOW for FREE Booklet

NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.,
Dept. 308, St. Louis, Mo.

Please send, without obligating me in any way, your free booklet regarding the tobacco habit and proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will positively free me from the tobacco habit.

Name ....

Street and No. ....

Town.. State..........................

Wanted-A $50,000 Man

THE response to this advertisement, run by a big Boston corporation, was enormous. Hundreds of applicants presented themselves, but one by one, they were turned down. Their training and knowledge of business principles were not broad enough to fit them for the position. What was wanted was a man with a trained mind—a man who knew the great fundamental principles upon which all business is built.

There are many big positions waiting, right now, for men who are prepared to fill them. Yet qualified men are seldom found. There is a dearth of good material, a famine in the market. In almost every big business there are $10,000 — and even $15,000 positions open—waiting for the right men to step in.

The big fundamental principles behind your work

You feel and *know* that you have the capacity for greater success. But conscientious work *alone* will not fit you to get ahead. You must be *prepared*, before you can hope to rise much above your present position. You must *master the big fundamental principles behind the work you are now doing and which underlie the job ahead of you.*

It is this broad grasp of the fundamentals of business that the Alexander Hamilton Institute is teaching to more than 45,000 men in America today.

Based upon the actual experience of thousands of successful business men

The Institute collects, classifies and transmits to you thru the Modern Business Course and Service the best thought and practice in modern business. It will give you a thoro and sound training in the fundamental principles underlying all departments of business—it will give you a knowledge that could otherwise be obtained *only* by years of bitter experience—if at all.

Advisory Council

Both business and educational authority of the higl standing is represented in the Advisory Council of the Alexander Hamilton Institute. This Council includes Fı. A. Vanderlip, President of the National City Bank; Judge H. Gary, head of the U. S. Steel Corporation; John Hammond, the eminent engineer; Joseph French Joh Dean of the New York University School of Commerce; Jeremiah W. Jenks, the statistician and economist.

The kind of men enrolled

Among the 45,000 subscribers are such men as: Osborn, President, American Multigraph Sales Co.; M W. Mix, President of the Dodge Mfg. Co, a $1,500,000 co tion; George M. Verity, President of the American R Mills, a $5,000,000 corporation; William H. Ingersoll, Mar Manager of the biggest watch company in the world; Hawkins, General Sales Manager of the Ford Motor Co scores of others equally prominent.

In the Standard Oil Co., 215 men are enrolled wit Alexander Hamilton Institute; in the U. S. Steel Corpor 450; in the National Cash Register Co., 173; in the Ge Electric Co., 240; in the Pennsylvania Railroad, 76;—and down the list of the biggest concerns in America.

"Forging Ahead in Business"

A careful reading of this 128-page book, "Forging Ahead in Business," copy of which we will send you free, will repay you many times over. It will help measure what you know—what you don't know, and what you should know—to make success *sure*. This Course and Service will fit you to grasp the opportunities that are bound to come to those who are prepared.

573 Astor Place **Alexander Hamilton Institute** New York, N. Y.

Send me "Forging Ahead in Business" — FREE

Name ....

Business Address ....

Business Position ....

Make This Your Home-Building Year

Will this year see the attainment of the home **you** have been waiting for? Of course, you have ideas and plans of what you want. Then take the first step toward their fulfillment by sending for the truly wonderful Book of Aladdin Homes. This most remarkable building book ever published is now ready for mailing.

It pictures and describes over one hundred bungalows, dwellings, summer cottages, and garages at prices from $138 to $8,000. It shows how twenty feet of lumber are secured from a sixteen-foot ard. It also shows how modern machinery can saw your lumber to fit, faster, cheaper, and more efficiently than ır carpenter. Aladdin prices for 1917 will save you from $200 to $800 on your home — this book shows how you ı secure a better home by the Aladdin system than by ordinary methods. Send for your copy today — now!

How Aladdin Helps You Build

rst, the plan: A hundred homes to choose from and each interesting, as charming, and as practical as the one shown ›ove. Next, the material: As clear and free from blemish was ever taken from the forest. And last, the Service: A ›wledge and experience gathered from twelve years work- with thousands of home builders—everywhere—a service assists you in every step of your home building.

5-Room Winter Home, $298

You can buy all the material needed to build a cozy, 5-room house complete for $298. Everything included to finish the house, ready to occupy. Price includes the same high grades of material as furnished for the larger Aladdin Houses.

Aladdin's Readi-Cut System Offsets Rising Building Costs

Of course, the cost of living has been raised. And so has the cost of building. Yet, you can avoid these higher prices by eliminating waste. The Aladdin Readi-Cut System of Construction eliminates the usual 18% waste of lumber, waste in measuring, cutting and fitting. This saving matched against wasteful methods **offsets the higher price** of building materials. Twenty feet of lumber from a sixteen-foot board — the Aladdin catalog tells how.

Aladdin Price Includes all lumber, millwork, flooring, outside and inside finish, doors, windows, shingles, lath and plaster, hardware, locks, nails, paint, varnishes. Your home is shipped in a sealed box car, complete, Readi-Cut, ready to erect. Safe arrival of the complete material in perfect condition is guaranteed. Floor plan arrange nt and complete description of the house shown above will be found in the Aladdin Book of Homes. Send stamps today for the book of "Aladdin Homes," No. 533.

The Aladdin Co. *Home Builders to the Natio*
536 Aladdin Ave., Bay City, Mich.

Canadian Branch, C. P. R. Bldg., Toronto, Ont.

THE ALADDIN CO., 536 Aladdin Ave., BAY CITY, MICH.
Enclosed find stamps for your book No. 533, Aladdin Homes.

Name ....
Street ....
City ....
State ....

FREE for Six Months

My New Magazine

INVESTING for PROFIT

This wonderful magazine is the "Investor's Brain Partner" and often referred to as the "Little Schoolmaster of the SCIENCE OF INVESTMENT"

Don't invest a dollar anywhere until you at least read Investing for Profit Magazine

"Every investment he touches turns into money." This is a common every day expression—no doubt you know a few such men among your acquaintances. These men do not follow blind luck—they have mastered the law of Financial Success. You may watch them conceive and carry out their financial plans successfully—and you know they are not mentally stronger than you are. But it is the KNOW HOW in conjunction with brains that counts.

The education necessary to transform mind conceptions into visual realities is the element necessary to bring wealth to the dreamer. Until you learn the *real earning power* of your money—the difference between *rental* power and *earning* power—the underlying principles of incorporation—the science of investing—don't invest a dollar in anything anywhere.

Investing for Profit—A Liberal Financial Education

I claim—and I can prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt—that my magazine has not only made thousands of dollars for its readers—but it has SAVED them from losing many thousands of dollars in unwise investments. Until my magazine, INVESTING FOR PROFIT, appeared the small investor never had an opportunity to ask for and receive honest, unbiased, sound, logical advice and counsel in the science of investment.

Think this over. What are you worth today? How much do you expect to be worth ten years from now? And how are you going to build your fortune if you do not take advantage of the best advice and counsel you can possibly get on the subject of investing for profit? Just so surely as there is a law of gravitation, so is there a law of financial success. Without money you can accomplish practically nothing—so if you have $5 or more per month to invest, read my magazine.

Why I Make This Free Offer

It is the ambition of my life to give to the great masses of the American people for the first time in their lives comprehensive instruction in the science of investment—the knowledge which financiers hide from the masses—the true inwardness of the great problem of scientific and profitable investment—placing this information before you in facts and figures which you can easily understand. The rich man KNOWS the science of investment—the poor man unwittingly permits himself to lack this knowledge. This is the mission of my magazine—it is FREE to you for six months for the asking. In requesting it you promise nothing—obligate yourself in no way. I am glad to send it to you for nearly everyone subscribes at the full $1.00 price after reading it FREE for six months. The number of free six months' subscriptions is limited. Sign and mail this coupon at once.

H. L. BARBER, Publisher
CHICAGO

Mail this now

H. L. BARBER, Publisher,
20 (O.O.) West Jackson Blvd. Chicago.
Please send me FREE for six months "Investing for Profit," and enter my name on your list for Free Financial Advice.
Name..
Address..

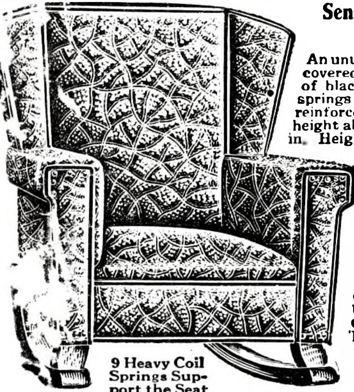
3 Wonderful Bargains from the Great UNIVERSAL Catalog Each Sent Direct Only 50¢

Special 5-Piece Mission Library Set

All five pieces made to match, of seasoned solid oak, fine rich fumed finish. Correct Mission design. Table is a neat design typical of mission style. The rich, dark fumed finish beautifully brings out natural grain of the oak. Each end has 4 panels with attractive cut-out design. Top 34x24 in.; 8 in. book shelf; legs cut from 2 in. stock and fitted with slides. Rocker; seat and back upholstered in imitation Spanish leather; seat supported by 6 heavy steel coil springs resting on steel channel bars. Width 26 in., height 38 in., back 24 in. above seat; seat 19 in. Chair has same upholstering and construction as rocker. Width 26 in., height 38 in., back 24 in. above seat; seat 19 in. Magazine Rack has 4 shelves; 30 in. high; 17 in. wide, [illegible] deep. Tabourette; top 11x11 in., height 18 in. Order No. U123. Price, (complete set of 5 pieces as shown) [illegible]. Terms, 50c with order; Balance $1.75 per month.

50c

Sensational Sale High Grade Rockers



9 Heavy Coil Springs Support the Seat

An unusually massive, overstuffed Rocker, covered in durable Imitation Leather, choice of black or brown Spanish. 9 heavy coil springs support seat, attached to frame and reinforced by steel channel bars. Extreme height about 37 in. Extreme width about 31 in. Height of seat from floor 17 in. Distance between arms 21 inches. Size of seat 21x20 in. Size of arms 5x23 in. Height of back from seat 27 in. Mahogany finish frame. Securely packed in a manner to obtain lowest possible freight rate.

This is an exceptionally attractive Rocker, and as will be seen from the ample dimensions, a most comfortable one. It is substantially built throughout, strong and durable. Order by No. U129. Price Only $9.68. Terms, 50c with order; Balance 95c per month.

50c

Special Kitchen Cabinet Bargain

This handy Kitchen Cabinet embodies many features that can add to the convenience and lighten the work of a housewife's kitchen duties. Made of kiln dried solid oak with beautiful golden gloss finish. Hardware is of copper, latest design. Height 63 in.; base top 42x26 in. Contains 1 cutlery drawer; 1 bread drawer; large cupboard space for cooking utensils; closet with door which contains rolling pin; and pan rack; one bread board 18x20 in.; portable 40-lb. flour bin with sifter attached; one china closet with two panel and art glass doors; one 7-lb. tilting sugar bin; two spice drawers. Draw bottoms, back, etc., built of 3-ply non-warping lumber.

Order by No. U126. Price $14.85. No money in advance — 50c with order — balance $1.45 per month.

50c

Order One of These Special Bargains

Here is a plan for beautifying the home that marks the most advanced step ever taken in the history of merchandising. For only 50c we will send you any of the remarkable bargains shown on this page. If more than one is wanted send 50c for each item. You may use what you order for 30 days at our risk. If you then decide to keep it, pay the balance in small monthly payments. If you decide not to keep it return it at our expense and we will return your 50c—the 30 days use of the goods costs you nothing.

This small 50c deposit does not obligate you in any way, but is merely asked as an indication of good faith and to protect ourselves against irresponsible people ordering at random. You run absolutely no risk in sending in your order. Ours is a big, successful firm with over $5,000,000 capital and resources—a firm that is reputable, responsible and trustworthy in every way. And every article you order from us is backed by our legal binding guarantee which insures your absolute satisfaction. Send us your order today—only 50c and coupon for each item desired.

SPECIAL BARGAIN BOOK FREE

Send for **Special Bargain Book** picturing and describing everything for the home—**at rock-bottom prices**—and on the most wonderfully liberal terms imaginable. **We will trust you for anything you want on our liberal, easy-to-pay, credit plan.**

UNIVERSAL MAIL ORDER CO.

145 W. 39th St.
Dept. 176
Chicago

If only catalog is wanted put an X in this square, fill in name and address on lines below and mail coupon. ☐

Universal Mail Order Co.
145-153 W. 39th St., Dept. 176 Chicago

Gentlemen: Enclosed find 50c for each item checked below. If satisfactory after 30 days examination I agree to pay the balance as per prices and terms printed in this advertisement. If not satisfactory I will return goods to you.

☐ No. U123. 5-Piece Library Set ☐ No. U129. Rocker ☐ No. U126. Kitchen Cabinet

Name...

Address...

City............................ State.............

10c

The mildest tobacco for cigarettes is Turkish.

The best tobacco for cigarettes is Turkish.

Don't pay 10 Cents for anybody's cigarette until you've tried "Helmar" a fascinating, elevating, gentleman's smoke.

The Cigarette of the Present and the Future.

Quality Superb

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE FEBRUARY 1917 VOL. XXIV NO. IV