Stageland

PRICE 15 CENTS

JANUARY 1911

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

"The Girl He Loved"

read "A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER" by William Hamilton Osborne

THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION
NORTH AMERICAN BLDG. CHICAGO.

COLOR PHOTO OF CECELIA LOFTUS IN THIS ISSUE

CABLEGRAM
EXTRA!

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Takes distinct pleasure in announcing that it has been offered by cable, by

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

For Exclusive Publication, his Latest Literary Contribution

THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS

Introducing Shakespeare and Elizabeth. The offer was promptly accepted on Mr. Shaw's own terms and "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets" will be published, complete in the January issue of THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale throughout America, December twenty-third.

The meager information available at this date enables us to say only that the work, as a play, will be produced in London on the occasion of a Shakespeare Memorial—November twenty-fourth.

WHO WAS THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS?

For three hundred years Shakespearean scholars have advanced fully three hundred theories. She is the one woman of deepest mystery in the whole range of English literature.

HAS GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Lifted the veil from her lovely countenance and disclosed her identity to the perplexed and anxious world?

We don't know. The manuscript is on the way.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

VS.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

George Bernard Shaw, "the most brilliant man in Europe," has been quoted as saying that he can write a greater play than any of Shakespeare's. But that may be George Bernard Shaw's way. Whenever he says or writes anything he makes the intelligent world sit up and take notice. And, after all, perhaps he ***can*** write a greater play than any of Master Will Shakespeare's. At any rate you may be able to form an opinion after reading in the January RED BOOK MAGAZINE

THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS

In which Shaw, according to his cablegram, introduces Shakespeare himself as well as Elizabeth.

THAT
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Himself Selected From All Others

The RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

¶ As the *one* magazine in America wherein to publish his latest work, is conclusive evidence of the high regard in which THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE is held by men and women of intelligence. Moreover, the stories that further comprise the contents of the January issue are in excellent keeping with the notable distinction of the leading feature. There is a heart-touching Irish Christmas story by Seumas MacManus, who, with Shaw, reflects the brilliancy of the Ireland of to-day. Its title is "The Hills of Mourne." There is a wildly funny yarn by Ellis Parker Butler, foremost American humorist, entitled "Anabasco Betz and Her Back." There is another story by Elliott Flower in which is revealed an absurdity of the criminal law. There is a newspaper story by Keene Abbott, entitled "Covered," that will get into your heart. There is the story of a United States senator on a peace mission in the Philippines, entitled "Blue Blazes" by H. B. Marriott Watson. There is another splendid story of Steele of the Royal Mounted, by James O. Curwood, that will thrill you. There is a heart-clutching story of childhood, "His Liege Lady," by Emerson Taylor, and ten more by the foremost writers of short fiction in America to-day.

ALL IN THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE *for* JANUARY

THE BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE

The Blue Book Magazine

For February

THOUSANDS of readers of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE have been charmed from time to time by the novelettes by Fred Jackson that the Magazine has brought out, and justly so. In all of Mr. Jackson's stories you may count on finding a mighty pretty girl and a dashing sort of chap involved in a mystery that is baffling till the end. "Diana of the Inn" which will be published complete in the next BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—the issue for February, 1911—possesses these features and others that go to make it quite the best long story THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE has had in a long time. And do not overlook the series—"HOLLY OF 'BIG NINE,'" "THE DIPLOMATIC FREE LANCE" and "MATT BARDEEN—MASTER DIVER." From cover to cover the February BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE will be packed with interest, deep interest, lively interest, and best of all, HUMAN interest. On sale everywhere on New Year's Day.

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY, 1911

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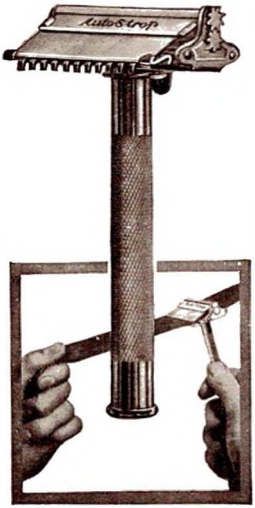

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MISS BESSIE McCOY in "The Echo"
Photograph by White, New York

"The Blue Bird"

By Maurice Maeterlinck

Once upon a time a woodcutter and his wife had two little children, TYLTYL and MYTYL. They are commanded by the fairy BERYLUNE to fare forth in search of the BLUE BIRD, which is the European symbol for happiness. As they depart all the inanimate things of their life become alive and they are accompanied on the journey by MILK, BREAD, SUGAR, WATER, and the CAT and the DOG in addition. They go first to the Fairy's Soap Bubble Palace, but the BLUE BIRD is not there. Then they go to the Land of Memory and there in a charming cottage they meet their grand-father and grand-mother, long since dead. For, you see, all those whom we believe dead are not, really; all that is required is a thought to bring them back to life. In the Palace of Night the children seek the BLUE BIRD of their quest but it is not there. Instead they find the SICKNESSES, including little GOLD-IN-THE-HEAD with his sneeze. Finally they unbolt a door, and, flinging it open, a beautiful garden is disclosed. What appear to be Blue Birds hop from branch to branch and sing, but when one is caught and brought forth into the sunlight it dies and turns gray. And so on they journey, ever searching for the BLUE BIRD and finally reach their cottage again only to discover that the turtle dove that hangs above the window is really the BLUE BIRD they have been so long in seeking. Thereupon they give the bird to NEIGHBOR BERLINGOT so that it may cure her little girl who is sick. And the BLUE BIRD does, whereupon MYTYL and TYLTYL wake up, for, you see, it has all been a dream of Christmas Eve.

Produced by The New Theatre

Scene X, "The Blue Bird." MISS LOUISE CLOSSER HALE, as Neighbor Berlingot; REGINALD BARLOW, as Daddy Tyl; ETHEL BRANDON, as Mummy Tyl; GLADYS HULETTE, as Tyltyl; JEANETTE DIX, as Neighbor Berlingot's little daughter; IRENE BROWN, as Mytyl. The children find that their own dove is the Blue Bird they have sought so long. *Photograph by Byron, New York*

Scene III. "The Blue Bird." JACOB WENDELL, JR., as The Dog. GWENDOLINE VALENTINE, as Water; GEORGIO MAJERINO, as Sugar; ELIZABETH H. VAN SELL, as Milk; CECIL YAPP, as the Cat; ROBERT E. HOMANS, as Bread; PEDRO DE CORDOBA, as Fire.
Photograph by Byron, New York

Scene I, The Blue Bird." In the woodcutter's cottage whence the children set forth to find the blue bird (Happiness) a dance is given by them assisted by the Fairy, the Hours, the Dog, the Cat, Sugar, Water, Bread and Milk.
Photograph by Byron, New York

Scene I. "The Blue Bird." GLADYS HULETTE as Tyltyl; IRENE BROWN, as Mytyl. The woodcutter's children watch the rich children across the way celebrating Christmas. The real Blue Bird (Happiness) is in the cage above them but they do not know it as such.

Photograph by Byron, New York

Act III. "Decorating Clementine." MISS DORIS KEANE, as Adrienne Morel, performs a Russian dance.
Photograph by Sarony, New York

"Decorating Clementine."

By Armand de Caivallet and Robert de Flers

CLEMENTINE MARGERIE, wife of the handsome but unliterary PAUL MARGERIE, is a writer of "best sellers." All is well in the MARGERIE *ménage* until CLEMENTINE learns that the ribbon of honor is about to be conferred on another and a rival "writeress" of books. Thereupon CLEMENTINE decides to cultivate the Minister of Fine Arts, M. MUREL, who has the power of granting the emblem. To make her quest more effective, she orders her shy husband to flirt with the Minister's wife. It is the beginning of her unhappiness. Her attentions to the minister, M. MUREL, are naturally misunderstood, and her husband's flirtation with the minister's wife assumes a degree of ardor that threatens the dissolution of their household. MADAME MUREL is a past mistress of coquetry, her affairs being frequent and short-lived. When PAUL MARGERIE is given the task of winning her, she is clandestinely receiving the attentions of one COUNT ZAPOUSKINE, master of a troupe of Slavonic dancers from the Russian Imperial Opera House. But PAUL MARGERIE soon outstrips the Slavonic Count in the fickle affections of MADAME MUREL. One day he is suddenly discovered in an embarrassing situation, with the young wife, by MADAME MARGERIE. She sees that a blue ribbon amounts to little compared with the true love of a husband, and she tries to win back her PAUL. The battle of coquetry between the two women is one of flirtation rampant but in the end CLEMENTINE makes up with her husband and all is well.

Produced by Charles Frohman

Act I, "Decorating Clementine." MISS HATTIE WILLIAMS, as Clementine Margerie; G. P. HUNTLEY, as Count Zapouskine; and ROBERT MILLASH as Dourakine. Count: "He's such a baby!"

Photograph by White, New York.

Act II. "Decorating Clementine." MISS HATTIE WILLIAMS, as Clementine Margerie; LOUIS MASSEN, as Monsieur Morel, G. P. HUNTLEY, as Count Zapouskine; MISS ALICE PUTNAM, as Mme. De Ternay; MISS GAIL KANE, as Mme. Fauchet; and MISS DORIS KEANE, as Adrienne Morel. Count. "All the women fall in love with me."

Photograph by White, New York.

"Judy Forgot"

By Avery Hopwood and Silvio Hein

JUDY EVANS was really as nice a little wife as FREDDIE EVANS could have hoped to secure. They were having the best sort of a time together in their bridal suite at the Swiss Inn at Innsbruck when something happened. JUDY became displeased with her husband and she straightway declared that she desired nothing in the world so much as to forget. As a means to the accomplishment of that end she takes a train for Marienbad. Then occurs the accident. She bumps her head and an acute but none the less perfect case of aphasia develops. JUDY forgets FREDDIE, Innsbruck and all. Likewise she forgets that she is married. At Marienbad is a comic-opera star, by name TRIXIE STOLE, who has been by way of eloping with a youth. JUDY EVANS annexes the youth willy nilly. Thereupon she believes herself to be the comic opera star, herself. She is as eager to read the real TRIXIE'S press notices as if they were her own and she sings and dances with all the charm and grace of the theatrical person she takes herself to be. The complications are obvious. FREDDIE, the crazed husband, foregathers with the real TRIXIE and every effort is made to rescue JUDY from her aphasia which is finally accomplished through the assistance of DR. LAUBERSCHEIMER and all ends well with the proper folks mated to their musical-comedy affinities.

Produced by Daniel V. Arthur

Act II, "Judy Forgot." MISS TRULY SHATTUCK, as Trixie Stole, and ARTHUR STANFORD, as Freddie Evans, singing "Thinky, Thanky, Thunk."
Photograph by White, New York

Act II, "Judy Forgot." MISS ETHEL JOHNSON and the Spirits singing "Dream, Dream, Man."
Photograph by White, New York

Act I, "Judy Forgot." JAMES B. CARSON, as Dr. Lauberscheimer, and MISS MARIE CAHILL, as Judy Evans. Judy, believing herself Trixie Stole, an actress, reads Trixie's press-notices.
Photograph by White, New York

Act I. "Judy Forgot." BERT BAKER, as John Muggs; MISS ETHEL JOHNSON, as Rosa; JAMES B. CARSON, as Dr. Lauberscheimer; MISS TRULY SHATTUCK, as Trixie Stole; JOSEPH STANLEY, as Dixie Stole, and MISS MARIE CAHILL, as Judy Evans, singing a parody on the Floradora sextet.

Photograph by White, New York

Act I, "New York." MISS MARY SHAW, as Edna Macey, importunes ORRIN JOHNSON, as Oliver King, for funds to go west.
Photograph by White, New York

"New York"

By William J. Hurlbut

OLIVER KING has "a past." A living souvenir of that past is a son, WENDELL RANDOLF. KING is striving to guide the steps of the boy into the path of rectitude, but the deviltry that had been the chief characteristic of his mother continually crops out in him. He is dissolute and altogether worthless. That mother was EDNA MACEY. At the opening of the play KING is in love with NORA NELSON, a decent woman, and all is going well when EDNA, a sodden creature of the streets, appears and demands that KING arrange a meeting between her and their son. KING refuses, shocked that the pretty girl he had once loved has sunk to such depths. He has told NORA of WENDELL'S existence and his fears for him, and she pleads with him to let her meet the boy and try to persuade him to be decent. She meets him and his conduct toward her is of such a brutal nature that in self-defense she is compelled to kill him. Thereupon CHRIS McKNIGHT, a lawyer, enters the drama and seeks to fasten the murder on KING, To save the man she loves, NORA confesses it was she who committed the crime. KING, shocked beyond measure, refuses, at the moment, to forgive her. Then, again the dead boy's mother appears. She is intoxicated. She confesses that she has been running a dance hall on the Yukon and is in New York to secure "performers." She seeks money from KING to carry on her business. He realizes then that the dead boy could not have been saved in any event and driving EDNA from his rooms he turns to NORA and takes her in his arms.

Produced by Al. H. Woods

Act III, "New York." MISS LAURA NELSON HALL, as Nora Nelson, begs ORRIN JOHNSON, as Oliver King, to forget the past and begin life over again.
Photograph by White, New York

"Madame Troubadour"

By Joseph Herbert and Felix Albini

The plot of " MADAME TROUBADOUR " bears a similarity to a well known modern French classic, but differs from the model in many particulars, so that it is not at all lacking in novelty. The story concerns the marital troubles of the MARQUIS DE KERGAZON, a scholar who devotes his life to a study of the deeds of the ancient troubadours, and his wife, HENRIETTA, who feels herself to be sadly neglected, and who, on account of her husband s obsession, is known as "MADAME TROUBADOUR." Husband and wife, mutually dissatisfied, agree on a plan by which the MARQUIS is to give her cause for a divorce. " MADAME TROUBADOUR " has already been receiving the attentions of VICOMTE MAX, a gay young man, and when the divorce scheme is outlined, she goes to his country home, only to find him kissing his servant maids, MARTINE and GEORGETTE, and not at all eager for matrimony. The fact that " MADAME TROUBADOUR " goes to the house of the VICOMTE instead of returning to her mother, excites the jealousy of the MARQUIS, who follows her in hot haste. In the meantime he has been disappointed in his efforts to create divorce evidence. " MADAME TROUBADOUR" is now disgusted with her fickle lover, so husband and wife awake to the fact that they still really love each other and resume a happy married life.

Produced by Sam S. and Lee Shubert

Act II. " Madame Troubadour." MISS DORIS GOODWIN, as Martine; RENSSELAER WHEELER, as Vicomte Max; MISS ANNA WHEATON, as Georgette. *Photograph by Hall, New York.*

Act I, "Madam Troubadour." MISS GEORGIA CAINE, as Juliette, dances with EDGAR ATCHISON-ELY, as Joseph.
Photograph by Hall, New York

Act III, "The Concert." Reunited to her husband, LEO DITRICH STEIN, as Gabor Arany, MISS JANET BEECHER, as Helen Arany, proceeds to dye his hair as of old.
Photograph by Byron, New York

Act III, "The Concert." MISS JANE GREY, as Flora Dallas; JOHN W. COPE, as McGinnis; LEO DITRICHSTEIN, as Gabor Arany; MISS JANET BEECHER, as Helen Arany. McGinnis, "I thought the Missus was the Missus, but the Missus says the Missus is the Missus. What do I know?"
Photograph by Byron, New York

Act I, "New York." MORTIMER WELDEN, as Wendell Randolph; ORRIN JOHNSON, as Oliver King; MISS LAURA NELSON HALL, as Nora Nelson; FRANK CRAVEN, as Chris McKnight. Nora discusses the possibility of being compromised in a man's apartment.

Photograph by White, New York

"The Concert"

By Herman Bahr, adapted by Leo. Ditrichstein

GABOR ARANY is a pianist of note—also temperament. It is the temperament, coupled with the note, that leads him from the straight and narrow path of domesticity, into the green-clad Catskills where a cobblestone bungalow rears its picturesque gables. GABOR'S wife, HELEN, knows her musician like a book and knows, too, just what his occasional "concert tours" amount to. She is not surprised when all his pupils fall in adoration at his feet and, like a true musician-wife, becomes not at all excited when FLORA, the otherwise delightful wife of DR. DALLAS, agrees to elope with GABOR to that Catskill retreat. On the contrary she and the doctor talk it over between them. All the doctor desires is his wife's happiness and that she may have "her happiness" he is agreeable to turning her over to GABOR. But HELEN, knowing her husband, proposes a plan that DR. DALLAS agrees to assist her in the operation of. The twain overtake GABOR and FLORA in the bungalow. They proclaim that they, too, have discovered themselves to be affinities. GABOR proceeds to make comparisons. After all, HELEN is the more desirable. But FLORA is not willing to capitulate until she sees her husband's loving attentions to HELEN. Then she gives up. Happiness is restored to the couples and peace reigns again in their different households. The curtain descends with HELEN performing her wifely duty of dyeing GABOR'S hair as of yore.

Produced by David Belasco

Act I. "The Concert." LEO DITRICHSTEIN, as Gabor Arany, wins MISS JANE GREY, as Flora Dallas, with music.
Photograph by Byron, New York

"The Scandal"

By Henri Bataille

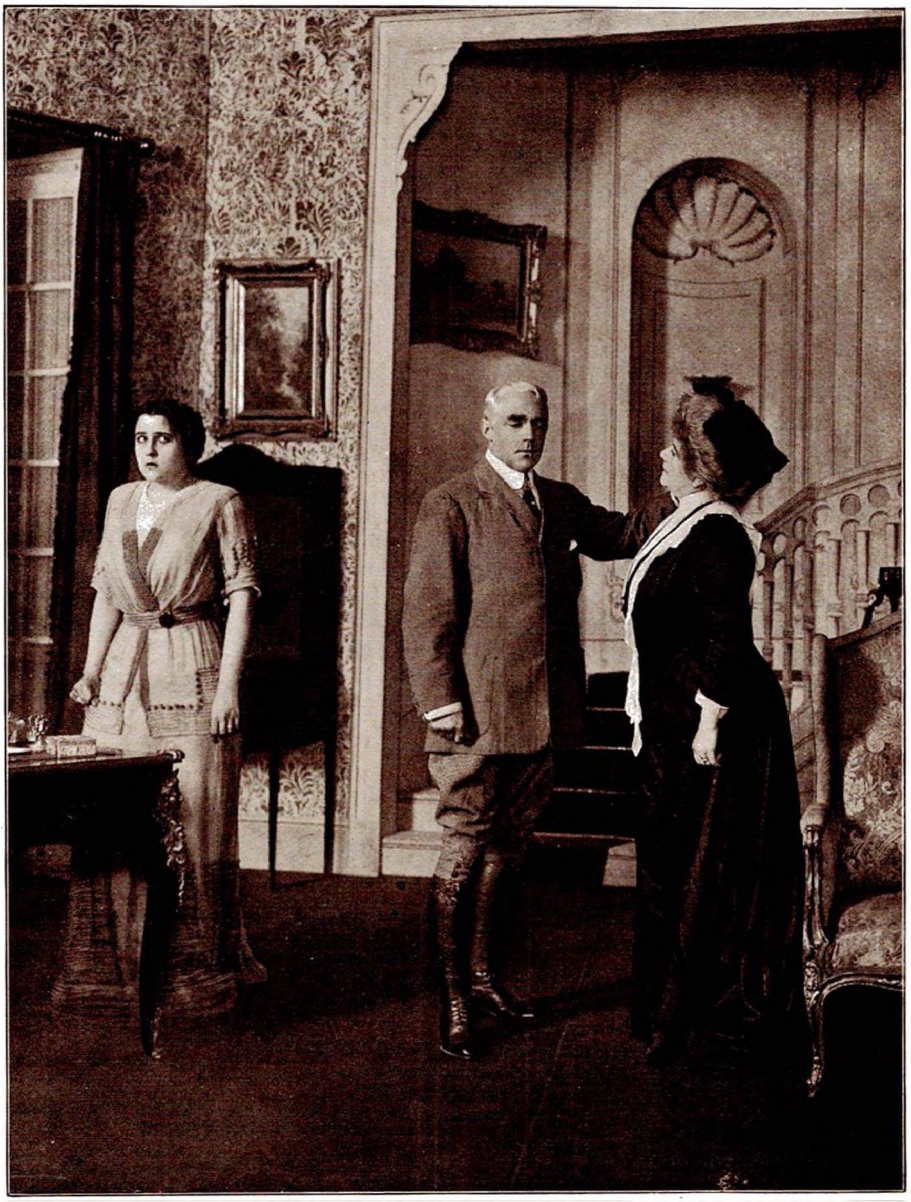
"The Scandal" opens in Luchon and takes its name from the scandal whispered abroad about CHARLOTTE FERIOUL and ARTANEZZO, a young gambler for whom she has a sudden infatuation. Her husband, MAURICE FERIOUL, is a distinguished man, Mayor of Grasse and a coming senator, and hitherto she has apparently been devoted to him, as she has also to her two children. But the moment she sees ARTANEZZO her whole view of life changes. Friends of hers learn of the influence of this handsome blackguard with whom she has fallen in love and that she has given him her diamond ring with which to assist in paying his debts. Gossip is now afoot. ARTANEZZO is arrested for swindling and CHARLOTTE is forced to go as a witness. But though she longs to have done with this adventurer, she is powerless to prevent herself from being drawn into a squalid double life. CHARLOTTE endeavors to keep the secret of her life to herself and at the same time to maintain her place as a wife and as a mother. She determines to throw ARTANEZZO aside when suddenly he returns, not to blackmail, as she had expected, but generously to give back her letters. CHARLOTTE'S nobility will not allow her to sacrifice him any more than she can the happiness of her husband and children. Then to make her plight all the more miserable, her husband gets breath of the scandal and determines to drag a confession from the woman. Manfully, however, he resolves to live his tragedy as she is living hers. Then comes another temptation to CHARLOTTE and she hurries to Paris to save ARTANEZZO when he comes up for trial. She invents an excuse for her husband, though he learns why she is gone and the great climax of the play comes when she returns home and he has to decide whether to take her in or cast her out. He accepts her and all is well.

Produced by Charles Frohman

Act II, "The Scandal." KYRLE BELLEW, as Maurice Ferioul; MISS GLADYS HANSON, as Charlotte, his wife; ERNEST STALLARD, as Parizot. Maurice suspects that Parizot is a go-between between his wife and some other man. *Photograph by White, New York. Copyright, 1910, by Chas. Frohman*

Act II, "Madame Troubadour." MISS GEORGIA CAINE, as Juliette; EDGAR ATCHISON-ELY, as Joseph; MISS GRACE LA RUE, as Henrietta; RENSSELAER WHEELER, as Vicomte Max; CHARLES ANGELO, as Marquis de Kergazon; MISS DORIS GOODWIN, as Martine; MISS ANNA WHEATON, as Georgette. The Vicomte attempts a reconciliation between Henrietta and the Marquis.

Photograph by Hall, New York



Act II, "The Scandal." MISS GLADYS HANSON, as Charlotte Ferioul; KYRLE BELLEW, as Maurice Ferioul; MISS FFOLLIOTT PAGET, as Mme. Ferioul. Maurice sends his mother away so he may talk with his wife.

Photograph by White, New York. Copyright, 1910, by Charles Frohman

Act II, "The Scandal." KYRLE BELLEW, as Maurice Ferioul, is about to accuse his wife Charlotte, MISS GLADYS HANSON, when, looking into her eyes he turns and talks of his son having been expelled from school.

Photograph by White, New York. Copyright, 1910, by Chas. Frohman

Act I, "The Deacon and the Lady." HARRY KELLY, as Deacon Flood, and the American pony ballet.

Photograph by White, New York

"The Deacon and the Lady"

By George Totten Smith and Alfred E. Aarons

Everyone who remembers DEACON FLOOD as HARRY KELLY used to portray him in "His Honor, the Mayor," will be interested to discover that the chin-whiskered hero of this new musical-comedy is none other than their old friend but in a quite new environment. DEACON FLOOD is still on deck and prone to get into trouble due to the lapses from rural rectitude whenever he ventures from the corner grocery and railroad station at Floodville, Vt., and treads the pavements of Broadway. DEACON FLOOD is first seen in Floodville, where he and a group of seminary girls are persuaded to go to New York and back a musical-comedy. JUPITER P. SLICK has made the daughter feel that she is a star hid under a bushel, so the trio and the girls fare forth for Broadway. There a western adventurer, one JIM GRUFF and his delectable pal, a Parisienne panel worker named MARIE TROUVILLE, seek to separate the Deacon from the package of money he is known to possess. How the Deacon conducts himself with the adventuress and her pal and how in the end he wins out and his son and daughters find sweethearts, with himself strong in the good graces of MRS. HUNTER-GREY, constitutes the story.

Produced by Weber and Aarons

Act II, "The Deacon and the Lady." MISS MAYME GEHRUE, as Meg, does a scarecrow dance with the pony ballet.
Photograph by White, New York

Act II, "The Deacon and the Lady." HARRY KELLY, as Deacon Flood, is denounced by MISS CLARA PALMER, as Marie Trouville.
Photograph by White, New York

"The Girl in the Train"

By Harry B. Smith and Leo Fall

JANA VAN MYRTENS is extremely jealous of her husband KAREL. On a train, quite by accident, KAREL had chanced to spend a night in the same compartment with GONDA VAN DER LOO, an actress and dancer. JANA immediately sets about to obtain a divorce from her husband. The amiable JUDGE VAN TROMP gives her her freedom. Now that she is free, she doesn't want to be free. Her one-time husband is giving a masked ball and there she seeks him out, deeply repentant. Her reason for pouring oil upon the troubled waters is that her old father, PIETER BROCKENSTEIZEL, who has a very weak heart, is coming to visit her. He knows nothing of the divorce and JANA fears that the shock will work him ill. Therefore she begs that she may be permitted to stay on as if nothing had happened, for "dear father's sake." KAREL, glad indeed to have her, consents. But, as it happens, the actress of the train is there and she taunts JANA and declares that she means to marry KAREL. Thereupon, her anger roused, JANA departs. She dons a disguise and returns to the ball where by employing all the feminine witcheries at her command she completely routs the actress and the curtain descends with her in complete possession again of her husband's heart and hearth.

Produced by Charles Dillingham

Act I, "The Girl in the Train." CLAUDE GILLINGWATER, as Judge Van Tromp, seeks to make an appointment with JUNE GREY, as Gonda. *Photograph by White, New York*

Act III, "The Girl in the Train." MELVILLE STEWART, as Karel, makes love to MISS VERA MICHELENA, as Jana, his wife.
Photograph by White, New York

Act II, "The Girl in the Train." The "Eeny Meeny Dance."
Photograph by White, New York

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

VOL. XII JANUARY, 1911 NO. 3

A Suspicious Character

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

Author of "THE RED MOUSE"

MYSTERY—ROMANCE—ACTION! These are the rare qualities which make this novelette by WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE *so uniquely attractive. You will doubtless remember this author's splendid story "Bribed" which we published some time since; and we feel no hesitation in commenting that the present tale is at least fully equal to that absorbing narrative. The plot is entirely new, the characters are original, yet convincing and likable. A delicate and whimsical humor lends an additional grace to this wholly fascinating tale, and we confidently anticipate that you will find it most enjoyable.*—THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I

A NEGRO porter passed through the car making his announcement in stentorian tones, tempered, however, by his expectant civility and servility, for his train was the three-thirty p. m. express from Wall Street to the shore.

"Ravenswood," he cried, "all out for Ravenswood by the Sea!"

His car was the Vashti, and in seat 9 of that car there sat a man who for an hour had been staring absent-mindedly, perhaps dejectedly, at the swiftly moving scenery. He was young, this man, and tall and lithe, and well looking. But a strange pallor was upon his face; his countenance was marked with lines of fatigue. He suffered, evidently from jaded nerves.

As the porter reached him, this young man came suddenly to himself, sprang to his feet, with one hand reached for his finely woven Panama in the rack above, and with the other grabbed the porter.

"Ravenswood," he cried, "this is my stop, porter?" It was indeed a question and not a statement of a fact. Immediately the porter shook his head.

"Not *youah* stop, sir. Elsmere—next station—is youah stop."

The young man sank back into his seat listlessly. He drew his hand wearily across his face.

"Almost forgot where I'm bound for," he explained to the next passenger, in a confused, embarrassed way. He

toyed nervously with his Panama, as though uncertain whether to replace it once more in the rack, or to hold it, preparatory to alighting at Elsmere. All this time the long train had been coming to a stop. Now it was stationary before a small, artistic station, practically deserted save for a rickety stage, and a huge, throbbing, steel-blue motor-car. The young man in seat 9 glanced at the small depot, at the rickety stage, at the car—

Then his heart leaped into his mouth. For suddenly his glance had lighted upon the girl in the car. He leaned forward on the instant, gripping his chair with both hands and staring at her as though completely fascinated, drinking in the glory of her face.

"It is she," he said softly to himself. He waited for an imperceptible space of time and suddenly the girl looked at him—looked him full in the face.

"*She*—and no mistake," he murmured. He jammed his hat well down upon his head, seized his heavy Gladstone bag, and tore down the aisle toward the only open door.

"All aboard," sang out the porter at the end, and the train began to move.

"Hold on there," cried the passenger, don't shut that door. This *is* my station, after all. I've got to get out."

By the time he reached the platform, the train had picked up considerable speed, and the porter tried to detain him, but without success. He jerked himself away, swung free, and dashed down the steps.

"Lawdy, boss," yelled the porter, "lock out—they's another train a-comin' —another train."

But the passenger never heard. Once on terra firma, he forgot that trains existed. He sought and found the face—the girl he was looking for, and as a mariner steers by a fixed star, so did the lithe young man follow his straight course across three sets of railroad tracks, toward the steel-blue car. In his ears, it is true, he heard the porter's warning:

"— th' *other* train, boss, on th' *up* track. Lawsy. Look out."

But he heard it only with his ears. The warning did not sink in. He did not realize that upon one of the three tracks which he was crossing, an express, bound citywards, was pounding its way at the rate of sixty miles an hour, coming nearer to him every instant, threatening him with instant destruction. He did not see it, did not hear it. The porter's warning droned away in the distance. And the passenger kept on—kept on, gladly realizing that his intuition had been correct, that the girl was lovelier every step he took. He had hoped, somehow to hold her gaze. But she had turned her head and was glancing intently at something to his left. He followed her glance, and his eye lighted upon three well dressed men, also crossing the tracks—men who seemed to have dropped from the clouds. These three men were bearing down upon him, following the porter's tactics, waving their arms and shouting violently.

"Express—express," they yelled.

The foremost of these three well dressed men made a sudden dash toward the tall young passenger, as one who would rescue him at the risk of his own life, but the young passenger merely held to his course, his glance returning to the girl. She was looking at him now, and upon her face there was a look of horror. She saw, then, what he had refused to see, the imminent danger in which he was, and acting on the impulse of the moment, she rose in her car and beckoned to him to come, to come at once. His face lighted up, and he quickened his pace, and swung clear of the last steel rail. Then with a roar like thunder, the meteor swept past him, almost sucking him into its mighty swirl. By some strange circumstance he had escaped where escape had seemed impossible. On the other side of the express three men fell back and, by common consent, they mopped their respective brows.

"Thunder," exclaimed one, the man who had dashed upon him—"I figured that we'd both be ground to mincemeat. Closest squeak I ever had, I tell you."

But the object of their solicitude gave no sign of their nervousness. Gladstone in hand, he swarmed up the terraced bank, and strode softly to the side of the car. He removed his hat and bowed to the girl.

"You beckoned to me—and I came," he stammered, in confusion. The girl was hiding her face in her hands and quivering hysterically.

She turned her scared face toward him. "You were in—such terrible danger," she cried, "I had to—do something."

For the first time he looked at the express as it dashed into the distance, and for the first time he realized the situation. Instinctively he held out his hand—an act in which both he and she recognized as wholly without the conventions, but she, quite as impulsively, held out hers and permitted him to take it for an instant. There was silence—deep silence for a moment.

"You saved my life," he told her.

She shook her head. "I think you saved your own, by your coolness in keeping right on," she answered, "don't make a heroine of me. Beside, down there is a hero—he *risked* his life in trying to save you. I saw it all."

The young passenger started down the bank and met the three men as they came up. Gratefully he murmured his thanks to them, rebuking himself to them, for his stupidity and his blundering in getting into danger. The hero that the girl had pointed out, merely shrugged his shoulders and stated, unconcernedly, in a rather rough and ready tone that belied the Wall Street clothes he wore, that it was all in a lifetime and there was nothing to pay. Whereupon he of the Panama hat went back to the girl.

"Would you mind telling me," he asked, "where those chaps came from?"

She was cooler now—and colder, too. Civilly enough, she evinced a purpose to end the conversation but she answered him categorically.

"They jumped off your train," she told him. "It seemed to me, somehow, that they jumped because you got off."

"Do they belong here?" he queried. She shook her head, and turned to her chauffeur.

"You can go on, Henri," she exclaimed. "He's missed his train. He wont be down now until the five o'clock."

The chauffeur cranked his machine, and prepared to start. But the young man still detained him.

"One thing more," he asked of her, "can you direct me to the best hotel in Ravenswood?"

She nodded graciously enough, but kept her eyes upon the distances, as one who would discourage a conversation involuntarily begun.

"There is only one hotel," she answered, "the Ravenswood Inn. The stage will take you there."

Henri, the chauffeur, threw in the clutch, and she bowled away. The passenger strode to the stage, clambered in. The three unknowns were already ahead of him, clustered up in front near the driver, smoking black cigars and telling witty stories. The minute he had swung aboard, the driver lashed his horses, and the dilapidated conveyance, like some weather-beaten craft tossed on turbulent seas, lurched and staggered toward its destination.

The man with the Gladstone looked at the three men, but mused upon the girl.

"I wonder who she is," he asked himself, " and who is coming down upon the five o'clock."

As they teetered on, scraps of conversation from the three ahead, forced their way into his inner consciousness, and he found himself sizing up his three companions with considerable interest. At first blush, he had taken them for Wall Street men. But as he looked and listened, he realized his mistake. He knew Wall Street well, and he knew men well, and he knew, instinctively, that these men were not Wall Street men, and further, realized that they were masquerading—that they were not what they seemed. Besides, there was something familiar in their appearance—where had he seen them before? And then like a flash, it came to him.

"They were the three I brushed against in front of the Tombs to-day," he told himself.

But his speculations went no farther, for the seaside Jehu had brought his vehicle to a full stop under a ponderous *porte cochère*, and the tall young passenger found himself clambering awkwardly out.

"Ravenswood Inn, gents," said the driver, "an'—twenty cents apiece."

A uniformed attendant seized the Gladstone and deposited it within a dis-

creet distance of the desk, giving the clerk some idea of the amount of luggage carried by the guest.

The clerk bowed to the young man, and nodded to the three who came behind.

"Together or separate?" he asked.

"I'm separate," smiled he of the Gladstone. He took the pen that the clerk handed him, leaned over the register and for the first time, hesitated before he wrote his name. His glance strayed toward his bag, and riveted itself upon two black letters that appeared upon its side: "O. P."

Then he turned back to the register and scribbled a signature: "Oscar Pearson, New York City," was what he wrote.

"Most of my baggage," he explained, "went on to Elsmere—booked for the Hotel Sandringham. Will you send and get it, please?"

The clerk nodded. "Glad to benefit by your change of mind, Mr.—er—Pearson," he exclaimed. The new guest, Mr. Pearson, did not answer at once. Through the broad doors that led to the Ocean Drive he saw something that attracted his attention—something that sent the color into his pale face. Then he looked once more at the clerk.

"Yes—so am I," he said.

The formalities over, he strolled out upon the broad, low-roofed veranda.

"I thought so," he whispered to himself. He smiled gently at the something that had attracted his attention. That something was nothing more nor less than a steel-blue motor car, with Henri lounging in the chauffeur's seat.

But the girl had disappeared.

II

He had been quite right about the three pseudo Wall Street men who had registered with him at the Inn.

For at half past ten o'clock that very morning this young man of the Gladstone bag—he who had registered as Pearson—had slowly descended the outer steps of the Tombs in Centre Street, New York. Three men had unquestionably been waiting for him to come out, for they had skulked about the street, dodged about corners, stood in doorways, walked up and down singly and together, for half an hour or more.

And when he had come out, running, singularly enough, plump into them, they had been more or less startled by his appearance. His face was unnaturally pale—and a new, anxious, worried, harried look was fixed upon it.

From the Tombs he had stepped into a taxi-cab, and given a brief direction: "783 West 73rd."

The three in their taxicab had trailed him, and had seen his cab pull up at 783 West 73rd, and had seen him get out. They knew an instant later, that he was consulting McIntyre, M.D., the only real nerve specialist in the world—and in their way, they were professionally glad that he was seeking medical attention.

"Needs it bad enough," the three said among themselves, "looks like a shadow, so he does."

Inside No. 783 their quarry sat facing McIntyre, a little bearded man with glasses.

"But I can't go away," he was protesting at the suggestion of the specialist.

The latter only smiled. "But you are going away, whether you can or can't. If you don't, you'll be dead inside of three months. I've kept track of you in the newspapers, and I know what you've been through. Well, you've got to quit, and rest—and when I say rest, I mean it. Don't go to Newport or Narragansett Pier."

"Thank Heaven for that," murmured the younger man, "where shall I go?"

The specialist ransacked a little drawer for a memo. that he needed. Finally he found it. "This is the place," he said at last, "Jersey Shore, Elsmere—the Sandringham hotel. Quiet. Family place. No excitement High class. Good food and lots of salt water bathing. That's the place for you." He leaned over and touched his patient on the knee. "Don't let anybody know where you are," he said, "give them the slip. That's my advice Forget that you are who you are, and don't let anybody know it. That's the trick. Do as I say, or—"

His young patient, with his characteristic gesture, had drawn a hand across his face.

"Just left the Tombs half an hour ago," he began. But the physician waved his hand.

"Never mind about the Tombs," he said, "I don't care anything about the Tombs, or about anything else, and you don't either. You forget the Tombs—forget the newspapers, and the bank, and everybody. Just take care of yourself. Why don't you get married. Your wife would take care of you. Haven't you ever thought of getting married. Eh?"

His patient had flushed. "Yes," he stammered in reply, "I have—But—"

"But what?" persisted the specialist.

"*She* has never turned up," explained the other, "I've been looking for her for months and months and months—"

"For—whom? Have you seen her—lost her?"

His patient shook his head. "I've never found her yet," he went on, "all that I know is, that I'll know her when I see her."

"And—what then?" laughed the elder man.

"Then," said his patient earnestly, "then I'll marry her."

"Oho, you will, will you? How do you know you will? How do you know she'll like you? How do you know she wont be spoken for—married maybe?"

The other man shook his head. "I never thought of that," he said.

The physician rose and slapped him on the back. "Boy," he exclaimed, "you're just as sound as a dollar—strong as an ox, if it wasn't for fag. All you need is rest, and you've got to promise that you'll follow my directions and begin right now. You'll go away to-day?"

"All right," assented the other, "I suppose I've got to, haven't I?"

He pressed McIntyre's hand, passed out, re-entered his taxi, and rode away—with three men trailing behind him.

He had literally obeyed the specialist—up to the moment that he had seen the girl from the window of the parlor car. Then he had deviated into a path of his own choosing. And here he was on the veranda of the Ravenswood Inn, staring interestedly at the steel-blue motor car.

"I wonder," he thought to himself, "if she is already spoken for—married, for instance. That would be awkward."

He fell to musing about this probable misfortune, and the lines settled back into his face. There kept throbbing through his overtaxed nerves a new and vital cause for worriment.

"It can't be," he told himself, "for, didn't she beckon to me—the fates must have arranged that part, at least."

A bell boy touched him on the arm.

"Mr. Pearson," he exclaimed.

The guest started. "Who?" he demanded. "Who is Mr. Pearson and what does he want?"

"Beg pardon, sir, thought you were Mr. Pearson."

"So I am, so I am," answered the guest hastily, "what do you want?"

"Gemmen to see you, sir—in the office, sir. Shall I send him out?"

"No, I'll go in," returned the guest named Pearson.

In the office, waiting for him, there stood an individual with a pointed black Van Dyke beard—a man whom he had never seen before. This individual held out a cordial hand.

"You're the man I'm looking for," he said, "I was afraid at first, you weren't. I'm Dr. Crocheron from across the way. I've been requested to take a look at you, if you don't mind."

Oscar Pearson was perplexed. "Who asked you to take a look at me?" he queried.

Dr Crocheron smiled mysteriously. "You called on Dr. McIntyre in little old New York to-day, didn't you, Mr. —er—Pearson?"

Pearson was relieved. "Ah, to be sure—so he's keeping his eye on me—to see that I'm following directions." Then he stopped. "But I didn't follow his directions," he exclaimed suddenly. "I was to go to Elsmere, whereas I came to Ravenswood, instead. How did you know?"

The local practitioner shrugged his shoulder. I treat everybody in both places," he returned, "news travels fast."

Pearson moved toward the elevator. "Come up to my room and have a smoke," he said. The physician complied, and the two men sat down in an upper window for the space of a quar-

ter of an hour and listened to the beating of the surf along the shore.

They chatted in a desultory fashion. "The only thing I wanted to warn you against, Mr.—er—Pearson," said the doctor finally, "is the drinking water down here. It's rotten bad."

"Will it make me sick?"

"Quick as a wink."

Pearson laughed. "Then why do you warn me?" he queried. "If you hadn't warned me, it would have made me sick, and that would have added to your fees."

The physician tossed over a card. "Crocheron Spring Water is what you want to drink," he remarked.

"Crocheron," mused Pearson, "why, that's your name."

The local man nodded. "I get it two ways," he admitted, "if they drink my water they have to pay for it—and if they don't drink it, they have to pay for it. Not a bad idea."

He started from the room. "Take good care of yourself, Mr. Pearson," he commented, "I've got to leave you. I've got a patient on this floor—other end of the hall. A Mrs. Ingraham—asthma. See you later. Good day."

The guest, Oscar Pearson, descended once more to the low-roofed veranda. When he reached there, the steel-blue motor car was nowhere in sight. But even while he smoked, pacing up and down, it hove into view along the Ocean Drive, and finally drew up at the *porte cochère* of the Inn. The girl alighted, for she was in the car. And so did her companion—a big, broad-shouldered, ruddy faced individual with prosperity stamped all over him.

"Old enough to be her father, confound him," mused Pearson.

Without looking to the right or left, the girl swept on into the big hall, and her big companion followed suit.

Pearson, strolling past, saw out of the tail of his eye, that the two had waylaid Dr. Crocheron, as that eminent gentleman was coming down the stairs.

"Better, much better," was the doctor's comment.

As he came out on the veranda Pearson buttonholed him.

"Doctor," he asked, "who is that big chap, anyway?"

Crocheron smiled. "He's Ingraham, the Cleveland banker. You ought to meet him."

"I certainly ought," went on Pearson, "and—who's the girl?"

Crocheron laughed. "That's the way the wind sets, is it," he exclaimed, "the girl is his daughter—she's too good for Cleveland, let me tell you that, and too good for Ravenswood. Her places are Manhattan Borough and the Pier. But the old man comes here because it's quiet, and because it gives his wife—she's my patient—a rest from keeping house. And the girl—" the doctor drew a long sigh.

"You know her?" queried Pearson.

"Yes, I know her," responded the physician, "that is, I have been introduced to her, but she is as cool as a cucumber." His eyes narrowed. "Funny thing, Mr. Pearson, I've known that girl for two seasons, and I've known other men who know her, but she's just the same to all of us, and I've figured out that they're waiting—she and the old man and the old lady—just holding back and waiting for the right man to come along. And I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts that when he does come along, he'll be the man that the old man wants and the old lady, too. My notion of the girl is that she'll stand for anybody that her family pick out."

Pearson flushed and smiled. "Do you know," he said, "I've formed quite a different opinion of Miss Ingraham."

"Do you know her," asked the doctor hastily.

"No," stammered Pearson, "I've only seen her, but my view is that the old man and the old lady can go to thunder, so far as she is concerned, when she makes up her mind."

The doctor crooked his finger. "I'll let you in on something, Mr. Pearson," he confidently went on, "the girl does what her father says, and the old man does what his wife says, and the old lady is stuck on anybody that's got a good new remedy for her malady."

"What's her malady?" asked Pearson.

"Never you mind," retorted the doctor, "I'm the man that's going to cure her."

"I should like to know the girl," said Pearson, quite casually.

Dr. Crocheron nodded. "There's a hop here to-morrow night, Mr. Pearson," he said. "I always take them in. I'll be here and I'll introduce you. Maybe you'll help fill in the time until the right man shows up."

"Until to-morrow night," said Pearson.

"To-morrow night," echoed the doctor, striding away.

When he had reached the far corner of the hotel, he waved his hand before he turned it.

"I wonder who the deuce that fellow Pearson is," he thought, "somehow they're mighty particular about him."

And as for that fellow Pearson, he stood staring into the vistas, with an unlighted cigar in his hand.

"I shouldn't wonder," he said to himself, "if the right man had come along."

Now, in justice to this man Pearson, be it said, that not for one instant had he expected the girl to renew the enforced acquaintance so strangely begun at the railway station, without the observance of the usual conventions, nor for one instant had he contemplated an attempt to force himself upon her. He saw, therefore, in the sprightly young Dr. Crocheron, the thin edge of the wedge. But it was not the doctor, after all, who introduced him to the girl. That office was performed by an individual of much greater importance, for Pearson was still pacing the veranda when Ingraham, the Cleveland banker, once more entered the arena of events.

He waddled to a settee, tossed upon it all the New York evening papers, leaned back with a sign of satisfaction, and also viewed the vista that Pearson had been contemplating.

Pearson trembled. It's a delicate matter to strike up an acquaintance, at any time, with a gentleman of prosperous appearance, and if Pearson ever had been master of the art, his art now forsook him. He went at it much in the same way that he had approached the girl.

He paced back and forth in front of the banker and finally faced him.

"Down on the five o'clock, sir?" he inquired.

The banker swept the young man with his glance, and then turned away.

"Um," he murmured, and picked up one of his afternoon editions and buried his face in it.

This brought Pearson to his senses. He knew he had made a mistake in making the slightest advances to the old gentleman, for the old gentleman ignored his presence as completely as though he were ten miles away. But experience had taught him that there was a way to remedy this mistake. He therefore seated himself upon the other end of the settee and smoked silently and in meditation for many minutes.

Suddenly the Cleveland banker threw up his head and snorted. "Confound these New York banks," he cried, "They're countrymen."

He looked at Pearson and waited for an answer.

"I say they're countrymen," repeated the old gentleman.

Pearson gave no sign.

This brought the old gentleman up all standing. For the first time he looked Pearson over to determine what manner of young upstart this might be, who declined to respond to a civil question from a Cleveland banker.

He started slightly, for he had recognized the fact that Pearson, stranger as he was, at least bore earmarks of a gentleman, so he tried it on again.

"They don't know enough to go in when it rains," he added.

Pearson gave no sign.

This indifference made a deep impression upon the older man. He had supposed when Pearson first addressed him, that Pearson, by reason of that fact, must be his inferior. Pearson's present complacent ignoring of him now, produced quite the opposite impression. He was convinced that the stranger must be somebody quite superior, for he could not recall, in all his prosperous middle west career, that anybody had ever withstood his own advances.

But there was one thing that he had not noticed, that at the mention of the New York banks, the face of the young stranger slightly flushed. But the old man kept on with persistence.

"What do you think of it, sir?" he bellowed.

The younger man turned to him with

a startled glance. "I beg your pardon, sir," he returned, "were you addressing me?"

The old man's tones were those of one who crawled. "I was just reading the account of this Tri-State robbery," he ventured. "The Tri-State Trust Company must have been crazy to let a thing like that happen under its nose."

This time the young stranger nodded complacently, but his face now turned exceedingly pale.

"You're delving into rather ancient history, Mr.—"

"Ingraham, of Cleveland, sir," exclaimed the other, "that's my name, Ingraham."

Pearson smiled. "Has the news of the Tri-State robbery just filtered through to Cleveland?" he inquired.

"No," snorted the banker, "I read about it—and you read about it—and everybody read about it, six weeks ago, but I see by the *Post* they have just let their paying teller out on bail."

"What was the bail?" asked Pearson.

"Fifty thousand," said the banker.

"Pretty stiff," said Pearson, "no wonder it took him six weeks to get it."

"It's not enough," returned the other. "That chap stole a couple of hundred thousand if he stole a cent, and I want to tell you if I was a depositor or stockholder in the Tri-State Trust, I'd rip up the management from the president down to the runners, for letting a fellow get away with that much coin."

The young stranger shrugged his shoulders. "They say the Tri-State Trust is as solid as a rock," he ventured.

"Well, then, they ought to change their management," said he, of Cleveland. "Here's this young paying teller—they hadn't had him for more than five years—takes all that stuff out of the bank, walks out, by George, in broad daylight, packs the stuff in somebody else's suit case, steals the suit case from an officer of the bank, and then like a fool runs away with some woman, and they caught him. No wonder they caught him—blamed idiot, with that suit case and the initials on it and his giving the name of Oliver Partridge to suit the initials on the case, why a ten year old could have caught him."

At the other end of the settee the man Pearson was turning paler still.

"You must confess, sir," he replied, "that the teller was pretty slick, at any rate."

"Well," admitted the old man grumblingly, "he was slick in everything but running away with that woman that he did. She gave him up and made money by it too. I want to tell you," he went on, "that things happen in New York that would never happen in my town of Cleveland, nor in my bank."

The young man rose sniffing the salt air. Once or twice he passed his hand over his face with that weary gesture that seemed part and parcel of him. He drew out his cigar case and passed it over to his new found friend, but on opening it discovered it was empty.

"I beg your pardon," he went on, "but I have some Duodecimos up in my room, if you wouldn't mind stepping up there, sir."

The old man responded genially. "I'd walk a mile to get a Duodecimo," he said.

Together they strolled up to the young stranger's room. No sooner had they entered it than the young man's eyes lighted upon his Gladstone bag, with the initials O. P. painted in glaring black letters. He stooped hastily, swung the bag about and turned the initials to the wall. Then he rang for the waiter, and the banker of Cleveland and the mysterious young stranger from New York sat down for a half hour's talk.

Suddenly Pearson pricked up his ears. For sometime a peculiar rasping noise had penetrated into the room from some adjoining apartment.

"They must have a rhinoceros—or an elephant—or an ostrich—or a whole menagerie, in that room," he exclaimed, after a long silence.

But the Cleveland banker, warmed by the genial contents of a decanter and soothed by the Duodecimos, merely shook his head.

"That is neither an elephant, nor a menagerie, nor an ostrich," he informed his host.

"What is it, then?" demanded Pearson.

"That," said the banker, "is Mrs. Ingraham, my wife."

Pearson apologized profusely. "I certainly meant nothing disrespectful, sir," he exclaimed. "But may I ask you, is she ill?"

The banker waved his hand. "It's chronic, sir," he returned. "A case of asthma, she suffers like the dickens."

The eyes of his young host brightened. "You don't say so," he replied, "and can't the doctor help her?"

"She's got one now" returned the banker, "that she swears by. Local man, Crocheron. He's been treating her for three summers here—that's why she comes here. She thinks he'll cure her in the end."

"And you?" asked Pearson.

"Not a bit of it," returned the banker. "I've got no faith in any of them. By the way," he added, "sometime I'd like to have you meet the missus and Miss Ingraham."

"Miss Ingraham?" queried Pearson politely.

"My daughter," said the banker, "I want you to know them. By the way, where are you from?"

"I'm a New Yorker," responded Pearson.

"And your business?" asked the other.

"Um," said Pearson, slowly, "Well, to tell the truth, I've always been connected with a bank."

"By George," exclaimed the old man, "then you can tell me what I want to know. My bank is looking for a new line of New York credit. Maybe you can help me. Who can tell."

"I should be very glad to, sir," said Pearson.

He strolled to the window and looked out. Across the way on the board walk three men were lounging. They were natty, well dressed, up to date. From time to time they glanced toward the Inn.

They were the three men, be it said, who had leapt from the moving train behind the New York stranger that very afternoon.

III

Mr. Cutty Wortman, of the Borough of Manhattan, expanded his chest with pride. He glanced with considerable complacency at his shining shirt front.

"It was little Cutty pulled these glad rags out o' the wreck, Red," he remarked, "you was against it. When we made the get-away, it was you who lost your nut, it was me who held me nerve. It was me knowed then just as I'm tellin' you now, that there aint no place that's closed to a couple of guys that is rigged in a clawhammer swallow tail full dress evenin' clothes, specially at a swell summer joint like this." Mr. Cutty Wortman paused as though for a reply. There was none save for the incessant pounding of the incoming sea and the distant strains of the string orchestra at the Inn, for though Mr. Wortman was of the Borough of Manhattan, he was not in it. He was, in fact, at least sixty miles away from that old-fashioned town, lounging genteelly upon half of a board walk bench. The other half was occupied by his bosom friend, Mr. Red Cullen, also of New York. His bosom, also, was in glittering expansive evidence. In front of them stretched a narrow strip of white sand, and then the sea in its majestic mystery. Behind them was the glitter of lights that railway time-tables designated as Ravenswood, N. J. Past Mr. Cullen and his friend surged the summer crowd, in pairs—always in pairs. The moon cast a shimmering radiance over all and its rays were caught and cast back from two glossy shirts as from a mirror.

"Say," persisted Mr. Wortman, nudging his friend, "Where would we've been, if it hadn't been for me."

Mr. Cullen merely grunted. "Go on," he cried at length, "we'd have been dippin' for supers on Broadway, and makin' money at it. See." By which remark, Mr. Red Cullen meant to intimate that the art of relieving metropolitan citizens of their gold time-pieces, was still in its prime. "We'd a made a barrel of money by this time," he complained.

"Huh," said Mr. Wortman, "we'd look swell on Broadway—every cop on every corner with his eyes peeled for us after that last get-away, and Lord knows how many plain clothes pounders after us an'—"

"Plain clothes," retorted his companion, "that's what we need, plain clothes an nothin' else. Look at this crowd on this here board walk—white

flannels an' such. There aint a glad rag in the bunch. An' as for dicers—say," he cried, as he eyed Mr. Wortman's headgear in disgust, "there aint a brown derby in the bunch."

Mr. Cutty Wortman caught his companion's burly arm in a mighty grip. "Bo," he returned, "you're pickin' now. And what I say is don't you pick. I'm doing this. In course," he commented, "you don't see glad rags on the walk, but you wait till nine o'clock till the hop begins up there. Then we'll go up and we'll find a whole bunch o' full dress suits and brown derbys there, see if we don't. And besides you know why we're here and who we've got to do."

Red Cullen slewed about in his seat and glanced longingly at the Ravenswood Inn. It was a massive structure, was the Inn, with small balconies in abundance on every floor. Red Cullen sighed. "Gee," he complained, "I wish we had Nice Kelly with us. What a bloomin' busy place for a second story man. Nice Kelly would certainly fit in—"

Cutty Wortman was seized with a fit of silent laughter. "He would be a six story man when he finished up," laughed he. Suddenly with a new and more insistent grip, his brawny hand tightened upon Red Cullen's wrist.

"By George, Kiddo," he whispered, "Here comes our meat. Watch out."

Red Cullen sniffed in momentary excitement. "Show him to me," he exclaimed. He followed the gaze of Mr. Cutty Wortman and noted that it rested upon two figures that had stepped suddenly from the darkness into the full glare of an electric light. They were coming from the Ravenswood Inn. They were headed for the board walk.

"The swell," whispered Cutty Wortman, "now who was right about glad rags? Watch out."

They watched out. The man they watched was a tall, cleanly built, clean cut chap, who swung along with a certain lithe grace, due partly to his shoulders and his slenderness, and partly to the careful cut of his dinner coat, for he too, affected a shirt front. Beside him swung along a girl—a girl who somehow seemed a fit mate for him.

It is due, however, to the business fidelity of Messrs. Wortman and Cullen to say here and now that though their eyes devoured the man, they totally ignored the girl.

Red Cullen grunted in the ear of his companion. "Are you sure," he queried. "Sure," replied Wortman *sotto voce*. "I tell you he carried the biggest roll I ever see anywheres, do yuh understand, and he's always got it with him. Maybe you never heard of a walkin' treasury. Well, you're looking at one now."

After that, the moon, the crowds, the sea, the sand, everything faded from the view of the two men on the bench. They became oblivious to everything save this—a dark-clad figure stalking by the side of a slender white one.

And as for the dark clad figure, the night was playing tricks with him, for it seemed to him as though he could see nothing save the eyes of the girl beside him, hear nothing save her voice, feel nothing save the unconscious pressure of her shoulder against his. But, unfortunately, his conversation did not match his state of mind.

"Do you think that Crocheron—doctor fellow, is doing your mother any good?" he queried.

"Oh," answered the girl, "if anybody can do her any good, he can, I am sure. He is a terribly clever specialist, I think."

"You don't say," returned the young man, coldly, "and yet he's been three summers at it, hasn't he?"

"Yes," she answered, "but mother has been at it for thirty summers, and he's done her more good than anybody else."

"Well," grumbled her companion, "I'm no specialist, but I want to tell you that my Aunt Charlotte—"

"I beg your pardon," said the girl, "your Aunt who?"

"Aunt Charlotte," replied he. "Stunning name, isn't it?"

The girl shivered. "It's a trifle more graceful than your own," she answered gaily.

"Great Scott," he answered, "don't you like my name? Don't you like the name of Oscar?"

The girl glanced daringly at him. "Do you want me to tell you sometning?" she began frankly. There was some strange

quiver in her voice that riveted his attention immediately.

"Yes," he said eagerly.

"Not now," she returned, "go on, tell me about your Aunt Charlotte."

"My Aunt Charlotte," he laughed, "is the dearest, most straight-laced proposition in the family, but she was possessed of a few devils. That little old maid had nothing but hay fever, colds in the head, asthma, and very likely membranous croup, but asthma was her pet. The point is that she doesn't have it any more."

"What cured her?" asked the girl.

"That's telling," responded Pearson, "and besides it's a secret—Aunt Charlotte's secret and mine. All I can say is it was a cure Aunt Charlotte didn't want to take. She had to break one of her most stringent commandments and was compelled to adopt a method that placed her, in her mind, in the ranks of a third rate actress. I wonder how the old—your mother, Mrs. Ingraham, would feel about it."

Impulsively the girl laid a hand upon his arm. "I think mother would go through anything to be cured," she said.

"Maybe I can help her," went on Pearson. "If she is willing to take just what Aunt Charlotte did and bear the brunt. To this day Aunt Charlotte claims that her hopes of reaching Heaven have been seriously disturbed—" He broke off suddenly. "I interrupted you," he said. "Tell me what you were going to tell me when Aunt Charlotte butted in upon our conversation."

They had reached the end of the board walk and the girl was about to turn back when he held out his hand.

"Do you mind walking on the sand," he asked, "on down there, toward Old Beach."

The girl glanced back toward the Inn. "We're a long way from home," she faltered, for she felt that her disapproving mother was rocking impatiently and with gasps, to and fro, in one of the big front rooms, and she had told her mother that she would be gone for a half hour and she was now upon her second hour with the young stranger who had jumped from the moving train and had so nearly lost his life the day before.

"I know," he answered, to her protest, "but it's summer, there's a moon, and the beach is as firm as asphalt. Come."

Slowly they descended the steps and slowly strolled along the beach.

"Now, what were you going to tell me," he persisted.

Again the girl darted toward him a daring glance. "I was going to tell you," she half whispered, "that the only thing I don't like about you is your name."

"What part of my name," he queried, "is it that you don't like, the first part or the last part?"

"Oscar," she exclaimed.

"Well," he answered lightly, "let's take another name. How is Oliver?"

"Never," said the girl.

"Ordway, then," he ventured.

She smiled and nodded. "Ordway is not bad," she admitted. "Ordway will do."

"For the present, then," he went on, "you can call me Ordway."

"For the present," she repeated, "I shall call you Mr. Pearson."

"Now," he asked, "is that all you had to say?"

"I can't think of any more," she answered.

"Then," he went on, "let me tell you something, let me tell you the history of my jumping off that train. It's a short history, but it's true. This was not my station. I merely looked up and out of the window of my car and saw you, and then I jumped off. Do you believe me?" he asked suddenly.

The girl tried to force a laugh. "I don't know that it signifies," she answered.

"Yes, it signifies," he went on breathlessly, "and this is a question that you must answer, for there was just one instant yesterday when you looked at me as I crossed the tracks that gave me the right to say the things I do. Do you believe in love at first sight?" he asked abruptly.

The girl drew herself up unconsciously. "You are getting to be very ridiculous, Mr. Pearson," she returned.

"In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of one thousand," he went on, "I should be. This happens to be the thousandth case. It's the one case that's

not ridiculous. Say, look here," he blurted out, "I don't believe your eyes were telling fibs yesterday afternoon when the 3:30 pulled in, and I don't believe you're going to pick out some fellow, whose name is not Oscar, just because the old—I mean, just because your father and your mother tell you to."

The girl drew back. "Why, where did you get this fund of information, Mr. Pearson?" she inquired.

"Never mind," he went on desperately. "I want to tell you something about myself. Ever since I was knee high to a grasshopper, I have been pushed—and pushed—and pushed. I've worked like a slave all my life up to now, and the older I got the harder I worked. I've thought of girls—lots of girls—girls by the dozens, but I've never had time to think of *the* girl." He drew his hand across his face again. With all his apparent confusion and enthusiasm, there still was upon him some terrible weariness that told. "I'm fagged out," he went on, "it's nerves. I didn't know I had any until the last two months."

"That's why you've been so white," the girl said suddenly.

"Yes," he answered, "and you've noticed that."

She nodded. "The sun did wonders with you, though, to-day."

He went on. "They told me I had to go away," he said, "and I went on the first vacation, the first real one, that I've ever had. I little knew that I was going to look out of a car window and see you and know—"

The girl shivered. She well knew she had no right to listen to all this, which from any other man would have seemed to her like twaddle. She felt, too, that a portly figure, gasping in a rocking chair, back at the Inn, was forcing itself upon her consciousness. Yet there was something about this man, this Oscar Pearson, that drew her out of herself. She could not seem to hold him entirely at arm's length.

"Go on," she faltered, but he didn't answer. There was a reason for it. He could not answer, for at that instant two burly figures hurled themselves through the air, dropping as from the heavens, upon this Oscar Pearson, and bore him to the ground.

"A-r-r-hh," he gurgled, for they had him by the throat, these two.

"Breast pocket, you dub," muttered Mr. Cutty Wortman of New York, for it was indeed he—Mr. Cutty Wortman and his friend Mr. Cullen—strong arm men par excellence.

The girl stood as though petrified—but for one instant only. Then she uttered a piercing shriek that might have reached the heavens.

"I'll take care of her," said Red, "you do the rest." And it is due to Mr. Cutty Wortman and to Red to state that on his part Mr. Wortman tried to "do the rest" and Mr. Red Cullen tried to "take care of the girl." But as a matter of fact he did not take care of her and as a matter of fact Mr. Cutty Wortman did not do the rest, for at the girl's shriek a strange thing happened.

Three men—three other men sprang immediately into view, and even as the strong arm men had dropped from the heavens, these three seemed to leap from the earth, and as well working parts of one machine, they closed in upon Cutty Wortman and his friend and bore them to the earth, and then the battle raged—a noble warfare.

At its end, two very much crumpled shirt fronts and four very black eyes were tied together and marched along the beach. One man drove them in front of him at the muzzle of a gun, the other two stepped to the side of Oscar Pearson.

"Much hurt, sir," they inquired.

"Not a bit of it," answered he, "and much obliged."

"Come on, sir," they exclaimed, solicitously, "we'll see you safely home."

But Pearson was staring wildly about him. "Where—where is she?" he inquired, dazed.

"Beg pardon, sir?" said one of the men.

"She," cried Pearson, in alarm, "I had a lady with me. Wait, here she is."

He was quite right. She had slumped into a little white heap on the sand—had fainted dead away.

"We were not thinking of the lady, sir," said one, "beg your pardon, sir."

She regained consciousness in an instant, and regained it only to find herself lying somehow in his arms.

"H-H-Helen," he was stammering, very clumsily, but very earnestly, and so softly that only she might hear, "you wont forget that it was first sight for both of us."

The girl released herself and stood very straight. "What a terrible thing to happen," she cried, referring to the hold-up rather than to Mr. Pearson's floundering declaration. "Come, we must go home at once."

They did. Pearson and the girl swinging on in front and two of their rescuers bringing up the rear.

One of the latter nudged his friend. "Blamed if I didn't forget all about the girl," he said.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "Can't take care of everybody in the whole place, can we, eh?"

"I should say not," replied the first, "we ought to have six men to take care of him alone. Blamed if I think three is enough for a lively chap like him."

Miss Helen Ingraham and Mr. Oscar Pearson ascended the Inn steps side by side. Miss Ingraham was tremulous and hysterical. "I don't know what to tell my mother," she exclaimed.

"Tell her the truth," said Pearson glibly, "tell her I proposed to you and you accepted me."

"That is not the truth," replied Miss Ingraham, "and anyway I mean about the accident—and where it happened—and why."

She told her, spent half the night telling her, in fact, conscious of the terrible disapproval in her mother's eyes, but told her only about the moonlight stroll and the attack.

"You had no right to leave the Inn," her mother said, "you know nothing of this man, Pearson."

"Father does," replied the girl.

"Your father," went on her mother, "knows nothing about him, nobody knows anything about him. I've asked everybody, sick as I've been—" Suddenly she stopped. "Who were those three men who rescued you?" she asked.

IV

That was the mystery that troubled Ravenswood from that time on. Through all the subsequent excitement —for the hold-up made big talk—that one feature over-shadowed all the others. It was a pleasant diversion for Ravenswood to stop talking and to hold its breath next morning as the tall and interesting Mr. Oscar Pearson entered the dining-room and nodded to Miss Ingraham. Pleasanter still, perhaps, for all Ravenswood to stand in line at the lock-up and look upon the countenances of Mr. Cutty Wortman and Mr. Red Cullen of New York. Pleasant to discuss the inpending romance. But—*who were the three men?* In the day time they were but little in evidence, they kept somehow out of sight; but at night denizens of Ravenswood, grown accustomed to traveling in pairs, were startled now and then by three skulking shadows —here, there, everywhere. And these shadows meant one thing and only one: that somewhere near, pacing the board walk or on the sand, gazing out to sea, there might be found Mr. Oscar Pearson and at his side Miss Ingraham.

"Swim to-morrow?" inquired he of her on the morning after. The tide will be about right for us at half past ten."

"Just as you say," she answered, "only my mother's case is getting desperate. Even Dr. Crocheron admits his failure, and I've got to spend most of my time with her."

Pearson smiled insinuatingly, "And if you didn't spend most of your time with her," he asked, "who would you spend it with? I think," he went on hastily, "that I'll have to bring down my Aunt Charlotte's remedy from New York. Of course, I sympathize with your mother, but it's mighty serious that most of your time is taken up with her. That's the thing that Aunt Charlotte's cure has got to fix. Then we'll see who takes up most of your time."

"Of course," she answered, "there's Dr. Crocheron. I don't mind saying that I'm very fond of him—"

"You'll surely swim to-morrow?" he said.

"I promised you," she answered.

"All right," he said, "I'll bring my tires along." For by this time, be it said, Pearson's luggage and his long, low racer had been brought from Elsmere, his intended destination

Next day they swam. Those were

glorious days, as side by side when they tired of the long arm strokes, Pearson and the girl reclined on the surface of the sea, each ensconced safely within the buoyant circle of a Mastodon tire that rose and fell upon the waves like some magic cockleshell.

"Rocked in the cradle of the deep," sang Pearson, in a baritone that startled the crowd scattered in groups upon the beach. Side by side, buoyed by the air inflated circles, they swam out—out—out, forgetting everything save themselves and the magic of the sea.

Suddenly from the shore they heard hoarse shouts. It was then that the girl lost her head. She glanced up to see the crowds waving, and realizing for the first time that they were far out beyond the hardiest swimmer—beyond the hardiest swimmer's distance. Someone on shore had realized this and the shout invaded the girl with a sudden sense of danger. All that she need do, in truth, was to lie still and paddle back to shore as she had paddled out, but in her sudden fright she slipped somehow out of her supporting tire and Pearson caught her just as she disappeared beneath the waves.

"What's the matter," he cried sternly, "you're perfectly safe—you can't sink—nothing can happen." But the girl was beside herself with fright. She had lost confidence and her nerve had gone.

For answer she merely stretched forth two shapely arms and clung tightly to the man's neck, sobbing hysterically the while.

Pearson, badly handicapped, could only thrust one arm through both the tires and hang on. He could not swim, for her grip upon him was too tight. All he could do was to support her and trust to luck that she might regain her equilibrium. A forlorn hope, probably, and the situation was one of real danger, for all the while they were drifting out to sea.

The crowd on the shore were quite as helpless, all but three men. Like parts of some machine, these three rose, dashed coats and shoes to the ground, and swiftly ran out a canoe, head on across the breakers. In less than ten minutes they had reached the pair and checked their outward progress.

"Now," said one of the three, "climb in, while I hold her steady, sir."

He was referring to the canoe, not to the girl. His two companions each had a hand on Pearson, clutching him anxiously.

"Climb in, sir," they exclaimed.

"Climb in nothing," replied Pearson. "What about the girl."

"We'll take care of her, sir," they answered carelessly, "you climb in."

Pearson laughed. "You're a great bunch," he said, glancing at them quizzically, "who are you anyway?"

"Lifesavers, sir," they answered, without knowing just what else to say.

Pearson grunted. "Women and children last, eh," he went on, "so that's the lifesavers' code. Steady now, lift her in carefully. Now I can swim to shore." He did, but they stood carefully by, making sure he was safe. Twice, in their eagerness for him, they nearly tipped over the canoe, but finally the brave little craft rose bravely on top of a breaker, and before they knew it, they were all upon the beach, and another page of Ravenswood romances had been turned. Another link in the golden chain that the little cupids were making, had been forged, and once more the mysterious triumvirate had come to the front.

"Plays her cards mighty well anyhow," whispered the eighteen year old wiseacres at the Inn, as the girl and Pearson drove back in his car, after this episode.

"Who is he anyway?" asked one of them.

"Nobody knows," replied the other. And therein, like Mrs. Ingraham, they spoke the truth.

Once more that estimable lady found herself under the necessity of reproving her headstrong young daughter, but the girl suddenly and unaccountably was defiant.

"Mother," she said, in a tone of voice that was new and unaccustomed, "don't you think that perhaps I am the best judge of my actions, after all?"

"Leave the girl alone," Ingraham, the banker, said to his wife that night. "She's not going to marry this young chap, and from the conversation I've had with him, he knows New York banks from A to Z. I've got to get a

line of credit, and I've got to get it right away, my dear, or there's going to be trouble out in Cleveland. This chap can give me pointers, and I need pointers just now, as badly as our bank needs money." He slumped down into a chair and wiped his brow. "My, but I'm tired," he said, "I've been all over New York to get what I want. I've tackled every big bank but the Tri-State Trust, and to-morrow, by George, I'm going to tackle that."

The next day he left the Inn at eight a. m. just as Pearson in his low racer, pulled out of the garage.

"Hold on there," cried Pearson, "don't take that stage. Where are you bound for, Mr. Ingraham?"

"New York," said Ingraham, "where are you?"

"I'll take you up," replied the younger man, "I'm going to make a flying trip myself."

That afternoon, Ingraham, the banker, more fatigued than ever, strode into his wife's room at the Inn.

"By George," he said, "I couldn't see anybody at the Tri-State Trust. They're all upside down there, probably due to this confounded thief of a teller that robbed them. Everybody tells you that the Tri-State Trust is as sound as a dollar, but it acts like a chicken with its head cut off. Couldn't get hold of anybody that could do me any good and—" He stopped suddenly. "What's the matter," he exclaimed. Grouped around a couch were two figures, a man and a woman. The man was Crocheron, M. D., and the woman was the banker's daughter Helen. Propped up with many pillows was the banker's wife, wheezing her very worst.

"Father," said Helen, "I think we'll have to go back to Cleveland at once, mother has never been as bad as this, have you, mother?"

Her mother admitted it between gasps, and also asserted without hesitation that Dr. Crocheron had seemingly fallen far short of success.

Crocheron was wringing his hands. "I don't know what more I can do for you, Mrs. Ingraham," he said, "I've applied all the known remedies, and you know this is a thing that can't be cured and must be endured."

Helen Ingraham held up her hand. "Wait a minute," she exclaimed, "somebody told me of a remedy, a real remedy. I think we ought to try it."

"Who told you?" inquired Crocheron.

"Mr. Pearson," she faltered.

"That's the first time I ever knew he was a specialist," exclaimed the doctor.

"Pearson," echoed her father, "why, he's in New York, he took me up this morning in his car, left me at the corner of Wall Street and Broadway, and went up town. Maybe he's gone for good."

"No, he hasn't," returned his daughter, with an air of very positive assurance.

For an instant the sufferer on the couch forgot her asthma. "How do you know, my dear," she asked her daughter sternly.

Her daughter did not reply, for at that instant there was a knock upon the door. Ingraham stepped to the door, opened it, held a whispered consultation, and then came back into the room. "It's the man we were talking about," he said, "and he wants to talk to you."

"To me?" asked Helen.

"No," returned her father, "to your mother. Wants to see her right away."

Helen's face flushed. "Perhaps," she suddenly exclaimed, "he's got Aunt Charlotte's cure."

"Aunt Charlotte," exclaimed her mother, "you have no Aunt Charlotte."

"This is his Aunt Charlotte," corrected the girl, "not mine."

Ingraham once more opened the door and Pearson entered. He was still pale, though the sun had made some inroads on his pallor. He still had that air of weariness. He strode to the bedside. "Mrs. Ingraham," he said, "I've brought you something that will absolutely cure you, if you'll consent to try it."

Dr. Crocheron frowned with professional disdain. "What new remedy is this, Mr. Pearson?" he inquired.

"That," returned the young man, "is something I shall divulge only to Mrs. Ingraham. May I see her alone?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Ingraham, who was willing to submit to any experiment, to go through anything to relieve her suffering.

"Certainly," echoed Helen.

The doctor and the banker looked at

each other in amazement, but Pearson with a considerable display of executive ability and self-possession, stood at the door and politely bowed everybody out. Then he locked the door, took a small packet from his breast pocket, and sat down by the bedside.

"Mrs. Ingraham," he began, "my Aunt Charlotte—"

Fifteen minutes later a young man stepped into the center of a small group of people clustered upon one of the many balconies that clung to the Inn. "She's very much better," he announced smilingly.

Helen pressed forward and touched his arm. "Did she take the remedy?" she asked.

He nodded. "She did," he answered, "though I'm convinced that it shocked her sense of the proprieties to a very great extent."

"What the dickens did you give her?" queried Crocheron.

"That," said Pearson, "as I've already indicated, is her secret, and it shall be mine."

These four people sitting in the balcony did not observe three men, who casually strolled up and down in front of the Inn, nor did they observe that these three men stopped short, and that one of them pointed somewhat unconventionally toward a wide window of the Inn that faced the ocean.

"Jerusalem," said one of these three men to his two companions, "look at the old lady in that window. She certainly has all the earmarks of a dead game sport."

"That's a queer note," said the other. "I always thought she was a staid old proposition. She's the wife of that banker from the West."

"Well," said the third, "she certainly doesn't look like a staid old proposition now."

The three passed on, and Mrs. Ingraham, totally unconscious of their observation, but fully conscious that for the first time in many years she had become wholly comfortable, sat complacently in the open window and smoked one of Aunt Charlotte's long black medicinal cigars with the utmost nonchalance of manner.

V

"I tell you, the man's a thief." Ingraham, the Cleveland banker, strode nervously up and down the big rooms that composed his suite at the Ravenswood Inn. Before him, hanging on his words, sat his wife, still puffing on her fireside companion, one of Aunt Charlotte's Perfectos. His daughter Helen sat at a broad window gazing out at sea.

"A thief," echoed Mrs. Ingraham, "why, it can't be possible."

"I tell you it's true," went on the banker. "Haven't I been in his rooms dozens of times, smoking his cigars, drinking his old port and telling him stories; and haven't I seen that tell-tale Gladstone bag with the letters 'O. P.' painted on it; and yet, by George, he fooled me, even me. It never struck me until to-day that the man was an imposter, that he's a masquerader, and it's as clear as daylight now. This chap Pearson is the thieving teller of the Tri-State Trust."

He turned suddenly. Helen was coming toward him with blazing eyes.

"That isn't true," she said in a low voice, and yet some unusual confusion seemed to rest upon her. "It can't be true."

The old man stalked to a big closet in the room, threw open the door and pointed to a top shelf. "Your mother," he went on, "keeps every newspaper that she lays her hands upon. There's the bunch up there, every one of them since we landed here."

He disappeared into the closet and a grunt or two indicated some unusual exertion on his part. He came back in a moment, bearing a pile of newspapers a foot in height, and tossed them on the bed. Then he shook his finger at them. "Those sheets there," he exclaimed, his face reddening as he went on, "they will tell you—read them again. They'll show you that the very day this fellow came here—that that very day he got out of the Tombs—was let out on bail. Why was he so pale? What was the matter with him? Six weeks confinement in the cooler, that's what's the matter with him. Follow the story down. You remember his going to New York a week ago with me, what did he go for?"

For answer his asthmatic wife held up her black cigars. "For these," she gasped gratefully.

"Not a bit of it," answered her husband. "Read your newspaper He went up to plead to another indictment they had found against him; you can't tell me. Take an hour off and go through that bundle on the bed and you'll find that the Tri-State teller and this man Pearson are identical. I tell you," he repeated, "he's a thief."

"But his money," exclaimed the banker's wife. "He's made of money."

"Made of money," snorted the Cleveland banker, "of course he is. Didn't he get away with hundreds of thousands."

"But they wouldn't let him keep it," she returned.

"Wouldn't let him keep it," he repeated, "of course they wouldn't if they knew where he kept it, but in order to get it they've got to sue him and get a judgment—they've got to issue execution and they've got to find out where it is. That fellow only had to put up fifty thousand cash on the first indictment. They were afraid to let the public know that he had gotten away with more. Only fifty thousand out of all that cash, and he's got the rest except what that woman took away from him."

Helen Ingraham turned pale, but her eyes still flashed. "It's not true," she said, but her tone exhibited more hesitation than indignation this time.

"And there's his automobile, his racer, there's property that they can take," exclaimed Mrs. Ingraham. "Why don't they take that?"

"Ha," returned her husband, "he's probably got it in his wife's name, that's the reason. He's probably got everything fixed so that they can't get at it."

"His wife," echoed Helen stammering. "Has he got a wife?"

"I should think he had," retorted Ingraham "Why don't you read the papers."

Helen drew herself up. For an instant she threw all uncertainty from her. "Father," she exclaimed, "you are totally mistaken. You don't know this man: if you really knew him you would understand that he is incapable of being a thief, incapable of anything that you have charged against him."

Ingraham smiled a supercilious smile. He knew that he could shatter all their doubts at one stroke and he had reserved this stroke until the last. His forefinger shot out toward his daughter as though to pin her with the force of his argument. "The old man's wrong, eh?" he demanded. "Well, then, just explain one thing to me, what in thunder do these three men mean, who follow him? Tell me that."

The stroke was an effective one. The argument was absolutely unanswerable. Helen sank into a seat at the window, her lips firmly closed, her hands clasped between her knees, thinking.

Mrs. Ingraham, wheezing a bit at this startling conclusion, only puffed the harder on her cigars.

"These three men," went on Ingraham, "mean this and only this, that the District Attorney of New York County is not going to let this chap, who has put up less than one-third of what he stole as bail, get out of his clutches."

Mrs. Ingraham regained her composure. "Maybe he stole these antiseptic cigars," she cried. And added "I only hope he'll steal some more."

Ingraham stood over Helen. "Helen," he said, "you've been having a good deal to do with this chap. You've taken a long chance, even if he were the best instead of the worst. Now, you know he's the worst—you know all he's done, and from henceforth I want you to leave him severely alone. Though I'm sure," he added with a bow, "that I don't have to tell you that."

Helen didn't answer. She didn't change her position at the window, but her mother waved her hand excitedly to attract attention.

"Helen," she spluttered, coughing, "don't say anything to offend the man until he steals some more of these cigars."

Helen did not answer her father's seriousness nor her mother's gayety. She rose and swept swiftly from this room into another, closed the door, locked it, and sat down alone.

"Confounded shame," said Ingraham to his wife, "that fellow made a deep impression on the girl. I don't blame her, for he's made a deep impression upon me."

His wife blew smoke rings. "And on me," she added.

"However," sighed Ingraham, "she'll do as we say—she'll leave him alone; she'll cast him off before these people find out who he is. Let's hope they'll never find out."

Helen started in bravely to leave Pearson alone. Her first step toward it was to indite a brief note to him and send it to his mail box at the office, requesting an interview that night.

Singularly enough, Pearson had done the same by her, and the two, each in solitude, read and somehow gloated over these summons to a tryst. But Pearson little knew what was in store for him.

Hours later, the girl sat upon a little hillock of dry sand, listening to waves that she could barely see, for the night was dark. Pearson fumed and fretted at her side.

"What's the trouble with me," he exclaimed insistently. "Don't you know that that one moment at the railway station made you as surely mine as I am yours. Doesn't your inner consciousness tell you that?"

"It does not," replied the girl coldly. Suddenly she turned to him. "Tell me one thing, Mr. Pearson," she exclaimed, in a cruel, hard, uncompromising voice, "have you told me the whole truth about this?"

Pearson laughed. "No," he answered, "why should I do that. How can it signify. I wanted to know that you wanted me for myself—for the man that I am, if I'm any kind of a man at all. I didn't want to tell you the truth until after we had settled that."

"Have you nothing to tell me?" she inquired, her voice growing harder still as she proceeded.

Her belligerent manner affected him unpleasantly. Her coolness froze him. Under other circumstances he might have made a clean breast of everything, but something combative within him kept him from it. He thought for a moment and then he answered her.

"I've just one thing to tell you," he replied. "My name is not Oscar, thank Heavens, and my name is not Pearson, ditto. My name," he added in a low voice, "is Ordway Pelletier."

The name evidently signified nothing to the girl, and apparently he hoped it would not, for she sat silent—listless, even dejected, by his side.

Suddenly he seized her hand, but she drew it roughly from him.

"Why?" he demanded. Then like a flash he had caught it and was holding it, staring down at it in blank surprise. It was her left hand and upon her third finger was a gem that gathered from the night all the night's darkness and turned it into brilliant rays of light. It was a solitaire diamond ring that he stared at for so long.

"This was not here yesterday—last week," he suddenly exclaimed.

"No," she replied, "it was not."

"Then," he returned, "there's somebody else."

She did not answer.

"Somebody else here in Ravenswood," he went on.

She still was silent.

"It's Dr. Crocheron," he exclaimed now, with tones of disgust. "Crocheron, that piffling proposition of a doctor—the village cut-up. What in Heaven's name can you see in him?"

For answer the girl stared into the darkness. For a long time they sat thus after he had released that hand of hers, with its portentous token. Finally he rose.

"Is that all you've got to say to me?" he asked.

"That is all," she answered.

She too, rose and left him, a white figure against the blackness of the night. She swept on straight to the Inn, avoided all the loungers of both sexes on the broad veranda, sped swiftly to her room and locked herself in. Her first act upon switching on the light was to jerk from that third finger the sparkling gem and to cast it into a jewel box on her dressing-table.

"He thought," she said softly to herself, "that it was what it seemed to be. It was the best way after all—the best way out of it." She drew her hand across her eyes. "Ordway Pelletier," she whispered softly to herself, "somehow I can't believe that you are what they say you are, and yet—" Suddenly she switched off the light and threw herself face down sobbing upon her bed.

VI

"Straight road down the beach?" asked Pearson.

"Sure," answered the attendant at the Inn garage, "twenty miles, maybe, straight as you can go."

"Jove," answered Pearson, "just what I need. It's the only thing that will brace me up. Where's my man?"

His man was sent for and he came. "Henri," said Pearson, "I want you to put my racer in A No. 1 condition, and have it ready for me at three o'clock."

"To-morrow afternoon?" inquired Henri indolently.

"Not a bit of it," replied his employer, "three o'clock this morning. The moon will be up and I'm going to do something that I've never done before."

"Yes, sir," said Henri, "and what may that be, sir?"

Pearson drew a long breath. "I'm going to beat the world's record in a twenty-mile dash on the Shore Road, and I'm going to do it all alone. Three o'clock, Henri, to the minute."

Henri nodded, and retiring to the recess where the racer stood, switched on a dozen lights and started in to work.

Pearson gritting his teeth, digging his nails into the palms of his hands, went back to the beach to sit alone upon that little hillock of sand, to stare blankly for hours into the blackest of black nights.

No sooner had he left the Inn garage than Henri whistled to the uniformed attendant. "Say," he whispered in a hoarse voice, "you go an' tell one of them guys that is watching us, what you heard him tell me, do you understand?"

"Who are them guys?" asked the other man. "I see them here—there—everywhere. What are they watching for?"

"Search me," answered Henri, "all you got to do is to go and tell one of them, do you understand?"

"What will they do," demanded the attendant, "stop him?"

"Search me," replied Henri, lighting up a cigarette, "that's their business, not mine."

The attendant obeyed his orders, and Henri finishing his cigarette and tossing it into the safety of the night, started in on his allotted task.

In a half hour the three men he had sent for entered the garage. "Anybody got a fast machine here?" one of them inquired.

The attendant, who had returned with them, nodded. "Mr. Pearson," he returned.

"I know," said one of the three, "but I mean anybody else."

The attendant looked around the place, and finally placed his hand upon a big machine. "This is the next fastest, gentlemen," he said.

"Who does it belong to?" demanded they.

"Mr. Ingraham, of the Inn," returned he of the garage.

The three put their heads together. "Well," they finally decided, we'll have to see Ingraham, that's all." So they saw Ingraham and offered him a price to take out the car, and Ingraham, being a practical man of the world, and being also curious as to their mission, accepted their proposition and sent for his chauffeur. "And I guess," said Ingraham to himself, "that I'll just hang around tonight and see what's going on; there's something in the air." He hung round on the grill side of the verandah, drinking Scotches, and he was right about something being in the air, but that something did not eventuate until the moon had peeped up above the horizon —until the Cathedral clock inside was striking three.

Shortly after that the folding doors of the silent garage opened and a long low racer, like some midnight marauding rat, thrust its nose into the dispelling gloom, gave one or two squeaks of caution, grunted a snort of defiance, and then silently darted past him, swung into the Shore Road, and disappeared into the distance. He had only time to note that the racer bore but a single figure, and that that figure was Pearson. He waited then for a few minutes and waited not in vain. Silently, his own ponderous steel-blue sixty horse power, leaped in sight, Francois at the helm and the three mysteries as passengers. That, too, darted past him and that, too, swung into the Shore Road after the racer, like some huge rat terrier on the scent of some huge rat.

"I'll bet dollars to doughnuts," ex-

claimed Ingraham to himself. "that he's bound for Florida." And Ingraham went to bed.

It was at four o'clock in the morning that the night clerk down stairs, drowsily nodding in the midst of his long vigil, was aware that the night bell was insistently ringing. He rose, strode to the door and opened it. Before him stood Dr. Crocheron.

"What's up, Doc," he demanded, "somebody 'phone you?"

"Nobody from here," answered Crocheron, "but they 'phoned me down the line to come right over here and stay here until I was wanted. What's up?" he asked.

"Blest if I know," said the night clerk, "I haven't heard anything."

"Something must be doing," exclaimed the doctor, "I wonder what it is."

He did not wonder long, for at that instant the toot-toot of a motor car was heard in the distance, and before they knew it Ingraham's big sixty horse power had pulled up under the *porte-cochère* and three men were lifting a heavy object out of the machine.

Crocheron peered at them across the broad verandah. "What's the matter," he exclaimed.

"Matter enough," answered the three men in fearful tones, "smash up, man killed, and a ten thousand dollar racer gone to the junk heap."

They swung their burden into the full light of the hotel office.

"Dead?" asked Crocheron.

"No," they whispered, "but mighty near it, that's why we sent for you." They halted with Pearson's limp form between them and nodded to the clerk. "Can you give us a ground floor room?" they asked.

"Sure," replied the clerk. He darted across the broad hall and threw open the Governor's suite and ushered them in there. "Put him on that bed," he said.

Once they had deposited their unconscious burden on the couch reserved for high officials of the state, the three men fell back and permitted Crocheron to examine him.

"Jove, but he's smashed up," said Crocheron, going over the man carefully. He glanced at them interrogatively. "What was he trying to do?" he asked.

"Nobody knows," they answered, "only he went past the lighthouse at Shore Front faster than a streak of greased lightning. The night watch saw him pass—he was going like mad— machine swung from side to side—seemed almost beyond control.

At this juncture, Henri, who had been attracted by the hubbub, thrust his countenance into the room. He wrung his hands in despair. "I don't wonder, gents," he said, "I knew he'd get his, some time or other, and he did it once too often.

"Has he done it before?" asked Crocheron.

"Sure," answered Henri. "Any time anything gets on his nerves, so he can't stand it, he goes out and breaks the speed laws. Another man would take to drink, he takes to this, that's all."

Crocheron sighed. "I don't know whether he'll take to any others," he returned. Then swiftly while he stripped his patient, he gave brief directions in his professional low voice, directions for drugs, splints, bandages, for surgical aid, for everything that occurred to him, and not once during all this time did his patient regain consciousness.

The three men stood about the couch, looking each other in the eye. "It wasn't our fault," they assured each other, as though afraid of some rebuke that waited for them in the future. "How could we have helped it?"

VII

It was two days later. Ingraham, the banker of Cleveland, had sent word to the New York specialist, who was waiting to see him, that he would be glad to consent to an interview.

The specialist, and this specialist was the same man Pearson himself had interviewed on the day he stepped out of the Tombs, came to the point at once.

"Mr. Ingraham," he said, "this is a matter of life and death, and you wont lift your finger to save a life."

"I wont do the thing you want me to do," returned the banker, "and I don't see how it's going to save his life."

"Mr. Ingraham," went on the specialist, "this man's broken bones don't cut any figure in his present condition. If it were only broken bones, we could pull him through. It's a question of nerves, shattered nerves, sir, and ever since that man recovered consciousness, he's been calling for your daughter Helen. Sir, I'll pit my knowledge against that of any expert in the world, and I say to you that the presence of your daughter in that room is going to save this man. Her absence is going to kill him."

"It will have to kill him, then," remarked the Cleveland banker.

In desperation the specialist left the room, and Helen, pushing open her own door, entered it. "Father," she exclaimed, "I heard what he said, and I know—I believe he speaks the truth. I'm going—going down."

Ingraham gripped her wrist as in a vice and forced her into a chair. "You'll do just what I say," he exclaimed. "I'm not going to have your name in the papers, the talk of all New York, linked with the name of this thief down-stairs. You'll do just as I say, if you don't I'll lock you up—do you understand?"

Helen understood. She leaned over, burying her face in her hands and wept as though her heart would break.

Down stairs the specialist was 'phoning to New York. He was talking to somebody in the Wall Street district. "You had better come down here at once," he warned the man at the New York end of the wire, "and knock something into this fellow's head, I can't."

Two hours later a natty looking individual was ushered into Ingraham's apartment. "Mr. Ingraham," he said, "I'm the representative of the International Insurance Company of New York. We've got a branch in Cleveland."

"So you have," exclaimed Ingraham, passing his cigars, "and your Cleveland branch banks at my bank."

"Exactly," replied the natty individual, "and it keeps large sums of money on deposit there."

"Best customer I've got," murmured Ingraham gratefully.

The manner of the natty individual changed at once. "Mr. Ingraham," he exclaimed ferociously, "you don't want to lose your best customer, do you?"

"No," returned Ingraham, paling.

"Well, you will," thundered this individual, "if you don't do what we say."

"Wh—what do you say?" stammered Ingraham.

The stranger tapped Ingraham upon the shoulder. "You follow the directions of our friend, the specialist, down stairs, friend Ingraham," he remarked ominously. "Do everything he says, and we'll stick to you. Decline, and you don't get a dollar of our money on deposit. Do you understand?"

Ingraham, terribly agitated, threw open Helen's door, and called to her. "Helen, my dear," he cried, "Helen, you must come with me."

Twenty minutes later Ingraham was standing outside of the Governor's suite of rooms on the ground floor of the Inn. Inside, as he knew, were Crocheron and the New York specialist —and his own daughter Helen. From time to time, reports of the injured man's condition filtered through the doors and were gobbled up eagerly by the little groups of guests who ranged themselves about the entries to hear every bit of news.

Finally the specialist bustled out. He caught Ingraham by the lapel of his coat. He seemed to have forgotten his resentment toward that gentleman. "Mr. Ingraham," he exclaimed, "I've never seen anything like it in all my experience. Talk about mental suggestion, telepathy, or influence of one mind upon another. The instant that your daughter entered that room, my man knew it without opening his eyes. 'There she is,' he said, as she came in. These were the first words he uttered, other than the constant calling of her name. 'There she is,' he said and opened his eyes and held out his hand—his right arm, you know, is not broken—and then, Mr. Ingraham, as your daughter stopped a minute and said 'Mr. Pelletier,' he smiled, actually smiled, sir, and he said 'Can't you do better than that' and from the minute, Mr. Ingraham, that that girl uttered his first name 'Ordway'—from that instant this young man's recovery has been a fact assured."

The doctor beckoned to him the natty individual from the International In-

surance Company, and clutching him with his left hand, while he held Ingraham with his right, he re-told the tale with gusto. "Most remarkable thing in my experience," he commented.

While they were standing there, two people approached them. Two strangers they were. One was a woman in a long cloak with a veil about her face, and the other was a youthful business man. The woman started for the door and had her hand on the knob before she was detained. She whispered some words to the man at the door and he nodded toward the specialist. "You'll have to see him," said the man. She swept toward the specialist and caught him by the arm.

"I must see him," she demanded.

"You can't," returned the specialist.

"I must," she answered, "it may be a matter of life and death; I always have a wonderful effect upon him when he is ill, I don't know why, but you must let me see him."

She pressed her card upon the specialist and he looked at it, though it meant nothing to him, and under the force of her insistence, he found himself entering the apartments with her. Once inside, he found her not at all amenable to reason; she simply swept past him as one who could not be stayed, and burst into the room where lay the injured man, and then she stopped. And at the same instant that she stopped, the heart of Helen Ingraham seemed to stop beating, too, for Helen noted that the injured man had turned to this woman with a new light of something more than recognition in his eyes, and with a clutch of fear upon her, she saw this other woman stride to the other side of the bed, near Dr Crocheron, and kneel down.

Crocheron tried to restrain her. "Who are you, madam," he exclaimed, "his wife, or—what are you doing here?"

"She is neither," answered the patient, feebly, "she is only my Aunt Charlotte. Let her stay."

Outside the door the youthful looking business man was arguing with the representative of the International Insurance Company. "Do you mean to tell me," he demanded, "that I can't see Mr. Pelletier. Nonsense. I've got to see him."

"I'm on guard here," returned the insurance man, "and I'll see to it that you don't see him. He's seen people enough already."

"But this is a matter of life and death," pleaded the other. "I must see him and he must see me. If he knew I was here he would insist upon it."

The insurance man wavered. He felt after all, perhaps, that he was not authorized to interfere quite as fully as he started out to do, so by way of compromise he nodded and said: "Suppose you tell me your business, if it's important, and I'll take the message to him."

The youthful business man looked about him, looked at Ingraham and concluded, evidently, that he was to be trusted, although a stranger, and then he went on to tell his troubles.

"We're all higgledy-piggledy up in the Tri-State Trust without Pelletier," he said.

Ingraham interrupted him. "Pelletier," exclaimed Ingraham, "why I've heard that name somewhere. Who's Pelletier?"

"The man inside," returned the insurance man, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

But the other man went on. "You tell Mr. Pelletier," he said, "that we wont bother him except about one thing. There's a cheap skate banker over in Cleveland, of the name of Ingraham, who wants a line of credit at our bank, and we've put him off and put him off until we can't put him off any longer. Ask him what we'll do."

Ingraham turned scarlet. "Cheap skate banker," he exclaimed, "do you know who you're talking about—do you know who you're talking to? I'm Ingraham."

The other man was not even feased. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Ingraham," he remarked, "even if you are a cheap skate banker from Ohio." He held out his hand. Ingraham ignored it.

"We don't let paying tellers like our friend inside," he thundered, "loot our banks out in Cleveland, I can tell you. You New York chaps have hayseed in your hair."

For answer the other stepped to the door and said a few words to the doorkeeper, and finally was admitted.

The insurance man smiled mysteriously at Ingraham. "You don't imagine, sir," he asked, "that Mr. Pelletier is an absconding paying teller, do you?"

"I know he is," returned the banker. "I've followed that paying teller's crime all through the papers, and this man's history has all the earmarks of it. He's a thief."

The insurance man held up his hands. "Dear me," he exclaimed, "a thief!"

At that instant the specialist returned and joined the little group of two. The insurance man nodded to the specialist.

"Doctor," he laughed, "Mr. Ingraham here thinks that Pelletier is tne paying teller of his own bank."

"Why, my dear sir," interposed the specialist, "Pelletier is a millionaire—he's the president of the Tri-State Trust—he's the man whose dress suit case that paying teller stole when he stole the funds, and this man Pelletier, overworked as he is anyway, worried himself almost to death about the thing."

"Not about the dress suit case," asked Ingraham.

"No," replied the insurance man, taking up the doctor's story, "but because of this, he, the president of the Trust Company, was the only official in the bank at the time when the paying teller stole the money. The paying teller did it right under his nose, and for that reason Pelletier felt responsible in the same degree as he would have held a watchman responsible for letting a burglar get away. It worried him to death."

"I should think it did," said the doctor, taking up the story, "and after that Pelletier spent most of his time in the District Attorney's office trying to get him to refuse bail, and up at the Tombs trying to worm out of that paying teller the secret of his hiding place where he had stowed away the loot. Pelletier told me, in fact, that he thought he ought to pay back to the bank himself the money that the paying teller had robbed them of Meantime, Pelletier's nerves were going by the board. He had to get away from business—go where business couldn't find him."

The insurance man shivered. "I should think so," he sighed, "with business at his heels every minute of his time—he had to get away incog."

Ingraham, his face flushed with these disclosures and with the mistake of his own diagnosis, was silent for an instant. Then he tightly clutched the doctor's arm.

"I think you're fooling me, gentlemen," he said slowly. "I think this man is that paying teller, and you're merely friends of his, trying to shield him. If I'm wrong, why is it that three New York detectives follow this Pelletier about. Can you tell me that?"

The insurance man turned pale. "Did you know they were following him about?" he asked.

The banker nodded. "Well, they didn't do their duty very well, then," returned the representative of the International Insurance Company. "Their instructions were never to show themselves, unless necessary, and never to let Pelletier know that they were watching him."

"It was necessary, several times, for them to show themselves down here," burst in Ingraham, and he told about the incidents of the hold-up and of the ocean rescue. "But," he persisted, there's a method in their madness, that I figure it, the District Attorney of New York understands."

The insurance man hesitated for a moment, and then he looked Ingraham in the eye.

"Mr. Ingraham," he exclaimed, "you're our banker out in Cleveland, I suppose I may as well let you into the secret. The doctor here is on. You didn't know that this young Pelletier is a crank on life insurance. Millionaire as he is, he came to us for a Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollar policy. After that, do you think we can let him wander around alone, taking all kinds of risks? No, sir, we can't even let him get sick safely. The International Life Insurance has got to see that Ordway Pelletier lives out his three score years and ten. Now, do you understand?"

Ingraham wilted. He understood, but he had no time to apologize for at that instant he felt a tug upon his coat sleeve, and his daughter Helen drew him toward the door and into the room of the injured man.

"Father, she exclaimed, "if you want want that line of credit in the Tri-State

Trust Company, you had better ask *us* now."

That evening as the dusk slowly settled down upon the Ravenswood Inn, those who paced the board walk in the twilight, glanced from time to time upward toward a moving spectacle. That moving spectacle disported itself upon a balcony. It consisted of two elderly ladies, apparently at peace with all the world.

Aunt Charlotte blew smoke rings into the heavens. "This is a lovely spot," she murmured.

Mrs. Ingraham blew another set of smoke rings that rose and twisted themselves about Aunt Charlotte's.

"Have you missed any of your good cigars lately?" she inquired.

Aunt Charlotte lit a fresh one. "I should think I have," she answered genially, her face widening to a broad but dignified grin, "and Ordway has been filching them from me, the young thief."

The Secret of the Goalanda

By WILL LIVINGSTON AGNEW

SCOUT-BOAT *D 29* of the Aerial Pacific Patrol, Captain Clark Paton at the wheel, swept steadily through a fluff of cottony clouds along the two-thousand-foot level half-way between Frisco and Flattery. There was a frown on the young officer's usually smiling lips, a dangerous gleam in his deep gray eyes, and he bit moodily on the stub of a half-burned cigar.

"Anything doing, Jim?" he inquired of his port lieutenant, for the hundredth time that night.

"Nothing," replied his aide in the conning-tower behind him. "Plenty of mail and passenger traffic up above but the cargo-carriers are as scarce as comets down on this level. Maybe we'd better rise."

The young captain growled his impatience. "Haven't I told you the *Goalanda* is an old-fashioned, triple-cell?" he demanded, testily. "She can't run higher than two thousand at most. We've sighted her a dozen times just about here."

"What's her best speed?" reflected the lieutenant.

"Not more than two hundred knots, steady—and she's forty-eight hours out of Calcutta now. We're morally certain to sight her before sunup."

"Unless Dobson is wise."

"'Wise!' That's the very reason he'll come right along. And we'll board him, and search him, and put him through the strainer, and all we'll find will be just *tea*."

Captain Paton's tone expressed such complete disgust at the prospect that the lieutenant laughed.

"He's sure a foxy devil," he assented, "but the chief knows what he's about, I fancy. Sooner or later we'll parallel Dobson's curves, and then we'll have him. Keep a whistlin', old man," he counseled his superior officer, who was also his best chum. Discipline was apt to be relaxed a shade when these two International Police officers happened to be alone together.

Of a sudden as they gazed with steady, unwinking eyes into the great void of the night there flashed across the screen of the dark-ray finder before the wheel the squat, cigar-shaped form of the craft they sought—the Indo-American tea-carrier, *Goalanda*.

And on the instant came a cry from the lieutenant. "I've got her, Cap! A couple of degrees off her course to the south!"

"Slow! Slow! The ray-finder beat you by a hair," chuckled Captain Paton. "Rub the star-dust out of your eyes, Jim! You're growing old!"

But there was only laughter in the voice; and the impatient wrinkle faded from between the clear eyes. For now there would be action; and action was the very life-blood to this restless and impatient temperament.

Obedient to the altered angle of her lateral fins and rudders, as Paton slid the levers into other notches, *D 29* swung her long, keen nose till it rested on a more westerly star. There she hung, quivering gently, a scant three seconds until the accelerated turbines caught their breath with a scream, and the soft combings of misty vapor that had collected along the dull, gray skin were wiped into a volley of cloud as the swift police-boat burst into her topmost speed.

"You take her, Jim," ordered the captain, kicking his feet clear of the control pedals, and slipping from his place behind the wheel. "I'll leave you to run this old darning-needle for a bit while I visit with Mr. Dobson."

"But you're not—" began the lieutenant, amazement in his voice.

"Just what I am," retorted Paton, determinedly. "I'm tired of this *Goalanda* business. Either she's honest or she isn't; and I'm going on board and stay till I find out. This is the last time we'll play tag with her around the constellations."

He reached for the telephone and called up the watch on the lower deck. "Get ready to transfer," he ordered. "And send up a balance belt adjusted for two thousand feet. Keep her on the ciphers, Jim"—aside.

Then he snatched the annunciator key, for they were rapidly overhauling the Indian cargo-boat.

"*Goalanda,* ahoy!" he tapped. "Slow down for inspection. International Police—*D 29*, Paton, commanding."

"I'll see you in the water first," snarled the irate freighter. "What in h—l do you think we are? I'm due at the south-end stage, India Basin, at daylight. Got an idea the owners are anxious to pay fines for open clips?"

Paton never moved a muscle of his face, but repeated his order, more peremptorily. "Sec. 46, Revised Rules, Dec. 1954," he added, as a gentle reminder of the source of his authority.

Grunting in rage the *Goalanda's* deflected lateral fins closed with a slap; her unwieldy, old-fashioned, laminated propellers ceased to revolve; and the freighter slid slowly to a halt, while Lieutenant Jim guided the scout-boat into a position directly above and parallel with the *Goalanda's* railed upper deck.

Having adjusted his speed and direction to conform absolutely with that of the tea-carrier beneath him, the officer touched a signal button, and the police-boat's vacuum grips shot downward until they slapped against the smooth skin of the *Goalanda,* which they seized with a tenacity that laughed at the tug of the most powerful engines. Hard on the heels of the giant tentacles Captain Paton slipped through a hatch and, with finger on the valve of his air-belt, descended softly as thistledown till his feet touched the freighter's deck.

He found himself face to face with a man of about his own age; a smiling, handsome, well-groomed individual, who was unconcernedly rolling a cigarette as though aerial police scouts were the least and the last of his troubles.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Captain Paton—do I get the name correctly?" he addressed the newcomer.

"I am Captain Paton, Aerial Pacific Patrol," he replied, somewhat brusquely. "I would like to see the first officer —Dobson—who is in command, I believe."

"Mr. Dobson has the pleasure of addressing you," the young man informed him, with a bow and a sweeping salute from his lifted cap.

He had overplayed himself, however, for Paton's second glance was keener and deeper than his first. He discerned now that the apparent politeness and exaggerated courtesy was but a mask; the smile was only on the lips, and beneath the purring tones was the snarl of a wild beast.

The hiss of escaping air caught the ear of the captain of the *Goalanda* and he turned with a quick exclamation to see the vacuum grips of the scout-boat rising rapidly, their hold on the freighter's sides released. And simultaneously with the detachment of the cables there came the whirr of the gas-turbines as *D 29* began to glide ahead, increasing her altitude as she widened the distance between the two vessels.

"Your boat is leaving us! What does this mean?" For a moment Dobson almost dropped his forced politeness.

"You invited me—or were going to invite me—to run into Frisco with you, didn't you say?" responded Paton, coolly.

"Sure I was," smiled the quick-witted Dobson. "Odd how you guessed it."

"Yes! Wasn't it?" laughed Paton, in his turn.

So they sparred while Dobson led the way to his cabin, where he found liquor — which Paton declined — and cigars of a quality better than the young police officer was accustomed to when on duty.

"Now, Dobson," remarked Paton, grimly, exhaling a satisfying mouthful of fragrant smoke into the air, "this is well meant, no doubt, but I'm not here for entertainment. Let's get down to business. Where are your manifest and shipping papers?"

These—instantly produced—showed that the *Goalanda,* of which Dobson was owner as well as captain, had left Calcutta with a full cargo of Assam tea consigned to a New York dealer whose agents would receipt for the same on delivery at San Francisco.

Paton went carefully over all the documents, and having done so, folded them together, and rising from his seat, remarked calmly:

"Now, if you don't mind beginning the day's work so early, I'll just go through your vessel and check up."

This was hardly customary, but Dobson never gave the least sign that he considered it at all out of the way. He exhausted every effort to make things as pleasant as possible for the police captain, until, in spite of his positive knowledge that the man was a rogue, and his conviction that this apparent openness was only forced, Paton found himself debating more than once whether it could be possible that his chief had made a mistake.

Finally the search reached the chests of tea, which were piled in the lower hold of the vessel. These Paton counted and checked, and selecting cases in all directions and in as many different markings as possible, he had them broken open before him and the contents emptied on the floor. Everything proved straight as a meridian.

"I have not yet inspected the plans of the *Goalanda,*" suggested Paton, quietly. "I presume you have them on board, according to regulations."

Dobson's face held its mask-like smile; but the veins of his temples swelled throbbingly under the fixed eyes of the police captain.

But his grip of himself never faltered. "By all means, Mr. Paton," he assented. "I was just about to suggest that was the only thing left to round out a most complete examination. We will go over to the chart-room where I keep all papers of this kind. We might have picked them out as we went through there a while ago and saved this trouble."

While speaking, he rose from his seat and held the door open for Paton to pass out. Afterward the police captain remembered that he thought at the time he was breaking one of his rules in permitting himself to be followed. Be that as it may, he has no recollection of crossing the threshold of the cabin door.

His next conscious moment was dizzy with pain and a whirring and throbbing in his head, that seemed almost at the point of bursting. He was in pitch darkness—or thought he was—and as he began to get his senses into hand, he noticed a curious, pungent odor in the air that it seemed to him he ought to recognize, and yet in the disordered state of his faculties he could not place it. At regular intervals, a soothing sensation of coldness stole over his forehead and the side of his head.

He snatched at some obstruction before his eyes, which proved to be a wet handkerchief; and it was promptly removed, while in the subdued glow of a

magnetic lamp, he saw bending over him a girl of about twenty, he thought, with dark eyes and hair, and a complexion that said "India" as plainly as if it had been written on her broad, smooth forehead.

Paton made an effort to rise, but the movement localized the blinding agony in a spot back of one ear, and groping for it with his hand, he discovered a lump as big as an orange.

"I begin to understand," he muttered. "What an infinite fool I have been."

"Ah!" The girl smiled—divinely Paton thought. "That's much better." Taking the wet handkerchief, she moved quickly across the room, and soaked it afresh in the stream from an ice-cooler. "You'll be all right in a few minutes," she assured him, deftly applying the grateful coldness to the injury. "Don't try to talk for a little; just keep quiet.

Still giddy and faint, Paton closed his eyes, but opened them an instant later as he felt a flask pressed to his lips, and choked with the sting of brandy in his throat. The effect was magical; in five minutes, thanks to virile blood and stout nerves, he was almost himself again.

Glancing about him, he discovered that he was lying on a couch in one of the lower-deck rooms of the *Goalanda*. "I might have guessed," he reflected, bitterly regretful of his carelessness, "that Dobson would not willingly allow me to examine the plans of the vessel. But it looks as if I had been on the right track, just the same. So he had nerve enough to lay me out with this clout behind the ear. Wonder what he'll dare next."

He stopped suddenly, sat up abruptly on the edge of the couch, and sniffed the air suspiciously.

"What is it?" the girl asked, anxiously. "Is something the matter?"

"Tell me," Paton demanded, impetuously. "Have you noticed that peculiar odor before?"

"I was just going to mention it. It has been growing for the last fifteen minutes. Ever since you were put in here by some one and the door locked."

Paton staggered to his feet, and to the door. It was locked, as the girl had suggested. With beads of pain and horror dripping from his forehead, and still giddy from the effects of the blow on the head and the brandy he had swallowed, he reeled to the opposite side of the room, where he had noticed another door.

"Do you know where this leads?"

"Along a passage to another room." The girl was gasping, her bosom heaving unsteadily with the effort to breathe.

"Oh! What is it?" she begged. "I am afraid I am going to faint."

Paton jerked the second door open and half-led, half-dragged the girl from the small room into the passage. The light from the magnetics glowed through the doorway, and his experienced eye told him at once that the passage between the two rooms ran along the outer skin of the vessel. A shuttered port confronting him proved his impression to be correct, and he had the inside metal covering open in an instant, and was prying with the heavy blade of his knife around the edges of the frame that held the glass.

"Thank God it's only rotten old aluminum sheathing," he panted, "or we would have been caught like rats in a trap."

He had a fair-sized crack made in a minute, and by putting their mouths to the opening, the two obtained sufficient fresh air to revive them.

"We're safe for a few minutes, now," he comforted the girl. "It was a close thing, though. When you can begin to smell lifting gas it's getting dense enough to be pretty dangerous."

The girl's face was ghastly pale.

"Then Dobson intended—"

"To snuff out what little life may have been left in me by filling that room with the deadly gas. Which makes one more score I'll settle with him ere long I hope."

He was working away diligently at the lock of the port glass as he spoke, and now had it free so that he could swing the frame back when necessary.

"I'm curious to know how you happened to be in that room," he continued, "but you can tell me later. Just now we must get out of this, and quickly. Wait here a minute—I'll be right back."

Throwing himself on the floor to escape as much as possible of the fumes of the gas, Paton crawled back into the small room, where he found, as he expected, an air-belt hanging in the usual place prescribed by International Law.

"Now we're all right," he jubilated, as he returned to the girl. Quickly he unfastened his own air-belt, which he wore constantly when on hazardous duty, and before the girl could divine his intention, he had swung it about her waist and snapped the spring lock.

"I don't quite understand," she objected. "Why don't you wear your own belt and let me have the other?"

"Because — because — Oh! Never mind! We haven't time to argue the matter."

"Ah! But I know!" she cried, softly. "You think the *Goalanda's* belt may not hold the pressure, and if it doesn't, you'll be the one that's lost. No, sir! I refuse!"

The young man's answer was to turn toward the port-hole and, pulling the glass and frame widely open, he flung a small article into the chasm of the outer darkness.

"That's the key of the lock," he announced. "You can't get that belt off if you try. Now, will you give me the other?"

The girl had snatched the second belt from the floor where Paton had dropped it, and she now stood with it in her hands, irresolute.

At last, with a half-sob, she complied with his arrangement, and held it out toward him.

"And if it doesn't hold?" she whimpered.

"Jim will be captain of *D 29*," replied the police scout with a grim laugh.

He was fastening the belt about his waist as he spoke. Then, producing two small metal filler-tubes, he screwed one into the valve of each belt, and allowed the belts to partially fill with the wonderful gas that had made possible the saving of life in the air as in the water.

"That will do till we get out," he decided. "We must drop till we clear the propellers; then we can slip up to the four-thousand-foot level after the *Goalanda* goes on, and I'll try to locate Jim and the boat."

It was high time for action, for the gas was momentarily becoming denser, in spite of the port opening.

"I'll have to tie your skirts so you won't turn into a regular parachute," apologized Paton as he tore his handkerchief into strips and, stooping, deftly bound the girl's dress closely about her ankles.

The speed of the vessel had slackened perceptibly, and a glance out of the port-hole told Paton that they had run into a dense bank of cloud. Nothing could have suited him better, for the circumstance would not only reduce the danger and difficulty of leaving a swiftly-moving boat, but would also lessen the chance of their discovery by a search-light.

Having assisted the girl through the port-hole and showed her how to hold on to the frame, he squirmed through himself and hung a moment beside her. Then, with one arm tightly clasping her waist, he gave a quick shove with his feet, and the two dropped like a bullet through the thick vapor until they reached the equilibrium of their belts, and floated, almost motionless, two hundred feet below the *Goalanda*.

Here Paton filled the belts with a further charge of gas and discarded the now empty tubes. As soon as the proper degree of expansion had been reached the two rose swiftly through the cloud strata until they reached the four-thousand-foot level. Here it was clear starlight; and away on the rim of the horizon the first faint purple of dawn dimmed the night-lights of distant aircraft.

"Now I'll call Jim," he said, and he tossed into the air a pair of smoke-bombs. Soon, far above them, came the *boom! boom!* of the explosion, and two spherical clouds of luminous smoke expanded slowly in the still air.

Paton swept the sky with his powerful nightglasses and was rewarded by the flash of the answering signal-rays from the police-boat.

"Good old Jim," he congratulated, "I rather thought he'd hang around a bit to see what developed. Now, Miss—"

He hesitated and stammered.

"Fredenham," the girl supplied. "Marcia Fredenham is my name. Really it was

thoughtless of me not to have told you before, but we have been rather busy," —laughing lightly. "You see I had the advantage of you. Captain Clark Paton of the Aerial Police is somewhat better known in San Francisco than insignificant Marcia Fredenham."

"Then you live in Frisco?" cried Paton, and unaccountably, it seemed to him, the knowledge invested the future with a marvelous charm. "But you have been much in India, have you not?"

"My father has large tea estates in the Assam District. I am finishing my last year in college in San Francisco. The bulk of the tea on the *Goalanda* belongs to father. Tea-carriers are very scarce just now and father had a chance to ship his tea and secure passage for two friends and myself on the vessel. Had we known more of the reputation of the captain we should never have done so. Unfortunately for me I blundered on the secret of the *Goalanda,* and—"

"The secret of the *Goalanda!*" cried Paton.

"Yes! And you would have found it too, if you had secured possession of the plans of the vessel as you attempted. That undoubtedly explains why Dobson was so determined to be rid of you that he was willing to go to any length to secure your silence. You see I have lived in India all my life and not only understand and speak several of the dialects but have learned much of the wierd mysticism of that strange land, I overheard the talk of two of the native helpers in the turbine-room who were uneasy about something, and I investigated on my own account—a very foolish thing to do, as I have since discovered. Dobson came strolling around just at the critical moment, and in a rage locked me up—"

"In the same room that I was brought to?"

"No! in the other room at the end of the passage. But I managed to get the door opened into the passage and so obtained access to the room in which you were put. I don't believe Dobson would have cared much if we had both been asphyxiated. He could have thrown us overboard—and the Pacific tells no tales."

The girl shuddered at the thought. Paton might have learned then the mystery of the *Goalanda's* suspected traffic but before the girl could continue her story there came a humming like the rush of wing of some great sea-bird, and *D 29* swept on them from the morning mists, her pale, gray hull glittering with frost particles. And none too soon, for at this high level the cold was intense and both Paton and the girl were fast losing what small strength was left to them after the experiences they had passed through.

Nominally Clark Paton was in command of the police-boat but it was Marcia Fredenham who controlled her movements for the next twenty-four hours. As soon as she had been refreshed with the comfort of dry clothing and scalding hot chocolate she told all she knew to Paton and his port lieutenant, who fairly hugged each other in delight at the fortuitous circumstance that had thrown Miss Fredenham across their path.

So it was that all that day from a dizzy height in the blue heavens they watched the *Goalanda* at her slip in the India Basin at San Francisco, unloading her cargo of Assam tea, until as the city felt the breath of the evening trade winds and the great fog-banks hid her lofty towers and blazing night-lights from their eyes, they followed the tea-freighter with their dark-ray finder and saw her swing out of the mist and head away for the rim of the Pacific where a sheaf of lemon rays marked the sun's good-night.

"She'll turn right back," said the girl, confidently, from her post on the cushioned seat in the conning-tower beside Paton.

"Keep her in sight, Jim!" ordered the captain of the police-boat to his aide at the control levers. "But don't let her see that she is being followed."

The peculiar actions of the *Goalanda* confirmed in every detail what they had been led to expect by the girl's story. She kept to a slow speed and as much as possible to a level little frequented by other traffic. An hour after midnight her lights went out like a snuffed candle, and unseen, but closely followed by the dark-ray finder of the scout-

boat, she wheeled on her track and crept, like a thief, back to the coast of California.

A hundred miles north of the Golden Gate the tea-freighter headed straight for the land, the police-boat close behind but high above her in the darkness, and with her lights also hooded so that her presence could not be detected, except with instruments more modern than the equipment possessed by the *Goalanda.* They watched the freighter glide slowly to a crudely-built landing stage where she instantly became the center of extraordinary activity.

From her open ports and hatches she began to disgorge long, coffin-shaped boxes that were carried with care to a small enclosed space beneath the landing. Dobson's figure could be recognized, readily, rushing to and fro in charge of the unloading operations. His perpetual cigaret left its slim curl of smoke here and there as he urged his men to greater speed.

When Paton judged that the strange cargo was about half unshipped he gave the word to his engineers and, with Lieutenant Jim at the wheel, the police-boat dropped like a hawk till her fenders cushioned directly against the freighter's upper deck. In an instant the *Goalanda* swarmed, deck and lower works, with uniformed International Police, and Dobson and all of his men were overpowered and in irons ere they realized what had happened.

Leaving Jim in charge of the two vessels Paton and Miss Fredenham, accompanied by Dobson handcuffed to a burly police sergeant, descended to the small building under the landing stage, to which the boxes taken from the tea-carrier had been transferred.

A strange sight was disclosed in the dimly-lighted single room. Row on row of opened boxes lay along the floor. Within each lay a white-robed, white-turbaned Hindu. At first glance Paton thought them dead, but at the end of one of the rows were several boxes in which the occupants were sitting up, breathing faintly, their black, beady eyes blinking in the unaccustomed light. Other Hindus were still working over them, with many singular manipulations and incantations.

"They will all be awake in a half-hour or less," whispered the girl to Paton. "This artificial catalepsy, while very profound, is easily broken, and some of them will no doubt come out of it naturally, as they have been some time under control. It is quite a common practice among the hypnotists and mystics of India. They will have quite recovered in a few hours."

"And," Paton supplemented gratefully, "if it had not been for you—and for us—they would then be free to roam the Pacific states, doubtless with forged papers of the International Emigration Board, causing the United States government any amount of annoyance, not to speak of the complications that have already taken place with England and India over this vexed question.

"How many of these 'passengers' did you have piled away in that double bottom of the *Goalanda,* Dobson?" he demanded, turning sharply toward the apparently unconcerned captain of the pseudo tea-carrier.

Dobson smiled, cigaret smoke curling languidly from slightly parted lips. But he made no reply.

"You're an infernal fool, Dobson," asserted Paton, calmly and coldly. "With your nerve and ability you might have made more of yourself than a builder of government roads—as you will be for the next ten years or more."

Three weeks later saw the entire lot of Hindus back in their own country; the confiscated *Goalanda* undergoing remodeling into a third-class police patrol; while Captain Clark Paton, with the prospect of increased pay as a reward for his share in the capture of the notorious smuggler, figured diligently, when off duty, to discover if he could venture to leave the Aerial Police and retire to the less exciting but more remunerative occupation of tea-growing in the Assam District of India, somewhere near the plantation of his prospective father-in-law.

The Adventures of a Diplomatic Free Lance

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

IF YOU have not already begun to read these remarkable international-diplomacy stories, start the experience with this one. One wonders if the author had in mind Alphonso of Spain or the deposed Manuel of Portugal. At any rate the story reads like truth.

No. X.—WITH ROYALTY AT BIARRITZ

THE villa, upon the broad veranda of which they were comfortably lounging, stood at the edge of the bluff, about half way between the Hôtel du Palais, as the "Villa Eugènie" is now called, and the light-house on Cape St. Martin. Biarritz itself stretched away to the south—clustering more thickly about the Casino and the rocky promontory of the Atalaye—while just below them the great combers, rolling in from the ever restless Bay of Biscay, boomed against the rocks and sent their dazzling white spray high into the sunlit air.

Architecturally, the place was more Spanish than French—in that its walls were covered with stucco, its roof with red tiles, and that it possessed an inner *patio* with a fountain. Socially, it had a distinction of its own to visitors at the gay little watering-place, from the fact that it was frequently the casual shelter of Royalty, and housed at all seasons of the year a dozen or more distinguished people who were upon the footing of honored guests rather than patrons of a hotel. Just at present, the occasional appearance of uniformed *Aides* and a valet or so about the place, indicated to passing tourists the presence of a boyish and exceedingly democratic King who often ran up from San Sebastian to enjoy himself with brother monarchs or personal friends of lesser caliber—always to be found at Biarritz during September. At the moment, His Majesty had not appeared—and the Condesa was trying for the twentieth time to provoke the English baronet into some evidence of gallantry toward her sex. The four of them had been discussing an old Biarritz story concerning the Duke of a German state who had followed his inamorata there and renounced his right to the succession for her sake.

"Pouf, Sir George! You English are like the ice which floats down upon your northern coasts—it is so difficult to surprise an admission of sentiment in any of you! And yet—Englishmen *have* thrown fortune, honor, everything to the winds for the sake of a woman—"

"Oh, I grant you that. If once we get the bit in our teeth, we go the pace, you know—no jolly doubt of it. But I fawncy, even in our leisure clawss, we have ourselves pretty well in hand as a rule. Speaking of men who have a reputation for intelligence and self-control, I can understand their throwing everything by the board in the case of a woman who is more attractive mentally than physically—or who adds keen wit and a high order of mentality to a handsome face and figure. But I really cawn't imagine that sort of a chap goin' crazy over an illiterate and rawther messy actress, don't you know."

"Even if she were beautiful?—Admittedly so?"

"Oh, that would make it all the worse, don't you see A handsome woman who is nothing else—not even—er—neat and tidy, you know—is a standing offense against good taste and one's natural expectations. Fawncy quoting Romeo and Juliet to such a person—or playin' a Chopin Nocturne for her—and seein' her face a perfect blank! Wastin' it all on crass ignorance!"

The other two strolled down the steps, along the crest of the bluff, leaving them tête-à-tête. And the Condesa's manner became somewhat confidential.

"Perhaps your point is well taken, Sir George, though it seems rather treasonable to my sex to admit it. M-m-m-m—I wonder now in just what category you'd be apt to place *me*? My glass tells me that my features are by no means perfect, and I am far from being a savant—but—well, I possess some intelligence, do I not? Would you consider it possible for me to attract any man so irresistibly that he would give up everything for my sake?"

"Oh, I say now, Condesa—that's gettin' into personalities, you know!"

"Well—suppose it is. I'm curious to know your opinion—to see how you would apply an abstract theory to a concrete instance."

"Oh, if you insist. Well"—running his eyes critically over her, in an openly unconscious manner—"you're not so awf'ly bad lookin', you know. Good eyes—fairly well set up, an' all that. An' you know things a bit. Personally, I rawther like you, don't you know—jolly good talker when you're not lazy. But somehow—I cawn't just fawncy a chap chuckin' himself away completely on your account. Beg pardon—that's rawther bald, isn't it! Didn't mean to be rude, you know—never can say just the right thing when anyone gets me into personalities—er—what?"

"No—so it seems. And yet—I thought you were really a bit fond of me—in a way."

"I *am*. I like you a lot—jolly good comp'ny! Like to ride an' walk with you—like to sit out here alone with you awfter dark, an' well—talk about things an' people, don't you know. But you see, I'm not a marryin' man—and—"

"I see. You're quite frank about it—*aren't* you?"

"Eh—what?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking how different you English are from the Latin races. In five minutes, I've given you a dozen chances to say something pretty, and complimentary, but you're so downright matter-of-fact that you've never even seen them. Your countrymen aren't *all* like that. I've met a good many of the other kind—members of the diplomatic corps, usually, if my recollection serves me. But it seems impossible for you to say one thing and think another—you never would have made a diplomat, that's certain."

"Oh, I'm not so positive about that. I'd a berth in the Vienna Embassy offered me, once." This, in a slightly offended tone.

"Do you mean actually offered to you as a bona-fide appointment? Or discussed as a possibility?"

"Well—I was told my name had been suggested to Sir Edward Wray—our Foreign Secretary—for the berth."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, he was quite decent about it—we're personal friends, you know. Told me the suggestion had been made to him but said I wouldn't like it—too confinin' work. Foreign office has a bally lot o' rules about not talkin' of anyone, or mentionin' any chap's name, no matter how well you know him. Mustn't express opinions about what one reads in the *Times*—or politics—all that tommy-rot, don't you know. So I told him while I appreciated the appointm'nt an'

all that, I fancied I wouldn't exactly care for it—an' he said he thought I'd look at it that way. What?"

The Condesa laughed. At first, a rippling murmur—but it grew into audible merriment the more she appreciated the unconscious naiveté of his statement. Something like the idea of a bull in a china shop crossed her mind as she tried to imagine him in the field of diplomacy. And yet he was very far from stupid or lacking in keen wit. He surprised her, now and then, by his knowledge of history—which he attributed to a liking for works of fiction dealing with European annals. And he was certainly no man's or woman's fool. She credited him with keen insight—but the sort one acquires in the open, rather than in drawing-rooms and offices. Trevor usually attracted every woman who set eyes upon him. A trifle over six feet without his boots, but so well proportioned that he gave the impression of being several inches shorter. A superb horseman and dancer—a crack shot—a yachtsman who held a North Atlantic license as a navigator, and was familiar with the seven seas. In short, a personage much sought after—even by Royalty.

"Perhaps a berth somewhat nearer Royalty itself might suit you better, Sir George? If you were not in the habit of treating His Majesty in such an offhand manner I think he might attach you to his suite. Are you aware of the fact that you seem to ignore his rank altogether?"

"Fawncy! Never thought of such a thing! The King's a gentleman—I treat him as such, do I not?"

"Oh, without question—but no more than that. He is also a ruling monarch, you know."

"Ay—quite so. But I'm not one of his subjects—and I'm nearly twice his age. A man can be no more than a gentleman whatever position he may happen to occupy—can he? Besides there were Trevors in Devonshire much earlier than 1492, you know. I fawncy my family has a bit the advawntage of him in age—if it comes to that."

"Oh, you're incorrigible! One might almost think you an American. By the way—I see in *Le Courier*, this morning, that you made a record of two thousand metres in your bi-plane yesterday afternoon, at 'La Barre.' Why do you risk your life in that reckless manner? I fancy there are many who would learn of an accident to you with considerable regret—do you really care nothing for life?"

"On the contr'ry—I enjoy every moment of it! And never more so than when I am flying—actually conquerin' the air, don't you know—at an altitude of two or three thousand metres. Why, I came down here expressly to pit my knowledge of aviation against these Frenchmen—and a jolly good lot they are, too! Came down by way of Ouessant in my yacht, with two machines on her deck. If the Frenchies beat my two thousand metres—which isn't unlikely, you know, I'll go twenty-five hundred the next time atmospheric conditions are favorable. If I'm put to it, I'll go three thousand, though the cold air currents at that altitude are quite difficult to stand. It's not like ballooning, you know: there's quite a difference between still air and rapid motion when one is a mile or two up. Of course, there is always a bit of risk—but after one has had some experience, not more than motoring in a high-powered car, I fawncy. Eh?—Who is it?" He turned in his chair to see what attracted her attention.

"Captain Ramirez—he seems to be looking for someone. You, very likely." In a moment, the handsomely uniformed *Aide* approached them.

"Buenos dias, Señora la Condesa. Buen' dias, Don Jorge. His Majesty presents his compliments and wishes to know if you will ride with him this morning? He is breakfasting now, but will be ready in half an hour."

"Ah—Good morning, Captain. Why—I ought to write some letters before luncheon, but it's rawther fine for a ride—just about cool enough to be pleasant. Who else are going?"

"None but yourself, I think—*Caballero*. His Majesty is very much interested in aviation and wishes to discuss the subject with you."

"Very good. I can easily tell him what little I know of it. I'll have my horse brought around in half an hour." As the *Aide* saluted and left them, the Condesa said in a low voice:

"I think, at the least, you might have expressed your appreciation of the honor the King does you, Sir George. There are many in Biarritz this morning who would have given much for such an invitation."

"Why, bless me, Condesa—I cawn't see much obligation in it, one way or the other. His Majesty wouldn't have awsked me unless he wished my comp'ny. I like to ride with him, you know, because he's such a deuced fine horseman—particularly for a young chap of his age. An' he's good comp'ny, too—no nonsense about him. But I'm givin' up my letters to accommodate him, aint I? I could have put him off until another time."

"Oh, you're impossible! Really, Sir George, it's rather bad taste—but—well, I can't help admiring your nerve! It must be nerve: you're so beastly unconscious about it."

From one vantage-point or another, everyone at the Villa managed to see them mount when the horses were brought around—because the two men were equestrians whose management of their animals made a picture of life and skill worth looking at. Trevor noted with surprise the absence of other mounts—and when he found that the King intended riding with no other escort, he excused himself for a moment and ran up to his rooms, where he strapped a cavalry revolver upon his hip, under the khaki riding jacket. Then they rode off down the Avenue du Palais and through the town to the foothills which rose at the south of it—the King not being recognized as promptly as usual from the fact that, like Sir George, he had dressed in an olive-drab riding-suit instead of his customary uniform and kepi. For an hour or two, they discussed aviation in all its branches. His Majesty took a lively interest in the subject, and admitted to Sir George that it had been his intention to make a flight with him if possible. But the Queen, whom he had left at the Villa Reale Miramar in San Sebastian, had insisted upon what amounted to a tacit agreement that he would remain on terra firma—and Trevor easily surmised that he regretted it. At the end of two hours, they reached the bald summit of a hill in the Forêt de St. Pee, from which they had a magnificent view up and down the rock-bound coast. They had been chatting with as much interest in each other's views as if the question of rank had no existence. Trevor did not for an instant forget the respect and courtesy due from one gentleman to another, but he seemed entirely oblivious to the fact that his companion was actually the ruler of a kingdom numbering twenty millions of people—and His Majesty, realizing that Trevor was a man of far broader experience and ability than himself, rather enjoyed the novelty. Presently—as he glanced at the towering peaks of the Pyrenees, capped with vapor, upon the southern horizon—the young King asked a question which had often occurred to him at Biarritz.

"I wonder how many people there are down there in the town who realize what these thirty-four miles between it and San Sebastian have been in the history of Europe?"

"With the exception of visiting Rulers and Statesmen, probably not half a dozen. In these days, geography has gone out of fashion in the schools, unfortunately—and no one save engineers or army folk ever looks at a topographical map. Do you know—I was myself considering the strategical importance of this neck in the coast line. At this end of the Pyrenees, there is a passage not over fifteen miles in width—between their foot-hills and the Bay of Biscay—through which it is practicable to march an army. At the other end of the mountains, the space between them and the Gulf of Lyons, in the Mediterranean, isn't more than eighteen miles wide at the outside—for purposes of army transportation. To the best of my recollection no army has ever crossed the Pyrenees—though Hannibal and Napoleon managed to get over the Alps. Historians mention the Saracen-Moors crossing the Pyrenees, but we know today that Abdel-Rahman of Cordova used these narrow coast passages at both ends and that, as this route is some three hundred miles the shortest between Cordova or Madrid and central France, he came along this way to meet his death at the hands of Charles Martel at Tours. Even the famous passage

of Roncesvalles is less than twenty-eight miles from the Bay of Biscay and has an elevation under two thousand feet. It was but a small detachment of Charlemagne's army that went that far inland, anyhow. For centuries that national turnpike just below us has been the passage through which both France and Spain have been invaded, alternately. In the Peninsular and Carlist wars, every town within forty miles of here has been the scene of a battle or siege—every hill and mountain-spur has been defended—fortified—taken by assault. Down there in Bayonne, Catherine de Medici and Charles Ninth met his sister Elizabeth, Queen of Spain—accompanied by the Duke of Alva—and planned the massacre of St Bartholomew. Off there to the south, you can easily make out the river Bidassoa which forms the boundary between France and Spain—and in it, the little Ile des Faisans upon which so many interviews between Sovereigns and Ambassadors have taken place."

"By Jove, Sir George! I hardly expected to find you so well posted upon this territory—you impressed me as being altogether an out-of-doors man. Faith—with your ability to grasp a topographical position, you should have been a general. Were you ever in the army?"

"Never officially. I've been in several fights with armies of different nations—as spectator and war-correspondent."

"Ah! That accounts for it. The Condesa was asking me yesterday if you were an army man—seemed more than ordinarily interested in you, I thought. But, of course, a person who can do such things in the air is rather a public character." Sir George was looking abstractedly out over the heaving waters of the Bay and seemed to be turning something over in mind. At a later day, the King remembered that the lazy drawling speech and mannerisms which seemed inseparably connected with the man had been dropped absolutely, that morning. His voice had the ring of decision noticeable in those who are accustomed to command, and his words were chosen with point—though at times they seemed irrelevant. Presently he remarked in a casual way:

"Rather interesting woman, the Condesa—don't you think? She asked me an odd question this morning. Of course it was only the way she has of chaffing me—but we were discussing the Grand Duke's blind infatuation for *'La Gitaña,'* here—you have heard the story, of course—and she asked me if I thought her capable of fascinating any man to such an extent. A bit personal—wasn't it? Question is—*was* it merely chaff? Or did she have some such idea in her mind? If so—who is the man? Evidently, not I—or she wouldn't have come at me with such a question. And—er—well, who else is there at the Villa or among her acquaintances in Biarritz that a Countess of her social position would consider worth exerting her powers of fascination upon? Suppose we settled upon any particular man as the probable one—what would be her object in doing it?"

The slim, graceful figure of the young King shifted its position in the saddle, and a rather surprised glance came from his mischievous eyes. The muscles stiffened a bit around the long Hapsburg chin. There had been nothing in Trevor's manner to suggest that his questions had more than casual significance but the King suddenly recalled a remark which had been made to him the previous evening at the Casino by a man who had been presented to him some years before.

"I say, Trevor—do you know a gentleman by the name of Lammerford?"

"Lammy!—Well, rather! One of the best friends I have in the world. I hoped he would join me here but he's away on some governm'nt business, I believe—contract for army supplies, or something of that sort. Why? Where did you happen to run across him?"

"At the Hotel du Palais, last evening. He was presented to me by your Ambassador, some time ago—and I imagine the 'government business' you refer to could scarcely have been *army contracts*, from what I know of him, though I appreciate your reasons for putting it that way." His Majesty grinned and boyishly poked his companion in the ribs with his riding crop. "I happened to mention that you were staying at the Villa, and he made a rather curious remark—which I've been thinking over."

"Ah? And what was that—if I may ask?"

"Well—hanged if I know just how it came about. We were speaking of chess, I think. He said you were one of the few men who generally beat him. Then he said you were a close observer of—people—as well as inanimate things. Said he considered your judgment in emergencies the best of any man he knew and wound up by advising me that if you ever felt called upon to make a suggestion, I would probably find it worth considering. Now—shall I take your remarks upon the Condesa in the light of suggestions—or as having no particular significance?"

"Why you see—really, you know, I shouldn't be messing in anything which may be governm'nt or political matters—because I've no head for that sort of thing, and I dare say I'd make a beastly fluke of it if I tried. But I know a few things about human nature—and I suppose I've a way of putting this and that together, sometimes—sort of jumping at conclusions which may be entirely wrong, don't you see. Now I've noticed Your Majesty seems rather to like the Condesa—as we all do, by gad—she's an int'resting woman, an' no fool. But that question of her's put a chance idea in my head—may be nothing in it, of course. You've noticed I'm a bit fond of hist'ry—like nothing better than to read historical novels, you know. Well, that sort of thing gets a chap in the habit of seeing plots and dramatic situations everywhere. Now according to the papers, things aren't altogether smooth in your country. And every Ruler is always in more or less danger of personal attack—particularly, when he's outside of his own borders. Assassination can be guarded against to some extent, but there are subtler forms of attack or influence against which it's impossible to guard *any* man. And the consequences may be fully as serious in the end." It was the King who now looked out across the Bay, as he tried to digest what he had heard.

"Trevor—you must know something about la Condesa which other people do not?"

"I don't. Absolutely nothing beyond what I see and infer. That question of her's this morning was very likely nothing more than a woman's natural coquetry. I accept her as just what she claims to be—la Condesa de Vastelar—a woman of unquestioned title, family and position in your country. If there were any question as to that, I fancy she would scarcely attempt to impose upon *you*."

"Then what—I say, old chap, are you trying to get me out of the running by arousing a nameless suspicion against her?" Trevor's disgust at the idea was plainly written in his face.

"Hmph! That *would* be a jolly clever thing to do, wouldn't it? If *you* happen to like her, how much show do you suppose anyone else stands! And how much stock do you think any man would take in underhand insinuations against a woman he is fond of? I wouldn't make any such fool play as that if I were in my senses. I think her only interest in *me* is in what I do up overhead—and in whether I am exactly what I appear to be or a person whose other occupations might interfere with her to some extent. Really, you know—one would think she took me for some kind of a secret agent by the questions she asked. But she wasn't long in seeing how absurd *that* was. No—if Your Majesty has an inclination to play with fire a bit—that's what all flirtation amounts to in the beginning—it's none of *my* business. I'll give you a clear field—or I'll do a little flirting myself, if you like, just to make the game int'resting. Only it might be well to remember that any game is a more serious matter for Royalty than for commoners."

Again, the King became the frank, outspoken young fellow who was so attractive to those who knew him well. For the moment, he lapsed into his own language, which he spoke with a purity delightful to hear.

"*Don Jorge—I like you!* One imagines you always saying exactly what you think—and saying it bluntly. But the fact is—you *don't*. You say what you *mean* to say, and it makes no difference to you who the other person is. I'd rather have one such man as a friend than fifty of those who never forget my birth and expurgate what they say, accordingly. Suppose we give la Condesa

a chance to exert whatever power she may possess—upon anyone she considers worthy of it—and see what happens? What do you say?"

"Suits *me*—I'm willing to stay a few weeks and see the game through."

"That's what I was hoping. If you were leaving immediately, I think I should go back to the 'Villa Miramar.'"

By a subtle free-masonry they understood each other without the necessity of defining their relations in words; and as they rode down the hills to the national highway, they chatted upon various topics. Trevor had learned in the Orient that it is a wise precaution always to return by a different road from that upon which one sets out—and was choosing the way accordingly. But he was also alive to the possibility that anyone with a definite object in view might easily guess the road by which they were riding back if he had noted the direction in which the King had started. So he was closely watching, from the corner of his eye, an approaching horseman who had turned into their wood-lane from the automobile turnpike, half a mile away.

The man was quietly, even tastefully dressed; seemingly he was out for a constitutional. But the lane was densely wooded upon either side, and judging by the grass between the ruts, it was seldom used. An ideal spot for a casual tragedy. Unobtrusively, the baronet's hand shoved back the skirt of his riding-jacket and, hooking a thumb into the belt, rested carelessly upon his hip. In another moment, there was a motion so rapid that the eye would have failed to catch it—a stunning report from somewhere near the pommel of his cavalry saddle—and a bright object went spinning into the air from the approaching stranger's hand. The fellow reeled, cursing with pain. His horse, maddened by the pistol shot and the spur which had been convulsively pressed into him, reared sideways, throwing the man into the bushes at the edge of the road.

Except for a slight start at the loud report so near his elbow, the King sat coolly in his saddle—mechanically stopping his horse with a slight pressure upon the rein. At first, he couldn't understand just what had happened.

"Why did you kill him, *Don Jorge?*"

"*Kill* him!—Hmph! That cursing is pretty lively for a corpse. I only shot the pistol out of his hand before he could pull on you. Aimed to carry away his first two fingers—and I reckon I did it, by the row he's making. Hold on, now! You just stay where you are until I overhaul him a bit! He may have another gun, you know!"

Walking his horse to where the man sat crumpled up in the bushes, Trevor swung one leg over its head and slid to the ground without taking his eyes from the scoundrel for an instant. In spite of the evident pain the man was suffering, he was forced to get up, turn his back, and hold his hands above his head—while the baronet removed from his clothes another pistol.

"Now then, my friend—I'll give you five minutes to bind up that fist of yours with a handkerchief—not more!" The man sullenly did as he was told. "Let me see it? Yes—that will lessen the bleeding for a while. Now you will please walk in front of us until we reach the police station in town."

"*Por amor de Dios!*—It is three miles! I am suffering!"

"Nearer five miles, I should say. And your suffering doesn't interest me in the least. If you bleed to death before we get there, it'll save La Guillotine a job. March!"

Once or twice, it seemed as if the man would drop on the road, but he managed to make it—and was duly turned over to the authorities, with a whispered word in the Prefect's ear which insured his being closely guarded. In the meanwhile, His Majesty had ridden on to the Villa, where he coolly handed his mount to an orderly and retired to his apartments without mentioning the occurrence to anyone. But when he came out upon the veranda for a cigar that evening, he placed his chair near Trevor's, and in the shadow of the vines, grasped the Englishman's hand in a way that meant a good deal. When they were alone for a moment, he said:

"That sort of thing has happened before—I suppose I shall get accustomed to it, in time. But I must compliment you upon your marksmanship—that was

one of the most superb shots I ever saw. I wonder if the fellow had any accomplices, here?"

"Um—I fawncy not, Your Majesty. The Prefect seemed to recognize him as an anarchist he had been warned against by the Prefecture at Paris. No, I think he had drawn the 'red ball' at some anarchist meeting and was deputed to do you himself, without assistance."

Later in the evening, Mr. Lammerford came up from the Hotel du Palais to call upon them, and was introduced to la Condesa—who seemed to have a vague recollection of having met him before. Up to that time, it was evident that she had not cared to exert herself for any of the gentlemen she had met in Biarritz, for, with little apparent effort, she now became the sparkling centre of the little circle. Keen wit, deep knowledge of men and women and affairs, an appreciable amount of excellent reading, a more than casual knowledge of the drama and the arts—there were hints of all these in the careless badinage with which she kept the conversational ball rolling. There were other women in the party whose claims to beauty were undeniable, and whose social position entitled them to marked attention, but for once in their lives they were tongue-tied—unwilling admirers and impatient listeners. As for the men—they were spell-bound. None of them had thought the lady capable of it. And unless the compliment of her sudden vivacity belonged to His Majesty, they were at a loss to know who had struck the spark in her. She had shown no previous disposition to attract the king and now seemed to be addressing anyone but him. Lammerford, being the latest acquisition to the circle, came under suspicion as the possible cause, particularly, from her claiming previous acquaintance with him. And in a clean-cut, soldierly way, he was handsome enough to merit it. But the close of the evening left them as much at sea as ever.

For the next week, the Villa was a little world by itself in which previous conditions had changed so materially that the inmates felt themselves going about in a maze. From being the clever but retiring woman she had first appeared to them, the Condesa had become the central luminary which ordered their daily lives—and this without their understanding just how it had come about. Apparently, she did not go out of her way to attract either man or woman by what she said or did, yet within twenty-four hours she seemed to have become mistress of the situation, absolutely. If anything, she seemed more desirous of subjugating Trevor than any of the other men—possibly from the frank disbelief he had first expressed as to her powers. He still managed to fence with her in his brusque, good-natured manner—but he had his yacht brought around from Bayonne every morning and placed at her service, the selection of other guests being entirely in her hands. She appeared to draw the man out as they had never seen him drawn before. In spite of his habitual drawl and mannerisms, Trevor could be a brilliant conversationalist—an exceptionally attractive man, when he chose—and Lammerford, who knew him best, was puzzled to understand his reasons for letting himself out. Afterward, even the hard-headed Dean of the King's Messengers found himself fighting too seriously against feminine influence to notice particularly what his friend was, or was not, doing. The other women at the Villa soon admitted themselves powerless as competitors. While saying innumerable "catty" things, sub-rosa, they were forced to content themselves with studying the Condesa's finesse—as chorus. As far as they could judge, the King was getting but the scraps from her table—and was, by this time, thoroughly interested in playing more of a leading part. His obligation to, and his liking for Trevor, kept him neutrally within the rules of the game at first, but after the third day there was an appreciable coolness between them. Trevor was too much the "lucky dog."

The Villa was now fairly seething with internal dissension—and the cause of it all was at war with herself. Intending only to use Trevor as a foil to her more serious purpose, she found herself madly attracted by him—and to save her soul she could not be certain that the feeling was reciprocated. One evening after an all-day cruise on the

"Ranee Sylvia" he had found her alone for the moment in the shadows of the veranda and, slipping an arm about her waist, had kissed her half a dozen times before she thought of resisting. Afterward, she knew that her slight effort at resistance had been but a further invitation—and with whirling brain, with her blood fairly on fire, she tried to concentrate upon her original purpose without permitting herself to drift too far.

Later in the evening, Lammerford went up to the baronet's apartments and walked in unannounced—locking the door behind him. Trevor was stretched comfortably in a Bombay chair, with his feet on the shelf, a cigar between his lips and a chess board at his elbow, but he had turned down the reading-lamp and was looking abstractedly out of the window at the moon-lit and tumbled waters of the Bay. In the adjoining dressing-room, his Afghan body-servant, "Abdool," was cleaning his revolvers with the absorption of an artist in such things. Lounging with his back to the door, Trevor couldn't see who had opened it, but at the turning of the lock, he carelessly stretched himself in such a manner that one hand slid partly under a newspaper which lay upon the table—covering a short automatic pistol of heavy caliber.

"Oh, hullo, Lammy! That *you?* I was just wondering what I was up against when I heard you lock that door. Well? Made up your mind to have it out with me behind closed doors?" Lammerford quietly pulled up a chair and drew from his pocket a brown cigar of prodigious length.

"Trevor—do you know just what you are doing?"

"Only in semi-occasional lucid intervals. Do *you?*"

"Well—just about to that extent, I fawncy. I thought I'd been through the hands of pretty much everything in the feminine line, but this combination is the limit. What are you going to do with her, old chap?"

"Get knifed by her, possibly—in the wind-up. I ve no desire to speculate in tigresses—more sense, I hope. But I can't help petting them—fooling with them—to save my neck. It's the deadliness of the game which attracts me, I suppose."

"Know anything about her before you came down here? Ever hear of her before? Did you stumble upon a hint that there might be something doing?"

"No—No—After that Carnstadt wedding, last month, I had an idea it would be better if my daily pursuits were reported by the papers in a locality at some distance from the German frontier and this 'Aviation Tournament' at 'La Barre,' yonder, seemed just the thing. I wanted to match up against these Frenchmen, anyhow."

"How did you happen to get quarters at this Villa? They're pretty inquisitive about whom they admit on account of the Royal patronage."

"You compel me to flatter myself, Lammy. I merely showed them my card, after I had initialed a few of my titles in one corner, and the Management were cordial enough to please anybody. His Majesty turned up, unexpectedly, next day."

"I suppose you've formed a suspicion or two as to what may be in the air?"

"W-e-e-l-l—I have—and I haven't. For example—who *is* the lady?" Before answering, Lammerford got up from the chair and poked his head out of the window—noting its distance from other ones upon the same floor. "Oh, I reckon we're safe enough. The architect of this place evidently had in mind the objects for which it was likely to be used—and made all the walls sound-proof. There is a vestibule to each suite, and I heard you locking the outer door. As for the window, it's cool enough to shut it. Now tell me: who *is* the lady?"

"For one thing, she's first cousin to Don Jaime, the Bourbon Pretender—an officer in the Russian army, just now."

"Then her title is a bona-fide one?"

"Oh, absolutely. The family are among the 'Grandees.' But it's human nature to judge men or women by the acquaintances they keep. It's natural enough, perhaps, that la Condesa should be intimate with statesmen like Sobrano and Juarez and Obdalla and Estrebo. There are probably family connections or mutual friends to account for it. Being herself partly Bourbon, there is nothing surprising in her close friend-

ship with Madame la Comtesse de Lesançon and others of the Royalist party in France—or with Il Conte di Rotiviglia, in Italy. He is distantly connected with the House of Savoy, as you know. But when one considers that every person I've mentioned is a secret political agent—of the superior and most efficient class—that the split with the Vatican is making a revolution in favor of Don Jaime something more than a possibility, and that she is his cousin on the Bourbon side—the trend of one's thoughts is likely to follow the line of least resistance."

"That's about all I need in the way of a hint, Lammy. I've been suspicious of her from the first day. Since she came out of her shell so amazingly—setting us all by the ears—I've been more suspicious than ever. She's a dangerous woman, with a power of fascination that is something hypnotic. But in the odd times when I've been able to throw off her influence sufficiently for connected thought, I haven't been able to put my finger on a single indication that she has anything in mind beyond the Mother Eve bug to play with men's lives as she would with so many pawns. She has so openly avoided making any set at the King that I couldn't see her game at all. It didn't seem to me that *I* could be worth the candle to her; and she knows enough of *your* connection with the Foreign Office to be mighty careful about what she says in your presence, though she may be quite willing to annex your scalp in a purely feminine way. When you mentioned the Comtesse de Lesançon and those statesmen, I began to see light. Comte Henri is staying at the Hotel St. Etienne, in Bayonne—now. If she knows his wife, she probably knows *him*. Estrebo and Juarez, the cabinet men, are there with him. They were talking with Comte Henri yesterday morning in the Place d'Armes when she motored over with me. She looked at them calmly from head to foot without a sign of recognition, and though they stared at both of us, they gave no evidence of knowing *her*. The presence of those men in such close proximity to our party here at the Villa is ominous. Seems to me it's up to us to look after the boy if we can."

"Meaning the King?"

"Of course. He's only twenty-four—and a lovable imp of mischief at that. In a game like this, the dice are always loaded. He has neither years nor experience to defend himself."

"I fancy he wont accept any suggestions from *you*. You've played the lady's game a bit too strenuously, I fear."

"Good lord, Lammy! Can't you *see* it! I was to be the lay figure to make him jealous—to arouse his natural combativeness and make his purpose serious. Of course it isn't for *me* to say that la Condesa may have gotten her fingers burnt a bit. If she has, that's her own lookout; and I doubt if she will allow her burns to distract her attention from the main object—not for the present, at least. The scorching makes the game that much more real, that's all. The young chap is almost infatuated, now, and of course he wouldn't listen to anything I might say, though he drifted into the thing and took a sporting chance at first. We'll have to act without consulting him. Let's see, now: how much do you suppose you could find out as to what may be brewing among his people and government if you ran down there for two or three days?" Lammerford moodily puffed upon his cigar for a moment or two without raising his eyes.

"Knowing about where to look for trouble, I'd probably find out a good deal—*if I went*. Meanwhile, what would *you* be doing? Monopolizing the lady, I suppose!"

"For the love of Mike, Lammy—has it gone that far with you! Look here, old chap—we'll have to pull ourselves together a bit or our judgment wont be worth much. Tell me what to look for—where to go—and you may amuse yourself here with the lady as much as you please!" Lammerford sat up with a start, like a man waking from a nightmare.

"George—I apologize! If you see any sign of my getting maudlin again, you are to kick me—kick me hard—where I'll notice it! I never took much stock in the stories one hears of woman's power to make an abject ass of a man—but I've learned something. There's a train passes the Irun barrier about midnight: I'll be on it. In the meantime,

you set Abdool to watching Comte Henri and those other two men in Bayonne. He's pretty clever at that sort of thing—probably stalked a lot of our 'Tommies' in the Afghan hills before he reformed and came over to you. Keep track of La Condesa, too. If she receives a communication from anyone, you want to know it."

Trevor obviated whatever difficulties there might have been in keeping track of the Condesa by proposing a three-day cruise, which was promptly agreed to by those invited. And as the yacht steamed out into the Bay, he gave the King a quiet tip.

"I shall be occupied with business matters for several hours each day—why don't you monopolize la Condesa yourself, instead of leaving her so much to those other fellows?"

To say that His Majesty was pleasantly surprised, hardly expresses it. His liking for Trevor was really a deep-rooted one, and it seemed to him that the baronet was deliberately effacing himself in the spirit of fair play. This again brought his view-point around to the original starting-place of merely playing a sportsmanlike game for what there was in it—the temporary monopoly of a fascinating woman. But a half-hour alone with her after dinner, under the stars—utterly routed what cool judgment he possessed.

Trevor had retired to the "Wireless" room with his private secretary. It occurred to him that code messages of particular significance might be flashing through the air in that corner of the Bay of Biscay, so he patiently settled down to intercept them, knowing that his guests were provided with all the amusement and attention they required. For the first twenty-four hours neither he nor Williams, standing "watch and watch," picked up anything but chat between various "Liners." Upon the second night, they heard a message which they carefully wrote down for later study; afterward, they caught two more. Then the yacht returned to Biarritz, where Trevor learned some interesting facts from Abdool's espionage of Comte Henri and his companions. Lammerford turned up the same night. Between them, they worked out translations of the code messages—an almost impossible task to one who has never tried it, but not so difficult when the underlying principle of all codes is understood. When they had succeeded in getting the gist of them, Abdool was instructed to watch for a Basque mountaineer who would probably endeavor to get a few words with the Condesa somewhere along the cliffs within a day or so.

To the King, the events of each day were now like phantasmagoria in a dream. He despatched what matters were brought before him by his secretary in a mechanical manner—scarcely remembering them afterward. When the Condesa denied herself to him—as she did for the better part of each day—he smoked innumerable cigarettes upon the veranda or listlessly strolled down upon the beach with half a dozen acquaintances. Sometimes, he retired to his apartments until evening. In view of the recent attempt upon his life, the local police were guarding the Villa and unobtrusively surrounding him with protection when he appeared in the town or suburbs—but the subtler danger he was incurring was something they could not handle.

During the next week, the King was given more encouragement, while the other men at the Villa became increasingly desirous of challenging each other at a chance word or glance. Then the Condesa made her first overt move—having no suspicion that Trevor and Lammerford were patiently looking for it. In a tête-à-tête with His Majesty upon the veranda, one evening, when he was murmuring something of his desires—she placed her hand softly upon his sleeve and asked if he would really miss her, next day—or the following one.

"Miss you, *Niña, querida mia!*—Why? What do you mean?"

"I am leaving Biarritz—did I not tell you?"

"*Dios!*—No! But where are you going? Surely—"

"Surely—what?—For instance."

"I was but thinking that where you go it is possible for others to follow."

"Not this time, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless I invite them as my guests Don't you know that I am in the habit

of leasing some out-of-the-way hacienda or chateau for several months of the fall and early winter, each year—in order that I may have time, undisturbed, for my work?"

"Indeed no! Though I was not surprised to learn that you write. With your cultivation, it would be strange if you did not. But—where do you go to-morrow, if I may ask?"

"You may ask—yes. But if I tell you, it is in confidence, strictly. Were I to inform the other men, here, they might be making excuses to drop in at all hours—when I've neither the time nor the inclination to see them."

"But you will tell *me*—you will permit *me* to come!"

"Ah, Your Majesty—is it wise? To be sure, no one but an occasional mountainer would see you. If you came with a small escort—Captain Ramirez and the Señor Lopez, for instance—probably no one would be the wiser. You can depend upon their discretion, I presume? —Yes? But, tell me—why is it you wish to come so much? It is better that you should not—for my sake, if not for yours." (A look passed between them which Trevor, happening up the steps of the veranda at the moment, partly caught in the glow from the King's cigarette. He said, afterward, that another such glance would have made him ring up the fire-department.) "You insist? What if I were to permit your taking me up there in your motor, tomorrow? The place I've leased this year is at the head of a valley in the Pyrenees, near the top of the Pic d'Orhy—about eighteen miles from St. Jean Pied de Port as the crow flies, and nearly the same distance east of Roncesvalles. Perhaps I may hear the 'Song of Roland' and see his ghost, some evening. The trail is a rough one, but it is possible to get a motor-car over it with some coaxing. Call it about fifty-eight miles from Biarritz. I expected to go by rail to St. Jean, and from there on in some kind of a diligence, but if you don't mind risking your car I suppose we could try it, and make better time in spite of the six thousand feet elevation. My convent friend, Madame la Comtesse de Lesançon is coming over from Bayonne with M'sieur le Comte in the morning. They are to be my guests for a week or so—and I have accommodation for three more at a pinch, which would give you an escort of two. If you really insist upon taking us up, I shall expect you to remain a few days, but you must tell no one of our destination —*no one!*—You understand? I am sending my luggage to-night as far as St. Jean. You can say to anyone that you are taking me and my friends off for a short motoring tour, if you like, but no more than that."

Now it is idle to theorize upon the King's youth or inexperience. Young as he was, he had an excellent head and a fair knowledge of the world. There were at least four other men at the Villa—considerably older, and of far wider experience—who would have snapped up the Condesa's proposition without a moment's hesitation, and chuckled to themselves at their luck over the others. This was really one of the strongest cards she played—the singling out His Majesty alone as practically her only companion in a lonely mountain cottage, it being implied that Comte Henri and his wife counted as merely discreet chaperones. The invitation to two members of his suite appeared to guarantee his safety without hampering him in the least by inquisitive observers. As for his being in danger from the Condesa—well—that would have appeared absurd, would it not?

The party left next morning in the King's big touring-car without the slightest hitch or delay; and it is certain that even the police had no suspicion the journey was other than a few days' motoring trip.

When they had gone, Lammerford and Trevor went up to the baronet's rooms, where they spent an hour or two in a close examination of the local topographic maps issued by the Ministere de la Guerre. The Pic d'Orhy and the valley trails leading to it from St. Jean Pied de Port were plainly marked, together with the grades, levels and elevations. Allowing for the compass variation in that locality, they figured the direction from La Barre to be, approximately, S. E., ¼ S.—and the distance about fifty miles in an air line. Abdool had been sent up to the spot upon the previous

evening with certain instructions which they knew he would carry out if he were alive. From his report, they succeeded in locating upon the map a small "bench" or terrace upon the mountain-slope close to the hacienda, the grade of which was not over two per cent.

In the afternoon, at La Barre, they carefully overhauled Trevor's largest bi-plane, a machine with powerful duplicate motors—twin screws which could be geared to either motor at will—and an unusual spread of vulcanized canvas. As the Aviation contest had closed the previous week, there were no curious spectators in the vicinity of the race-track. When they unlocked the shed where the bi-plane had been housed and brought it out, there was not even a jockey or a *mécanicien* loitering about the low ground at the mouth of the river; and as Trevor, with the assistance of his friend, Lieut. Borrowdale, had perfected a muffler which absolutely deadened the exhaust, they managed to get into the air and cross Bayonne at an altitude of two hundred metres without being observed. Ascending still higher as they approached the foot-hills, Lammerford sat with a reliable compass between his knees and, flashing a pocket torch upon it every moment or two, he coached Trevor so well that the machine was kept upon a course almost as straight as that of a rifle bullet.

Sir George purposely kept the speed down to something under forty miles in order that Abdool might have time to carry out his instructions, but as an hour passed without any signal from the indistinct shadow of the mountains ahead of them, he began to fear his faithful man had found a combination too much for him. In a few moments, however, a spark appeared near the crest of a solitary peak, growing brighter until it appeared to be caused by a good sized bonfire or a train of chemicals with strong illuminating power. Holding a Roman candle over the edge of the lower plane, Lammerford touched it off with a wind-match, let it burn for perhaps a minute, and then dropped it. The signal upon the mountain burned for three or four minutes longer, then it was suddenly extinguished. They were by this time near enough to catch a shadowy outline of the peak against the stars. Steering directly toward it, Trevor reduced his speed a trifle while Lammerford strained his eyes to detect another signal. When it came—a tiny spark, appearing and disappearing several times in succession—Trevor gave his motor more gas and shot ahead, slowing up when directly over it. Then, with the utmost caution, he circled above it once or twice and softly descended upon the little terrace before mentioned. As they came to rest upon the ground, a shadow approached the machine and they heard a voice scarcely above a whisper:

"It is Abdool, Master. Allah be praised that you are here safely."

"Are any of the Basques within hearing, Abdool?"

"There were four, guarding the house, Master—but they have gone upon a journey. There were two who considered themselves 'knife-men'—but they were fat and out of practice."

"Oh, the devil!—Did you *have* to kill them, man?"

"If the 'Protector' will step this way, he will see that it was necessity."

Taking their hands, he guided them through the darkness to a clump of fir trees within a hundred feet of the hacienda—and when they would have stumbled over two motionless bodies, he touched the button of a small electric torch. In the little disc of light, they at once recognized the faces and uniforms of Captain Ramirez and his Teniente.

"Good God! The scoundrels were taking no chances, were they! Does the Condesa know about this, Abdool?"

"Nay—I think not, Master. I overheard her giving directions that they were to be well treated in a cabin further down the mountain, but not allowed to escape until she gave the word. She seemed not to realize that it would be too dangerous to let them live."

"Where is His Majesty, now?"

"Smoking, upon the balcony—at the other side of the bungalow. The Condesa retired early, to-night, with a headache."

"Were the four men you killed the only Basques in the neighborhood? Surely not!"

"If the 'Presence' will step beyond the

trees, he will see camp-fires, down the mountain. More than thirty men watch every trail into the lower valleys—but they have not come nearer the bungalow than half a mile except when they were summoned by their Chief, who is now dead."

"Ah! That's about the way I figured it. Now you and Lammerford Sahib remain over there by the machine while I go around and see His Majesty. It will scarcely arouse suspicion if he is heard speaking to someone on the veranda."

Picking his way cautiously over the rough ground at the rear of the hacienda Trevor walked around to the front and ascended the steps as if he were entirely at home. In the darkness at one end of the veranda, the glowing spark of a cigarette indicated the King's whereabouts. Thinking he recognized the other's figure, he spoke.

"Out for a final cigar, M'sieur le Comte?"

"Oui, Majesté." Trevor pulled up a chair by his side and, striking a fusee, calmly lighted one of Lammerford's titanic weeds—noting the start and the low exclamation as the King recognized his face in the flare.

"You, Don Jorge! How in the name of the Saints—!"

"Careful, Your Majesty—please speak as quietly as possible. None but yourself knows of my being here. Do you mind stepping around back of the house so that we can talk a little without being overheard? I've good reasons, you may be sure. Besides—I want to show you something, back there."

Without another word, the King got out of his chair and followed Trevor around to where his two *Aides* lay in their eternal sleep among the fir trees. After they had been shown to him, the two sat down on the bi-plane with Lammerford and Abdool.

"Now, let me outline the situation to Your Majesty as we know it. About a third of your subjects are ripe for any old kind of a revolution—preferably, in favor of Don Jaime, as the Vatican, through the priests, is egging them in that direction. Another third is neutral and fairly law-abiding. The army seems to be loyally in your favor: it likes you personally, and will undoubtedly follow anywhere you care to lead it. But if you die unexpectedly—or disappear—it will take the oath of allegiance to Don Jaime or to the President of a new republic without much objection or resistance. Well, the Junta in your capital have made arrangements for your final disappearance. Comte Henri is really one of the most active secret agents of the French Government and a Bourbon royalist at heart. So is la Condesa. Sobrano—Juarez—Obdalla—Estrebo— all are secret political agents of Don Jaime or other governments, and two of them are camped with the circle of Basques who now surround you, down the mountain, and make your escape impossible. To-morrow, your motor-car will be found wrecked, with two or three unrecognizable bodies under it, over toward Lourdes. Every newspaper in the world will publish cablegrams reporting your death. The Junta will proclaim Don Jaime—he is now at Bordeaux, on leave from his Russian regiment—near enough to reach your capital promptly.

"As to what they will actually do with you, I can't say. The Condesa wont have you killed if she can help it—but you can see for yourself that they can't afford to let you live—it'll place a halter upon every neck in the crowd. You mentioned to me a tacit promise to Her Majesty that you wouldn't make an ascent with any of the aviators—but you may give her my word of honor that she'll never see you again alive if you don't. We made the flight here from Biarritz since dark and there's petrol enough in the tanks to reach your capital, I think—after we drop Lammy and Abdool, somewhere. I wouldn't risk over thirty miles with the shifting weight of four men on the machine. If you personally review all the garrison regiments in front of the Palace, to-morrow, it'll squash this conspiracy as flat as a pancake. They'll never know just where they mis-cued."

For several moments, the King silently digested this information. He had suspected—with Trevor's surprising appearance—some kind of a play to get him away from the Condesa, and his monopoly of her society. The idea was a persistent one—yet everything he

knew of Trevor and Lammerford testified to their being above that sort of thing, and there had been a ring of deadly truth in Trevor's explanation. Besides there were the bodies of his murdered *Aides*, among the trees. He was angry and bewildered at the suddenness of it all.

"*Don Jorge*, I have considered you and the Señor Lammerford men of honor and I'm willing to assume that you believe every word you say. But—well—suppose that *I* believe you have been unnecessarily alarmed, that you have magnified slight evidences of dissatisfaction, rumors, which are really groundless—and that I prefer to remain here. What would you say?"

"Say! Stay here, if you like—and be damned to you! I've ample and documentary proof of what I've told you! It's clearly our *duty* to get you out of this scrape—with or without your consent—if we don't want to see the map of Europe changed. Why, Boy—can't you realize what your disappearance and murder will mean to your country, your dynasty—to Her Majesty and your children! But if you suspect me of being blackguard enough to put up a job like this just to undermine you with a fascinating woman whom you consider harmless, I suppose I'll have to 'salute one who is about to die'—and leave you."

That settled it. The great bi-plane stole away through the darkness like a shadowy bird of prey. To this day, no one knows just how the King arrived at his capital, when he was last seen hundreds of miles away in another country. Neither has the world yet suspected that such a conspiracy ever existed. Against the candid advice of a man in whom he has the utmost confidence, His Majesty refused to have a single arrest made. He is forewarned. His enemies received a paralyzing surprise which put them temporarily out of business. But who can tell what the end will be?

With Cupid in Disguise

By ADOLPH BENNAUER

"SPUD" Derringer, foreman of the Double X outfit, rode wearily over a stretch of rolling prairie behind a bunch of lazy steers. It was near noon and the heat was intense. He had pulled the brim of his broad slouch hat down on all sides and wrapped a big bandanna handkerchief across his mouth and nostrils. The hat protected him from the scorching rays of the sun, the handkerchief from the billows of choking dust which arose from the cattle's hoofs. For all that, however, he was perspiring at every pore and his parched throat was clamoring for water. He looked about the hills in vain. Not a tree or a spring met his gaze. He had no intimate acquaintance with this part of the country having passed over it only once before in his search for the strayed cattle, but he remembered from that one trip that somewhere ahead of him lay Lucknow.

Lucknow was a watering station on the Southern Pacific and comprised a depot and a huge cylindrical tank. The tank was there to supply the locomotives with water, the depot to accommodate such people as desired to make the trip overland to Trestle, ten miles across country. Derringer remembered the pump which stood on the station platform. He had drunk from that pump on his trip out and he remembered distinctly how fresh and icy-cold the water

had been. He licked his lips in expectation.

After half an hour's more riding he caught sight, from the summit of a hill, of the tank and the depot and the twin lines of steel extending in shimmering bands across the flat waste to the horizon. More light-hearted now, he rode forward at a quick trot, rousing up the lumbering steers with a series of exultant whoops, muffled by the handkerchief to mere coughs and gasps. He reached the little station, extricated himself slowly and painfully from the saddle and let his cramped body slide to the ground.

He was perspiring profusely and reeking with the odor of horses and tanned leather. The depot looked cool and inviting and he decided then and there to lie over in it and rest himself until the hot noon hours had dragged away. The grass about the little station was thick and green and the tired cattle threw themselves upon it with extravagant ease, or browsed slowly and meditatively a short distance away. Derringer saw that he would have little cause to worry about them so he set to work taking the saddle off his pony. The latter he hobbled and turned loose, together with the extra horse which he had kept tethered behind him. Then he turned his steps toward the little depot.

An old rusty tin cup swung on a wire from the spout of the pump and after rinsing this, he straightway filled it with the cold liquid and drank and filled it again. As he drank a third cup, his ears were assailed by a sound which made him pause and listen in surprise. From the interior of the depot came a noise which is seldom heard out west and absolutely never in the bunk-houses where Derringer usually held out. It was a cross between the cry of a wild-cat and a locomotive whistle; that is to say, the wail of an infant.

Derringer waited patiently for it to cease. He knew that it came from inside the depot and he realized that he would have all afternoon to investigate it in if he chose to do so. So he was in no hurry. Just at present he was more interested in the sound itself. He had an ear for melody, had Derringer, and there was some elusive, primal note in the rising and falling cadences of this wail that struck a responsive chord in his own nature. But the sound was just as persistent as it was evident and to the cattleman's surprise and later annoyance it seemed to give no indication of a near termination. He licked the last drop from the tin cup and hung it back on the spout, where it swung back and forth for a moment, striking the pump with a resonant clangor. Then he wiped his mouth on the back of his hand and strode to the door of the little depot.

It was light as day inside the square, vacant room and Derringer's eyes lit in an instant on the object of his search. There were two chairs in the room, placed side by side near the east window. Stretched out at full length across them lay a kicking, squalling baby. Part of the clothes it had been wrapped in were strewn in a disordered array all about it and while the astonished cowpuncher gazed, the infant was clutching the spindles of the chair in its chubby fists and performing sundry gyrations with its legs. Beside the man and the baby there was no one else in the room.

Derringer puckered up his lips and emitted a long, low whistle of astonishment. Of course a thousand questions as to the cause and manner of it all crowded upon him, but he was sensible enough to realize that he could never come upon a solution by guessing. The fact that the infant was there was enough for him to worry about. He had vague ideas, too, of a frantic mother tearing out her hair by the roots and mutilating the face of an innocent conductor somewhere out on the Southern Pacific. He approached the east window gingerly and halted at a respectful distance from the chairs. The gyrations and the piercing squeals still continued, and Derringer's eyes lit up with unfeigned admiration. The geometrical figures which the pink feet were describing were wonderful. He watched them, fascinated. It was a maze of untraceable outlines, performed with the speed and skill of an expert.

Suddenly, through a sidewise lunge of the plump body, a flat, odd-looking bottle was disclosed to view. Derringer caught sight of it in an instant, and, prompted by some intuition, sprang for-

ward and rescued it. As he held it up and bestowed upon it a closer inspection he realized that he had seen its kind before, and at the same moment he remembered where. One of the boys at the bunk-house had brought in a magazine and it was in the back of this, in the advertising department, that he had become acquainted with nursing bottles. He had remote ideas that they were a panacea for all infantine ills; above all he was sure that they were used to placate babies on such occasions as this; so, as the bottle was still half-full of milk, he screwed up his courage and held it conspicuously in front of the baby's face.

"Here, nice baby," he stammered awkwardly, using the tone in which he generally addressed his dog, "see, nice milk."

He pressed the nipple against the infant's rosy lips, but they remained stubbornly closed. For some reason it would not accept his offering, but screamed as lustily as before. For a moment his heart failed him. Then he gathered courage and tried again. Results: the same as before. He scratched his head in perplexity, looking now and then longingly out at the hot, dusty plain. The infant's wails had increased to such an extent, both in volume and in number per second, that they were becoming unendurable. Derringer felt that he could not stand it much longer. He bent forward again, and sticking his finger in the baby's mouth, pried its lips open so that he could insert the nipple between them. He expected that they would close instantly on the nipple and that after that all would be plain sailing. But he was disappointed. The lips this time remained open and from the toothless cavity howls of exquisite agony emanated. In desperation Derringer jerked the bottle away, tore off the nipple, and holding the baby's lips open as before emptied half the bottle into its mouth.

At that moment the air was rent with a shrill, ripping whistle towards the east. The clanging of a bell and the roar of an approaching train followed. As Derringer left the side of the strangling infant and darted to the window, the long line of Pullmans drew up before the little station and came to a standstill. Out of the coach facing him stepped a negro porter laden with two large suitcases and followed immediately by a young lady. Derringer stared at the new comer with pardonable surprise. What on earth was she getting off here for?

It had all happened so suddenly and unexpectedly that for an instant he could not accept it as real. The proof of it all, however, stood before him on the platform. She seemed a creature that had been dropped out of fairyland. She stood with her back toward him looking down the track after the departing train and every now and then glancing curiously about the little station. Derringer had not yet caught a good glimpse of her face, for a side view was almost completely obstructed by her massy hair and mushroom hat, yet he was obsessed by a queer idea that he had seen her before. In the roundness of her shoulders, the curves of her splendid figure, there was something hauntingly familiar. He was almost prepared to swear that he knew her. He watched her eagerly from his place of concealment and noted the growing anxiety in her manner as she gazed about her at the desolate tract of prairie. Finally she caught sight of the horses and the bunch of cattle and she looked for a long time with great interest in that direction.

A faint wail from the other end of the room aroused Derringer from his inquisitive contemplation. During the descent of this creature from fairyland he had forgotten entirely the *enfant terrible*. The latter seemed to have managed somehow to clear its throat from the milk deluge for it now began testing its vocal chords in a manner that gave promise of much better results later on. With a sinking heart, the cow-puncher crossed over to it and again picked up the bottle. Since the last dose he had administered had been such a signal success he felt favorably inclined to repeat it. But nature must have already bestowed upon the infant comprehensive and retentive faculties, for no sooner did it observe Derringer's action than its throat was cleared as if by magic and there issued therefrom a series of thrilling death screeches which far excelled any that had gone before.

Derringer, bent over the infant with the bottle in his hand, his brow corrugated in wrinkles of worry and distress, did not hear the sudden gasp of the lady without, nor did he hear her quick steps toward the door. He was for the first time conscious of any move on her part when he heard the latch click and looking up saw her standing in the doorway. It was the only time he had had an opportunity to see her face and he now stared at her in the most impolite manner, forgetting even to remove his hat. A faint red began to flush his cheeks, his eyes wavered, he shifted his feet nervously, and finally, as he remembered and removed his hat, his eyes tore themselves away from hers.

"How do you do, Mr. Derringer," she said quietly, in a voice whose natural warmth was chilled with an icy accent.

He nodded shortly and responded to her greeting with crisp politeness. For a moment they were silent, staring at each other with great interest, and yet at the same time endeavoring to appear indifferent and uninterested. The girl's eyes this time were the first to waver. She let them drop to the floor for a moment and then travel over in the direction of the two chairs and *enfant terrible*.

"Oh," she said, remembering, "I heard the baby cry and thought it might be alone, so I came in."

As she spoke her quick eye took in the baby's deplorable condition. Derringer faced about and stared at it guiltily.

"I—I'm glad yuh did," he said awkwardly. "I tried tuh make him take his milk but I can't handle him." He fumbled confusedly with the matches in his hat-band, putting them all in head first, then removing them again to put them in with the heads out.

"Oh," she said in apparent surprise, "I thought it was a girl. It looks like a girl."

Derringer followed her searching eyes in guilty fear. His face grew beet red.

"I—I don't know what it is," he stammered.

For a moment the girl looked at him in horrified surprise.

"You don't know what it is?" she gasped. "Where is its mother?"

Derringer felt diminutive enough to have vanished through one of the floor chinks. His ears were burning him frightfully and he wanted to rush out and cool them under the pump.

"I don't know," he cried desperately. "You see—"

"May I tend him?" she interrupted shortly.

"Why, certainly," he stuttered. "You see, I—"

But the girl had swooped down upon the squalling infant like a guardian angel and heeded him not. Derringer could only stare at her in astonishment. She had picked the baby up in her arms and was cuddling and kissing it with all the ravenous love of a mother. In her eyes, too, was a light which he had never seen before; a strange incomprehensible affection; a display of that maternal instinct of which he had read a little but knew not. In less than a minute she had soothed the baby's temper and brought it down to the cooing stage. Derringer had to admit that it *was* cute in a way, when its face was not begrimed with tears. He felt, however, that for the present he should prefer to leave the two alone.

"I'll have tuh go out and water my horse, now, Miss Rodner," he said quietly. "I'll be back in a little while."

The girl turned, nodded brightly at him, and continued her babble of endearments to the baby. Derringer put on his hat and stalked slowly out of the room, tingling in every nerve. Once outside he removed his hat and wiped his forehead. His eyes were dancing strangely, his cheeks burning. He thought no longer of the baby. *She* was here now, right there in the depot behind him, and he could have no desire to think of anyone else. He filled the water bucket which stood beneath the pump, then went over and got his horses and let them drink their fill. He was eager to return to the room where she was, but a feeling of injured pride and delicacy made him refrain. A long series of reminiscent thoughts rushed panoramically through his brain. It was three years since he had last seen Verna, three years since he had proposed to her and been rejected. Those years he had dragged through after a fashion. He had left Chicago and

gone west, resigning his position in his father's office to take up the profession of cow-puncher. This, after the rejection, had been his only dissipation. Whether it could, however, in a strict sense be regarded as such may be doubted. The open plains and the wild, free life had done for Derringer what Chicago could never do for any man. They had given him, who was naturally athletic, a physique not to be excelled; they had cleared his mind from the foppishness and vanity of city life, and they had bred a clean, honest spirit within him. Besides this, in a pecuniary sense, he was benefited even more greatly. From a common cow-puncher he had risen to be boss over half a hundred men and he now owned a half interest in the ranch itself.

He waited on the platform until he thought that he must be prolonging unduly his period of ostracism. He brushed some of the dust off his shoulders, cleansed his face and hands in the clear water, then advanced to the door and opened it. Miss Rodner stood in front of the two chairs looking down at the infant who, snugly bundled up, was lying at full length across them. She was humming a soft lullaby under her breath and rocking the baby gently to and fro with a hand upon his stomach. As Derringer entered her singing stopped abruptly much to his regret, and she left the baby's side and turned to face him.

"Shh-h," she whispered with a finger at her lips, "she's asleep."

Derringer very dutifully held his breath.

"We'd better leave her alone now," Miss Rodner continued, tip-toeing softly toward him.

Derringer held the door open for her. As she approached him his eyes dwelt upon her longingly. That soft, gentle motion was so characteristic of Verna in every way. Just as she had swooped and settled down upon the *enfant terrible* she seemed about to alight upon him. She did not meet his eyes and he knew why. He would not have averted his own had she done so and that would have destroyed their mutual indifference, which she seemed so anxious to maintain. When she had passed out on to the platform he closed the door softly and followed her. He expected that she would be at least a trifle more friendly with him than she had at first appeared on account of their mutual responsibility back there in the depot, but as he approached the east end of the platform where she stood looking anxiously about her she did not even turn her head.

Derringer, however, had no mind to continue the strained relationship. The more she snubbed him the greater the desire arose within him to obtain conciliation. He felt in his heart the same thrill and quiver that he had felt on that fatal day, three years before. He stood in back of her now, appearing very awkward and out of place, yet very determined in what he intended to do.

"Were you expecting somebody, Miss Rodner," he asked quietly.

She half turned her head and replied to him over her shoulder.

"No," she said slowly, "I came a day too soon. I thought, though, that Lucknow was a town and that I could get a conveyance to my uncle's ranch at any time."

Derringer shook his head smilingly.

"I don't know much about this part of the country," he said dubiously, "but I've got a hunch that visitors to this burg usually have connections arranged beforehand. About how far away is your uncle's ranch?" he asked curiously after a pause.

"I—I don't know, I'm sure," the girl replied nervously. "It's due east of here —maybe ten or fifteen miles."

Derringer started abruptly.

"What's your uncle's name?" he asked respectfully.

"Mr. Roberts," she answered.

"Roberts?" he repeated, a satisfied light gleaming in his eyes "Jim Roberts. Why, I work for Roberts, myself. I'm on my way there now with this bunch uh steers."

The girl turned slowly and surveyed him from head to foot. She smiled grudgingly. Derringer underwent her scrutiny with the most perfect ease and assurance. He felt that now he had a hold on her which she could not despise. That she herself was able to perceive this he could tell by her reluctant smile.

"You—you work for my uncle?" she

murmured, biting her lip to appear unconcerned.

Derringer nodded agreeably.

The girl let her eyes stray from his and they wandered restlessly up and down the track. When she brought them back again her cheeks were a very delicate pink.

"Why did you take the baby with you?" she demanded, with some asperity. "Is your wife away?"

Derringer's mouth dropped open like that of a mechanical toy. He stared at her in the most incomprehensible amazement. His wife? Good heavens, did she believe that he was married? Did she think the child was his? There passed through his mind a lightning remembrance of their past conversation. He recalled, now, remarks of hers which at the time he could not fathom. But this explained them all. The delusion under which she was laboring had been responsible for her unintelligible questions.

He was just on the point of replying to her when from the direction of the east there came again a shrill, ripping whistle. Both turned instantly and faced the sound. A long, stately train of Pullmans was rushing at them across the prairie as if about to devour them. With slackening speed it glided up to the station platform and stopped.

Before it had quite come to a standstill a pompous conductor in blue and brass leaped from the lower step and landed directly in front of the man and girl. For an instant he looked from one to the other in hesitation, then fastened upon Derringer.

"Haven't seen anything of a stray baby around here, have you?" he asked brusquely. He dug in his pocket as he spoke and pulled out a yellow slip of paper. "I got a telegram here," he explained, "telling me to pick up a baby at Lucknow. A couple on this morning's train claim to have left it here in the depot."

Derringer regarded him with a calmness which to the girl was bewildering. He nodded his head in the direction of the depot.

"It's in there now," he said, grinning.

The girl looked first at the conductor, then at him. In a flash the true condition of affairs presented itself to her mind. As she became conscious of the terrible blunder she had made she spun savagely on her heel and entered the depot in advance of the railroad man. Derringer remained where he was standing, his heart beating at a furious rate. He felt very serious over the manner in which Miss Rodner had received his disclosure and yet at the same time he could not help being moved by the humor of the thing. So he was undecided whether to feel grave or laugh.

Curious heads soon began to peer out along the windows of the train. They gazed brazenly and inquiringly at Derringer as if he were the cause of the stop. He stared back at them at first indifferently but as the number increased he began to feel embarrassed. He shifted his eyes along the coaches till they rested upon the locomotive which stood ahead, bell clanging loudly and a thick column of steam roaring from its safety-valve. This he watched intently for a long time, wondering why on earth the conductor did not return with the baby. At length, when he was seriously considering entering the depot and investigating, the latch clicked and he heard the two approaching. He turned and faced them. The conductor was carrying the baby on his arm with the skill which only a married man can display and Miss Rodner was at his side, adjusting the trimmings of the baby's hood and dress with dextrous fingers.

"All right, ma'am, thank you, ma'am," the railroad man was saying. At the steps of the coach the girl left him. He waved his hand to the engineer and as the train started, nodded a cheerful farewell to the man and girl on the platform and swung aboard.

Derringer watched the train till it was a mere speck on the horizon. Then he turned about to find the girl's eyes fastened intently upon him. They were very angry eyes. In them he read hurt pride, offended dignity. He almost feared for a moment that she was about to cry.

"Verna—Miss Rodner," he stammered, "I'm sorry if I offended you, but what did I do? What did I say?"

"Don't you speak to me," she stormed, her eyes flashing angrily.

Derringer was truly sorry for her but

he now gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"Don't you see that you're doing me an injustice," he demanded. "I tried to explain to you at first but you were too excitable to listen. Since then I couldn't find an opportunity."

She regarded him with scant consideration.

"A gentleman would have found a way to spare me this humiliation," she said icily.

'Now, please, Miss Rodner," he begged. "I'm truly sorry. I feared all the time that when I corrected your mistake you would act this way. I've been dreading this moment from the first. Can't you please forget it?"

The girl tipped up her nose and eyed him with great superiority. When she looked at him like that Derringer knew that she was flattered, puffing herself up like a peacock. Experience had made him familiar with this mood of hers and during three years he had not forgotten it. With more hope of salvation than before he returned to the attack.

"I don't see how you could ever imagine my being married," he said with a forced laugh. "I told you some time ago that I should die a bachelor."

A curious light came into the girl's eyes. She looked down and tapped the boards with the toe of her very small boot.

"Your actions at that time," she said stingingly, "didn't lead me to think so."

Derringer slapped his hat impatiently against his knee.

"I told you, Verna," he said earnestly, "that I never cared for any other girl but you. They were simply friends; two of them my cousins."

Miss Rodner, with her eyes still on the platform, kept digging at a knothole with her toe.

"They're all married now," she said simply.

Derringer nodded.

"I know," he said, "my mother wrote it in one of her letters. By the way," he added, noticing the favorable indications, "would you mind telling me how my people are?"

She raised her eyes to his for a moment, undecided whether or not she might, with proper dignity, risk such an action. But his own eyes were so frank and truthful, and he now appeared so penitent that she finally decided it might be managed.

"All right," she smiled. "You may get me a drink first, and then we'll go inside. It's dreadfully hot out here, isn't it?"

Derringer, with a buoyant heart, replied emphatically that it was and strode over to the pump. She stood beside him while he filled the cup and when he handed it to her their fingers for an instant touched. Another of those old-time thrills vibrated through his whole body and the warm blood rushed to his cheeks. For a moment he dared not meet her eyes. He finished what she did not drink and they repaired to the cooler interior of the depot. He placed her in one of the chairs and then drew his own up to it, facing it, so that their knees almost touched.

For all of an hour they sat there and talked of home and old friends and of Derringer himself and the progress he had made in his new profession. She was surprised to learn what he had accomplished through his own capital and labor. When the sun had descended so low in the western sky that its rays were no longer unendurable the girl proposed that they set out for the ranch. The afternoon was beautiful. Derringer, however, saw more beauty in the setting sun and the lonesome prairie than ever before, and more, perhaps, than really existed, for a new light had come into his life and he saw through another's eyes. He rode side by side with the girl, regretting each minute that he had to leave her to run a refractory steer into the rest of the herd. Great visions were flitting through his mind, in which the girl and himself played the leading *rôles*. And while he stared before him with these visions in his brain he was conscious that she was watching him, and as he turned and caught her eye her cheeks went rose colored. For she, too, had dreams.

The Metamorphosis of Alphabet Smith

By PAUL HARRIS

THE *Ayuntamiento,* or Governor's Palace, in Manila, has sheltered some queer citizens. Its walls bear wooden *bas reliefs* of old dons who governed back into the eleventh century; when the Americans first landed there the Spanish troops occupied the building as headquarters and its gaudy splendors were indeed trampled in the dust by the little chambray uniformed *soldados.* A Chief Surgeon of the Division who had a very keen nose for possible fever spots gave the old building one big wash day and the story has it that the old dons on the walls turned up their noses at the carbolic odors for quite a while. A brusque old Commanding General ruled from the *Ayuntamiento* with an iron hand in "The Days of the Empire," which, it may be stated, to the uninitiate, included from 1898 until the "carpet baggers" swooped down on the Islands, after the smoke had blown away. Then the proud old marble building, of martial memories, was subjected to many indignities. Lady school teachers tripped their way up its broad steps, frittered in with their expense accounts to the overworked gentleman known as the General Superintendent of Education; girly-girly talk resounded through the corridors where old warriors had curled their fierce moustachios. And one of the greatest characters of the early "Empire" days, before the falling of the mighty memories of this old pile, before convention, wives, etc., were landed, was James Wilberforce DeWitt Kenton Smith, better known to the old guard as "Alphabet" Smith—whom this story concerns almost entirely. About him none but pleasant memories linger in the minds of his old time friends, with the possible exception of a few Chinese merchants on *Calle Rosario* who had foolishly extended to him credit which he was really not able to take care of, but for which they still hold lengthy, legibly written "chits." "Chits," it might be mentioned in passing, are now largely a mere memory themselves: a painful memory to the many dispensers of evil and most mediocre rum, curios, lodgings for the night, etc., for they were the little paper slips bearing the mystic I. O. U. of the early generation in the Islands which were taken by the merchant in a childlike faith which was simply irresistible to the many "Abraham Lincolns," "O. U. Kidds," and other lights of history who at that time sprang into such surprising activity. If "George Washington" paid every *tienda* owner who had passed across first quality *bino* in exchange for this neatly written slip, all of the insurrecto Generals would be living at the Hongkong Hotel across in Victoria Island and issuing manifestoes on Irish linen.

The chit habit was quickly acquired by "Alphabet" Smith; all other bad habits of the country he had before he landed there. No special duty man plugging away at a machine or doing orderly duty that day in the *Ayuntamiento* will forget soon the manner of Smith's entrance into the sacred halls ruled over by the brusque General who was pro-

prietor of the log chain rule in the Pearl of the Pacific.

A slightly listed, tousled gentleman he was indeed. His white duck suit was no longer immaculate; his cork helmet tipped perilously near the jumping off place on the back of his head. In some manner, he got by the guard in the lower entrance, and ascended the steps with mellow dignity. On the first landing there stood a heroic statue of Magellan—white, imposing, impressive. The newly landed one gazed at it with respect.

"Almost as good looking as Greeley, old spot," he remarked gravely, waving his hand in attempted salute. "You ought to be in Central Park; I ought to be in a Turkish bath; how's tricks?"

And waving the statue a cheery goodby the happy young man entered the Holy of Holies, more usually described as the office of the Adjutant General, Headquarters Division of the Philippines. It was pay day and most of the special duty and Civil Service men were upstairs in the Paymaster's Office getting their money. The few who saw him thought that he had been paid earlier in the day and for some strange reason was coming back to work.

He tacked through the inner rail which guarded the clerks' desks; ambled among file cases and waste baskets, and drew up at length in front of the old Spanish throne, the dias and canopy of which still remained as left by the former Governor General. Above the canopy hung a portrait of Alfonso XIII. This caught the pilgrim's eye immediately. He gazed at it long and earnestly.

"You're the one, all right, you doggoned little King," he muttered. "Couldn't mistake that Hapsburg chin. Put my little brother on the hummer down in Havana didn't you; you and your Weyler soldiers. Well, that for you—bing!" And with the exclamation, he let fly his umbrella, which he had grasped javelin-wise. Never did umbrella speed on stranger mission; never was drunkard's aim so perfect. It was a center shot; the ferrule neatly piercing Alfonso in a vital part. The umbrella hung for a moment in the plastering, wobbled, ripped the cloth dismally, and flopped to the floor.

"All same Robin Hood," chuckled Mr. Smith. "I guess baby will go by-by now," and suiting the action to the word, he swept offending ink wells, documents and red tape from the top of the desk occupied by a division Chief and curled up neatly, a man at home

After they had succeeded in awakening him it was discovered that he was the missing Mr. Smith, the War Department Clerk who had landed two weeks before and couldn't find his way to headquarters to report. He was promptly accorded first place as the greatest drunkard of them all. In order to achieve this prominence he had to step some, but the position remained his through numerous pay days. When he wanted to work, which was not often, he showed some of the old hands at the red tape game new tricks about "military channels." It was these occasional flights of labor which helped to prevent his discharge from the Civil Service; clerks were scarce in the Islands at that time and Uncle Sam had to make shift as best the worried chiefs could manage. Although it could have had no possible bearing on his case, it might be mentioned in passing that his only uncle was a U. S. Senator.

"Alphabet" made friends by the score. Everybody liked the cheerful, happy-go-lucky, "good scout;" guile was not within his soul. Even his Chief Clerk found difficulty in calling him down after a week's absence from the office, for Smith always took these lectures in the most dejected, penitent way imaginable. His hanging head would straighten up as the chief puffed through the last line of criticism; his eyes would light up with good intentions; back he would scurry to his desk and the number of Boards of Survey that he would get out within the next couple of days would be amazing.

"Alphabet" drank his way through one merry year and then the tropics began to sing their invitation to the underpaid clerks back in "God's Country." There were more eligibles on the list than formerly; every Transport brought in a new batch. The days of the carousing Civil Servicer became numbered in the land. Smith was shocked one day to find a new chief clerk in Connelly's old

place. He had been out "looking them over" for a few days and had not heard that his old forgiver had been transferred to the States. The new chief would brook no foolishness. He was a martinette through and through; men of "Alphabet's" type did not appeal to him, the man of ink and action. First went Keene, then Taylor and Porter. These were names to conjure with in the old Headquarters office; the men gasped. Smith wondered when his turn would come and did not have long to linger in doubt. One sad night he won fifty pesos playing poker. Three days afterwards he slid apologetically through the guarded railing and sought out his old desk. Ensconced behind it was a pale faced young man with glasses. Sizing him up with the huge scorn that the "Old Timer" always felt for the tenderfoot, "Alphabet" cocked his hat jauntily on one side and swaggered upstairs to the Paymaster's Office with never a question. There was a hush throughout the office as he whistled his way through; not a man but was his friend. They did not rush out with their condolences; that was not by any means the way to play the game. Well they knew that Smith could be found at any of the better known taverns of the Walled City that night. Then they could join him at his table and help him forget. For such was the way of their going.

The periods of a man's downfall in the Philippines are marked and outstanding. If the liberal actions of a broad minded Government in offering him transportation back to the States and another chance at his job do not allure the unfortunate who has tasted of the lotus leaf, he slides rapidly from "Let me have ten pesos for a couple of days, old man" to "Kid, can you spare a dollar?"—which last is always the sure sign of retrogression. The old crowd hang by him faithfully; if he is only half of a man he will accept of their bounty without question. Smith was a man all through, in spite of his overconviviality, and not even his room-mate knew how badly he was hit that day when the Paymaster's clerk shoved over his few dollars of pay.

He had taken the few relievers of temporary pain around the corner to Billy's Place. They didn't last very long and that night "Alphabet" awoke in a *carromata* which was sleepily wobbling its way down the Escolta, bound for no place in particular. The driver was squatting drowsily on his heels; the horse's head drooped miserably; the rig and Smith were covered with mud.

"Must have been playing marbles in a rice paddy," yawned that young gentleman when the cobble stones shook him awake. "*Hombre, donde vamos?* I said, *donde vamos,* you Indian. Where in the name of hack drivers are you hiking me to and where did you find me, huh? Hey, *hombre* don't you savvy *Español un poco?*"

The driver saw the welcome uniform of a Metropolitan policeman down towards the Bridge of Spain. Fear of his muscular charge vanished as if by magic.

"One *peso,* yessir. One *peso*" and he smiled malevolently as he stuck out his dirty paw.

"That's what they all say," responded Smith, as he searched his pockets for the needed coin. The extent of his wealth was quickly determined as being exactly two *pesetas*, a sum which without the aid of an adding machine he could estimate as the equivalent of twenty cents in American money.

"I now remember where I have been," Smith softly murmured. "That sure helps some. The good looking boniface in the Luzon gave me these two pieces of eight to buy him some *chili con carne* with. *Hombre, sigue chili con carne,* savvy? Oh spludge on you, you mutt, you don't even understand the language yourself," he ended sleepily And then the Metropolitan policeman, who knew Smith by sight, wearily took charge of the entourage and led them to the nearest station, where "Alphabet" awoke the next morning on a bench, to his right a smuggler and on his left a cigarette smoking young man who confided the fact that he was unjustly accused of deserting from a Hongkong liner's crew.

They let him go without appearing in court with the motley crew and for the first time in his life Smith dodged around corners to avoid seeing friends. He made his way rapidly toward the bay front. He wanted to lie down on the

grass near the moat of the Walled City and think it over. As he turned down the Luneta by the Government Corral—which even that early in the morning, was the busiest spot in the Islands—a Government buckboard came rattling out of the big gate.

"Hi, Smith," yelled the cheery handler of the reins. "Want to take a ride out to Pasay?"

"You know it," responded "Alphabet," much to his own surprise. "Guess I'll take a little jaunt out there with you and see if I can pick a winner among the morning-glories."

The driver laughed somewhat out of the corner of his mouth as he pulled up to let Billy clamber into the front seat with him. "You'll be going some if you pick a winner out of that bunch of ki-yis they call race horses in these bum Islands," he responded. "They've been getting my coin and I have sworn off on them; no more totalizers and playing a horse to come second for mine. Had to come all the way from 'Frisco to get hep to that bet. Think of it, man, just ponder one fleeting moment. Is that not some strange bet? You play a horse to come second and if he comes first you lose your money. Could you beat that or the Pasay track? Absolutely nevaah. I have quit."

The driver and the buckboard rattled on for a couple of miles and as they drew out into the suburbs around the beach following road, the cool morning breeze from Cavite almost awakened Smith to good spirits again. It is true that he was riding along a road to a place where he did not want to go and had no business in, but the driver seemed to sense the fact and manfully avoided questioning his companion's unkempt appearance. This itself helped a great deal; when you added the salt breeze and a general "hang-over" feeling of "don't care," the morning was not so bad after all.

The fast trotting Government mules had been making good time over the smooth road and they were shortly within view of the race track and the Country Club, so called because "only countrymen were allowed to buck the tiger," within its confines.

"Son, there is some gambling shack," remarked the driver as they came closer to the big nipa building. "They do say as how some awful stacks have melted in there."

"So I have been told," remarked Smith ruminatively. A thought had flashed through his mind which bordered upon inspiration.

"Woagh," he suddenly exclaimed. "Partner, thanks for the lift. Think I'll go in and have breakfast."

The mildly interested but non-inquiring driver stopped his team and Smith scrambled down.

"So along, old timer, beat 'em to death," was the parting adjuration of that worthy. "Giddap."

Smith stopped in the shade of a tree near the fence surrounding the Club House grounds and adjusted his tie and straightened his hair with steady fingers. The breeze and the mighty "hunch" had conspired to brace him up mightily.

Softly humming Rosie Aguinaldo's March, he swung up the steps, sat down at the biggest table and rapped noisily for a waiter.

A kow-tow-ing Chinaman appeared from the silent recesses of the place which had only recently gone to sleep and expressed no surprise whatever at Billy's extravagant appearance or order.

After a very good breakfast indeed, the same being prefaced by two or three nerve steadiers, James Wilberforce DeWitt Kenton Smith straightened up in his chair, lit his cigar, signed his chit, threw the waiter his twenty cents and was at peace with the world. Across the fields he could see the diminutive native ponies taking their morning workout on the track; up in the grandstand were the usual group of trainers and owners who never seemed to be able to realize that their horses could be beaten; Cavite shimmered beautifully across the bay; Mr. Smith felt much better indeed.

Fred Ames, the proprietor of the "Country Club," joined Smith on the porch shortly before noon. The cold eyed gambler sized Billy up quickly.

"Out to try your luck rather early, aren't you?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Have already tried it, Fred, and like the place," replied Smith. "Have you got a job that needs working? I believe I could do very well out here."

Ames, with recollection of the size of the ticket which Smith had just signed, and also remembering the stiff hand of poker which that young gentleman was reputed of being able to play when sober, swallowed his disgust and smiled.

"Yes, I believe I could use a look-out; but he must look out and that's all there is to it. The play's getting pretty heavy out here and we have to keep an eye peeled for bad actors. Sometimes they do not lose very gracefully. You might fit in there."

Then the gambler proceeded to employ the nephew of the Senator from the rock-bound Puritan State which was so proud of its families. The man who was down listened to the gambler who was up and questioned not the strange order of things The Land of the Lotus produces unique conditions. The even voice of the man of chips wound up with "And you must handle them all diplomatically. Treat the winners well and the losers better."

He led Smith off to a room which was to be called his; silently indicated some clean clothes which Smith's unfortunate predecessor (who had intercepted lead) had left behind him; advised him to take a sleep that afternoon and closed the door.

"If not respectable, it beats charity," philosophically commented the scion of Puritans as he curled up on the bed. "Guess this will fool the crowd a little, though. Well, what's the diff?"

And so he entered upon the new night life. Some of the old crowd did see him out there, but their manner did not betray any surprise. In fact they were glad to see him not "on the beach." The feverish scenes of the gambling room, its clicking roulette ball and sing-song dealers, soon became an old story with him. At first he gambled his earnings himself; gradually he became like the young confectionery clerk who could not bear the sight of candy. Drinks did not appeal to him as much as they did; the hot, close, smoke laden atmosphere and unusual life had their inevitable effect. He became disgusted with himself.

One night things were very tame for the usually crowded Club House and Smith kicked himself figuratively for being coward enough not to shake away from the life. The rain was depressingly dismal and steady; he got up from his seat on the porch and strolled into the gambling rooms. Not a player had arrived; the tables were deserted.

"I'll give you a bet," he growled at the roulette wheel guardian. "There's the last five on the black. Go get it."

The dealer smiled sarcastically and spun the ball.

"Big business for the old man when he has to depend on the lookout for a play. Things are sure fast to-night."

"The black she is," he droned. "And the young man says to let his ten beans ride for another of the same color. Good-by, old suit of clothes." The other dealers strolled languidly over to watch the usual course of Smith's downfall, for ever since he had been working in the place his luck had been miserable.

"If it aint the cute little black again," chirped the dasher of hopes. "As I live, the young gentleman says to let the kale ride the same way. This sporting life is fierce."

He gave the ivory ball a tantalizingly long flip, but like gambling devices of all time, there was an end even to the rolling of the uncertain little white globule.

"If it isn't the black again I'm a catfish," remarked the dealer. "Things are looking awfully black to-night."

"Alphabet" reached over for his forty dollars which had grown so quickly from five.

"A correct imitation of a young man cashing in," smiled the dealer. "Alphabet, did you ever try those heavy woolen socks for what ails you?"

Smith flushed angrily. Forty dollars was more than he had been the possessor of since his discharge. The dealer watched him with tantalizing eyes; the others laughed and started to walk off.

"I wonder if it could come up black again?" softly ruminated Smith, who had now become quite calm. "That would mean eighty large liberty heads, if I calculate aright. Suppose we don't cash in."

The dealer smiled at Billy thankfully.

"Young man, you are indeed one who shall some day sleep in the street. Thou art on."

At eleven o'clock at night Fred Ames returned from a poker game in the English Hotel over in Manila and saw his lookout ensconced behind many chips of various colors. The dealer's laugh was no longer mocking. Smith's playing was the center of interest for a big crowd.

"The seventeen, up jumps Satan," sang the dealer. "And I guess that's going some."

He was now calling the despised lookout, "Mr. Smith" and endeavoring to make him drink more. "Alphabet" was surprising even himself by the way he kept sober and lucky. He was easily a thousand dollars ahead of the game.

He leaned far over to make a bet on the corner of the "layout" and as he did noticed a hand steal out from the crowd in a careless sort of fashion and fall upon one of his yellow chips which he had knocked off of the stack when he leaned. Reaching back quickly with his left hand he caught the man's wrist before he could drop the chip and whirled on him angrily.

"You piker," he gritted. "You chip thief; you would, would you?"

The crowd fell back as Smith straightened up and pulled his man toward him.

"Just as I thought," "Alphabet" remarked. "I always knew you were a bad one and this proves it."

The man who had made the disastrous attempt upon Smith's wealth was a Signal Corps private whom he remembered as having driven all over the Walled City one night when he was strangely lonesome. The morning after that particular jollification he awoke shy some twenty dollars that he did not remember having spent.

Smith gazed at the cringing apology for a man with curling lip. "I guess you'd better get out of here real quick, son, before I get angry," he remarked, as he dropped the soldier's arm.

The incident brought him to with a jerk.

"I guess I'll cash in," he remarked. The crowd, which had been drinking steadily upon his bounty, stood and watched the operation of cashing in with that peculiar fascination which seems to hold every loser near the game until its final close.

"Good-by, Colonel Ames; me and your money am going to them United States," he remarked to the proprietor as he stuffed the large wad of money in his pockets.

The hard losing gambler, too angry to reply, spun around on his heel and walked away.

Three mornings afterwards, James Wilberforce DeWitt Kenton Smith awoke in the same police station, only upon this occasion he was flanked on his left by a wife beater and on his right by a gentleman who stoutly maintained that he was the King of Zanzibar. His head felt like lead, his tongue was swollen, his eyes smarted painfully.

Again he was released without the necessity of facing trial; again he plodded for the water front, but this time with a fixed purpose in view. He was half crazy; dim recollections of having started for the Pacific Mail steamer offices, crowded memories of myriads of friends whom he had met; a band that he had tipped, a dinner that he had bought, wine that had flowed. "Old Colonel R. E." never had a man in tenser grip; his poor befoggled head could barely guide his nervous feet, but the one dominant idea was to reach the old pier jutting out from the Luneta. Then he would jump off and end it; the water would at least be cool. He staggered down the palm bordered roadway, sometimes in the sun; his one dominant idea was to reach the pier. Now it was closer; he could see the sea-weed along the water line. He broke into a crazy trot, stumbled, fell, and then—

"Well, Alphabet Smith, you are quite an orator," remarked Captain Billy Haynes of the U. S Quartermaster's Department some two weeks later. "I've heard a lot of them rattle in their fever but you've got them all beaten. How do you feel?"

Smith tried to sit up and found his arms curiously weak. His head felt as if it was detached from his body

"Pretty doggoned good, thank you, this morning," he replied feebly. "How are all the rest of the victims?"

And then the Captain told him how it had happened—how he had been out riding that morning and had seen Smith take the cropper near the water front.

"I figured it was no place for a young man and brought you here to my quarters," he remarked. "Glad I did, because it would have been pretty lonesome without you to listen to. You went some. Had a nurse out every day but she said you were too tough to kill so I guess it's all right."

It took Smith two weeks to recover fully and in that time he had much chance for sober reflection.

"It's a deuced good thing there are some good fellows left in the world," he said to himself one morning. "I never did anything particularly for Haynes, but he's some swell scout."

One night when he was getting stronger the Captain brought him some very good news. He had arranged to have Smith temporarily reinstated in the Civil Service, to be followed by complete restoration if he behaved himself for a year.

"Watch me, Cap," huskily responded the much changed young man. "I got mine and am done."

They shook hands on the compact and left for Batangas Province a week later. There Smith became so crowded with work that he almost forgot the last awful celebration which had come so near ending disastrously. Batangas Province was a very active center for the insurrectos and General Bell was making things hum. New regiments were arriving every month; every detail of their equipment passed at some time or another under Smith's swiftly moving eyes. Captain Haynes was congratulated on all sides for having such a model clerk and few could believe him when he reminded them that the man they envied him the possession of was none other than "Drunken Smith."

The man worked too hard and was losing flesh; his hands trembled and the Captain eyed him one morning rather anxiously. He had come to have quite an affection for this open-natured boy.

"I think we had better a-hunting go," he remarked one morning. "How would you like to take a little hike with the first squadron to-morrow? They'll be out a couple of weeks cleaning up the north end of this bad Province and I want you along."

The next day they started on their long hike and Smith was glad of a chance to get out in the open and away from the hot office tent where he had slaved.

"Guess I needed it all right, Cap," he remarked the third morning out. "This is fine and I am getting to feel better every minute."

"You had better feel better, Alphabet," the Captain rejoined. "They tell me we're going to bump into some hot country up here and we may all need our running legs." He said this with a laugh in which Smith joined him.

"You know I've never been under fire," remarked Haynes soberly. "I have been one of those unfortunate things called an office officer."

"Say, Cap, did you notice that esteemed correspondent attached to troops who is with us? Well, that little snipe has been discharged from the Signal Corps, his time being up last month, and some fool paper has hired him to come down here for them. I caught him trying to grab a yellow chip on me out at Pasay one night."

"You bet I've noticed him," growled Haynes. "It was my extreme pleasure to sit on a court martial which had that young man as its victim about a year ago and I don't know how he ever squeezed out with an honorable discharge. We didn't convict him but all felt certain he was what you say he is. We were trying him along with another batch for selling ammunition."

The squadron marched through the bad end of the Province without a skirmish and the Commanding Officers turned back on their line of march with regret at the tameness of things. When they were about three days out from headquarters Smith strolled out from camp one night, hoping to walk off a peculiar case of "nerves" which had suddenly possessed him. He knew better than to get too far away from the outposts and brought himself up with a jerk when he realized that he was perhaps half of a mile from the nearest guard.

"Wow, I feel bum," he muttered. "Better be beating it back, don't like this bamboo country." He had not gone very far when between him and the camp there suddenly seemed to arise from the

ground a dozen red-shirted little "goo goos." Raising their carbines quickly they fired at the nearest guard. With a peculiar sensation tugging at his throat, Smith saw him crumple up. It didn't seem fair to plug a man with a pot shot. Off to the guard's right he could see men running towards him; in the sudden tropical twilight he could discern welcome khaki uniforms. Suddenly his hair stood on end. In the underbrush between him and the insurrectos there broke out an awful crackling and snapping of boughs. His escape was doubly cut off! Sudden panic overcame him; he took to his heels and ran as he never had before. Ever behind him came that horrible crashing in the bushes. His breath was strangely minus; his lungs felt as if the splitting point was surely reached. Ever behind him was that dreadful noise! He stumbled heavily; gave one despairing yell and crumpled up in a heap as Captain Haynes of the U. S. Quartermaster's Department stumbled over him and flattened out on the ground in a panting heap!

"Alphabet," realizing finally that he was not killed, sat up and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks. But not the Captain—he was miserable.

"My God," was all that he could groan, as he held his head between his hands and rocked back and forth on the ground. Smith stopped laughing and began to argue with the officer. Finally he had him half convinced that he had not done such an awful thing after all; the Captain's self-respect gradually reasserted itself.

"Come on let's get back" said Smith. The two began to trudge silently back towards the firing.

"Stop, I have an idea," said "Alphabet." "Don't ask any questions. Just do as I tell you."

They were within a couple of hundred yards of the camp now.

"Grab me up in your arms and run like hell," said Smith. "You are now going to rescue the wounded man. I cut my leg badly up the road and it is more of a rescue than you think."

Haynes stopped a moment and looked at Smith dazedly. The younger man's will conquered, however, and the officer suddenly reached over and grabbed him up in his arms and ran as directed.

A few scattering shots came their way but the cordon was safely run. Puffing and blowing, by all the good luck in the world, the Captain, who was about all in, staggered and fell over a tent rope which threw the two of them down in a heap directly in front of the Colonel himself!

"What's this?" snapped that old man. "Ye Gods, man," as he gazed at the softly groaning "Alphabet," "did you think enough of him to bring him in from the firing line? Very bad, Captain, we have more clerks than officers. Brave thing, too, damme if 'twasn't."

That night after Smith's "wound" had been dressed, the two sat talking in the Quartermaster's tent.

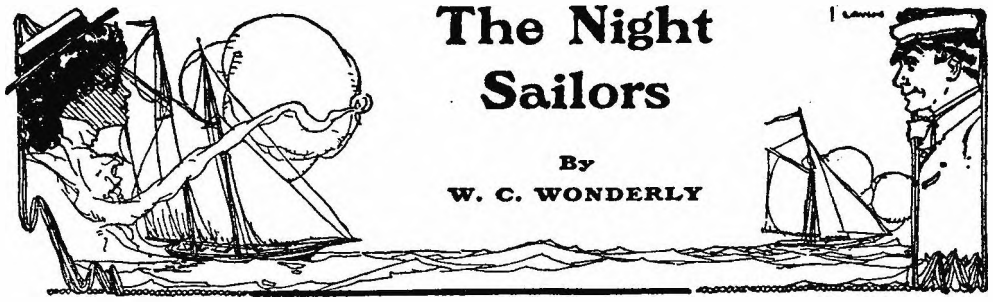
"Cap, here's something I thought you might like to see. I found that little shrimp writing it," and Smith tossed over some crazily scrawled sheets to Haynes, whose face went very grave as he read them.

"Yes, he's as yellow as the chip he tried to steal from me in Pasay. He was going to send that account of the fight to his paper. Believe me, he was the other noise we heard in the bushes back of us when we were coming in. He happened to be there at the wrong time. The account of the fight will be slightly expurgated, however, for I put the fear of the Lord in his soul to-night. He's a fool as well as yellow, for he ought to have waited until he got to Batangas port and wired it in. As it is he thinks I know all about that ammunition steal he was in and will never pipe out loud in meeting about this little Marathon of ours. I am glad you told me about that court martial."

Haynes cleared his throat two or three times before replying. He tossed the crumpled sheets into the mosquito fire and smiled.

"I am sure glad to have met you that morning on the Luneta, oh Alphabet, I sure am."

"Same here, Cap," responded the gentleman with the name as long as his gratitude.



The Night Sailors

By
W. C. WONDERLY

COME along with me, Mac," said Masters suddenly; "I want to try something."

McRae tossed away the end of his Turkish cigarette and faced his companion with watchful, eager eyes.

"What now?" he asked.

"Come, take a walk down here with me," nodded Masters. "I want to prove to myself that an idea which came to me just now, as I stood watching the people go into the Seagirt Hotel there, is not only probable but possible and practical, too. Have you ever noticed, Mac— But, never mind, not here, old man"

He took the other's arm and they moved along down the Boardwalk; well-built, well-groomed, well-mannered men they looked and were. It was mid-August, and Atlantic City was crowded with the height-of-the-season throng. At noon the beach was covered with striped awnings and gay parasols, the breakers were alive with laughing, shouting people. Along the Boardwalk the shops beckoned with their tempting display; on the piers the bands allured with the newest Viennese waltzes, the man with the ice-cream cones, the persistent photographers, the *boutonnière* venders, the lace-makers, the sand artists, the post-card boys—all the hundred and one things and persons that help to make gay the playground of a nation, were abroad to-day. Everything and everybody was wonderfully alive!

"There are a million people boxed in these hotels and boarding-houses at this minute," said Masters quietly.

"By George, it looks as if they were all of them empty at this minute," laughed McRae. "Everybody's out of doors this morning."

"Yes," nodded Masters; "and at midnight they'll be asleep in bed."

They strolled on past Steeplechase, and down into the heart of the Boardwalk, where the big, beach-front hotels stand proudly facing the sunlit ocean. Once McRae stopped an Italian woman and bought a *boutonnière* of lilies-of-the-valley, Masters watching him impatiently and refusing one for his own coat.

"Heavens, no," he said. "This is business, not a social call, Mac."

"Well, I didn't know, I'm sure," returned McRae cheerfully. "You haven't taken me into your confidence, my friend."

"No," answered Masters; "but I will. Here, in the Roxburghe!"

If McRae felt any surprise no one could have told it from looking at his face. That he was surprised, Masters knew, but he kept up a running fire of light conversation and followed the older man into the lobby of the hotel without the quiver of an eye-lash. Masters admired him for it, but there was no time now for compliments.

Still talking, they strolled leisurely through the magnificent lobby with its marble columns, music balcony and scores of liveried attendants. Guests were lounging in chairs, walking, gossiping, flirting. Directly in front of the desk with its dozen clerks the two men went, still talking, observing all things and persons with seemingly unobserving eyes. No one spoke to them; none stopped them. Straight to the elevators they walked, and, entering one of the

cages, they were whisked to the seventh floor. For several minutes they waited in the corridor, here; then Masters nodded to McRae and they entered another car and were carried down to the first floor again. Still talking, they strolled through the luxurious lobby and out in the salt air and sunshine of the Boardwalk.

"Well?" flashed McRae, as they mingled in the crowd again.

"Never mind," cautioned Masters. "Here, we'll try the Royal Edward."

Again they entered the spacious lobby of a big hotel and walked through to the elevators, unmolested. Up to the fifth floor this time, out, down again, and then back through the lobby to the Boardwalk.

"Are we doing this for our health?" asked McRae, but only half-humorously albeit he smiled. "For heaven's sake, man—"

"*No,*" replied Masters. "Now the Oceanvue—and watch me for every cue. Come along, old fellow."

The Oceanvue was a smaller but rather smarter house than the other two, and the lobby was neither so large nor so crowded. Several attendants, at the doors, came forward as the two men entered, but they kept straight on, still laughing and talking, to the desk.

A clerk came to them as they stopped.

"Have you a garage in back of this hotel?" Masters asked.

"Yes, sir," came the answer.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Masters, triumphantly turning to McRae. "Didn't I say so? They make a most infernal noise there early in the morning," he added, to the clerk. "Kept me awake from five o'clock on, I should say."

"I'm sorry, sir," returned the man. "I'll see if something can't be done, sir."

"Thanks," nodded Masters, "I'll appreciate it," and he turned with McRae and together they went towards the elevators.

Fifteen minutes later they were out on the Boardwalk again. The beach was deserted; the crowd had thinned. It was one o'clock.

McRae moistened his lips.

"For goodness sake, Masters, what's all this in-and-out-of-hotels business about?" he burst forth. "What's in the wind? What are we going to do now? Bless me, if I can get the hang of what you are up to!"

"Hope not," smiled Masters.

"Well, what is it?" frowned McRae.

Masters consulted his watch.

"We are to meet Isabel at half-past at the Little Crown—had you forgotten?" he said. "We've just time to make it, if we put our best foot forward. At luncheon I'll tell you both together what 'my latest' is, Mac. There's a cool million in it, boy."

"Maybe," returned McRae, but without enthusiasm. "Do you know," he added, presently, "it seems to me that Isabel had better be kept out of this if it's—it's left handed, Masters?"

Masters gave way to a short laugh. For a second neither man spoke but walked on, side by side, up the Boardwalk toward the Little Crown tea-room out at the Inlet end of the city. The sun was boiling hot. There was no breeze. Few persons were aboard.

"We'll have a storm to-night or I miss my guess," said McRae, after a short silence.

"I hope not," returned Masters quickly.

McRae looked at him but said nothing.

"Because," added Masters, "to-night the Night Sailors clear out with the cool million."

"Well, it sounds all right to me," said McRae; "although I must own I know little or nothing of your—of the Night Sailors' plans. Still, I'm game. You—they can count on me. But Isabel—it's terrible!"

Masters stopped short right there on the Boardwalk, and catching the other by the shoulders, swung him around until they faced each other.

"Mac, old fellow," he said, "now I want you to fully understand one thing. And don't forget. I love you and Isabel better than any two things in God's great world; Isabel's my sister; you're my pal—the best fellow that walks the path of life—white, honest. I know you love Isabel, and Mac, I'm glad as glad can be; but none of us are children—not even she. Don't you be an old wo-

man, Mac. Of course, there's a risk in this as there has been in everything we've undertaken, but we'll get away with it; we've got to! My plan is to rob Atlantic City to-night—just you and Isabel and myself. We can—we three! The whole city, or all the big hotels where the money is. I've figured it out—and I'm good at figuring, Mac. Do you remember when we were standing there on the Boardwalk in front of the Seagirt?"

"Yes," nodded McRae, listening closely.

"Well, there was a bunch of people going in and coming out of that hotel while we stood there, opposite," explained Masters. "And I figured out that more than half of them couldn't be living there. House is too small. But they're always coming and going, and the clerks and the attendants can't know them all. This is even more true of the larger places like the Roxburghe and the Royal Edward. Hundreds of people enter these hotels every day and even get upstairs, who have no right in them at all. We did. At the Oceanvue I went up and spoke to the clerk. He didn't know I wasn't a guest there, and apologized for a garage I hadn't known existed. Mac, we can walk in these hotels to-night and carry away what we will."

"Of course, we can," returned McRae, but with an indifference that Masters could not help but notice.

"What is it? Out with it!" he cried.

"Oh—it's Isabel, of course," said McRae doggedly. "She may be your sister, but, hang it, Masters, she's my *all!* If anything should happen to her—"

"Nothing will," snapped Masters.

"You promised she should never sail with us again."

"She likes it."

"A child likes the fire," said McRae crossly. "I'm not afraid for myself—you know that surely, but I'm like a mother hen with a duckling when I see Isabel get ready to sail with us. When we are married—"

The other smiled indulgently and raised a hand to still the young man's speech.

"If this deal brings us as much as I hope, there is no reason why you and Isabel shouldn't be married right away," emphasized Masters. "Then Italy or Utopia for you, and a mountain-cabin and a trout-stream for me. Each man to his own liking, Mac. Understand, if we get our million we sail to-night for the last time."

McRae was about to reply, when Masters held up a cautioning hand. Directly in front of them, facing the ocean, was the little tea-room, and standing at the door, bareheaded and shading her eyes from the sun with her hands, was Isabel. She gave the men a gay "halloo!" when she saw them, and stepped out on the Boardwalk to meet them.

She was a pretty girl—to Mac the loveliest in the wide world—with brown hair and blue eyes and well-tanned cheeks and neck. She gave a hand to each of the men and led the way into the little shop.

There were no customers nor had there been any during the two days of its existence. Situated at the Inlet end of the Boardwalk, a small, rough shanty, the Little Crown English Tea-room seemed hopelessly lost and out of place. Why Isabel had rented it, only she and the two men knew. It served its purpose, however, and proved an admirable rendezvous, and she was well satisfied when no ladies came in at five o'clock. Indeed it is doubtful if they could have been served with tea if they did put in an appearance.

Now the three sat around a small table on which Isabel had placed a luncheon bought from a nearby boarding-house. Outside it was sizzling hot and there seemed little likelihood of anybody coming to disturb their meal and conversation

Masters explained the scheme to his sister.

"It's so ridiculously easy that's it like taking candy from a baby," he cried enthusiastically. "Why in three hours—not more—we can have our hands on everything in sight! We'll take the Roxburghe, the Royal Edward, the Oceanvue, the Mount Alto, Greystone Hall—you, the Roxburghe, Isabel; Mac the Edward and the Oceanvue; and I'll look after the others. Walk right in and up to the safe. Each of us will be armed.

So will the night-clerk and the watchman? True, but they'll be frightened to death or I miss my guess. Why, they'll never *dream* of one man, single-handed, attempting to rob a hotel-safe! And a fellow can walk right in a hotel-lobby, up to the desk, and be down the clerk's throat, with a pistol at his head, before he can touch a telephone or a burglar-alarm! And speaking of telephones and burglar-alarms, I'm going to cut the wires at the electric-plant. This means that every hotel in the place that hasn't its own plant will be plunged into darkness. But the Night Sailors have no fear of the dark, eh?"

"No, no!" cried Isabel, her face flushed with excitement.

"Look here," said McRae, "you surely don't mean for Isabel to go alone to the Roxburghe! Why, man, you're crazy! I wont permit it! The Roxburghe is a very big house and there are sure to be several men in the office all night. Masters, you can't be serious!"

"Have you forgotten Isabel's part in the steamship *Princess Maria* affair?" asked Masters quietly.

"No, but—" hesitated McRae. "Oh—you know. Then Isabel wasn't—wasn't what she is now to me. Oh, laugh if you like—"

"We're not," snapped Masters. And then *sotto voce:* "H'm, the young idiot!"

But Isabel came quickly around the table, and kissed Mac lightly upon the forehead.

"Dear, we are not laughing—oh, never!" she said. "Why your love for me is the greatest thing in my life, Frank. It is wonderful! Often I wake up in the night and think of you and wonder what I have done, what I am, to deserve it. I love you, and so does Jim. I am his sister; he wouldn't let me go straight into danger, would he?"

"It is dangerous," said McRae, still only half willing that she should go.

"Everything is dangerous," spoke up Masters. "We can't handle all these hotels by ourselves, Mac. Otherwise I wouldn't let Isabel go with us. But it seems to me that just the Roxburghe—you ought to be able to handle that, Sis."

She nodded cheerfully. "Surely," she said. "Now don't be ugly, Frank; I want to go to-night. Why it's the last time the Night Sailors will set out, Jim says!"

"No, but it isn't," returned McRae. "It's always the last time, but that time will only be when one or more of us—is gone. I know. I wouldn't care if it were only you and I, Masters. I love the life, and the excitement it brings. Every time we set sail I feel the blood tingle, my heart beat, with the joy of what is before us. I love it, but I love Isabel more. And I feel like an old woman—h'm, worse than that! Perhaps it's my nerves, although I've always believed I hadn't any. Don't look bad, do I? Well—If it really is the last time, Masters—"

"It is," he nodded.

"Then I may go, eh?" cried Isabel. "Why, Frank, I'm a woman and I'm not half so afraid for you as you are for me. If I were, what a miserable life I should live! Heigho, it's after two o'clock. What next, Jimmy?"

He told them briefly what was required, why he thought this way best, and how he had figured out the entire scheme. It sounded simple enough, so simple indeed, that when he had finished Isabel asked if "that was all." It was, in truth, the very simpleness of the thing that had impressed Masters so at first. No one would ever think of such a thing because it was "too easy." This was why three persons could rob six or more hotels in a few hours and make their escape before the authorities had fully grasped the situation. Too easy!

"The Night Sailor will be at the Inlet, waiting. We will all meet there at half past four, ready to sail away in her," explained Masters finally. "No matter where each one of us is, what we are doing, or why, we must leave and hurry to the yacht by four-thirty Understand, Mac?—Isabel? Be there at four-thirty. If I am not there you two go—set sail at that hour. This is an ironclad rule, remember! Right out to sea; there are provisions aboard for two weeks. We'll run down the coast and try to make the Indies. When the authorities wake up they'll watch New York and Boston. Now remember, the Inlet at four-thirty."

It was now nearly four o'clock in the afternoon and they had been talking for over two hours. Everything was settled. They were to meet at the Steel Pier at one o'clock in the morning. This would give them three hours and a half to work in, and Masters declared they would have time to spare before they met the Night Sailor at the Inlet. Indeed both Isabel and McRae had caught something of his enthusiasm, for the three parted in the best possible spirits. Even Mac had come to see it as "mere child's play," and indeed, remembering some of the Night Sailors' other expeditions it was like "taking candy from a baby," as Masters put it. The excitement, the very bigness of the idea, had entered their blood and not a one of them could have hung back now if he had tried.

That afternoon Isabel slipped out on the pier near the Little Crown tea-room, and sat in a rocking-chair reading "Mr. Chambers." She looked so very like the hundred other young girls who sat near her reading the very same book in very similar chairs, that nobody thought to give her a second glance. When finally she turned the last page, and closed the book with a sigh of satisfaction, it was six o'clock, and the pier was almost deserted. Back in the tea-room she closed the doors, ate a light supper, and then threw herself on a sofa. The alarm-clock was set for twelve-thirty in case she fell asleep.

It began to rain during the evening, a severe but brief thunder-storm such as McRae had predicted early in the afternoon. It churned the sea more than Masters liked for the sake of the yacht, but by nine the rain was over and the water promised to be calm by four o'clock. This meant a great deal more than Masters guessed as he sat on the pier and smoked, enjoying the band the while. Of course he was thinking about the night and what it would bring forth. As he watched the long stretch of brilliantly lighted hotels on the shore, he smiled quietly to himself. What a surprise, what a consternation in the morning! If the papers could only know that three persons, and one of them a young girl, had carried out the most daring robbery of the century, what a time there would be then! But this, of course, they must not know. It would only be another of those mysterious visits of the Night Sailors and the havoc which followed in their wake.

A little after ten, Masters left the pier. Isabel was then fast asleep in the Little Crown tea-room, and McRae was trying to rest in his mean little boarding-house on Michigan Avenue. Only Masters was up and doing, but since the scheme was his, he felt the responsibility, and he couldn't go back to his hotel and remain quiet. But he was neither nervous nor doubtful of success, as he set out for the city power and electric plant.

The rain did one thing for them—it sent the people to bed early that night. The storm had broken just after dinner and thereby upset all theatre-plans and pier-parties. Even after the shower the Boardwalk was too wet for walking, and too damp for chairs. It was too late for the piers and theatres, and those who did not patronize the grills in their own hotels went to their rooms early after a tiresome evening at cards. At midnight everything was hushed and quiet. The city seemed asleep to Masters as he strolled back from his electric-plant.

He waited an hour more in one of the pavilions along the Boardwalk before, at one o'clock, he stopped in front of the Steel Pier. The Boardwalk was dark but for the arc-lights. The festoons of lamps across the street were out two hours ago.

As Masters stopped, the figure of a girl in a dark blue dress came out of the shadow of a shop-door, and joined him.

"Where's Mac?" asked he.

"I guess he's not here yet, but—yes, here he is now!"

Isabel pointed to McRae who, in evening-clothes, as was Masters, came hurrying up the Boardwalk from the direction of his lodging-house.

"Not late?" he asked.

"No," said Masters shortly. "But come, now; no time for idle talk!"

They walked down the Boardwalk, keeping well in the shadow, to where the larger and more important hotels were grouped, facing the ocean, and buried in sleep.

"Now, Isabel, you the Roxburghe;

Mac, you the Royal Edward and the Oceanvue; and me for the Mount Alto and Greystone Hall," said Masters, as they drew near the first of the hotels. "Wait—one fifteen yet? Well, at that minute I have arranged so that the entire electric-plant will fail to do its work properly. The city will be thrown into darkness except for those places that have their own plants. I don't know for how long, so make hay while the lights are out. It's likely they will be repaired in an hour at most. Got your gun, Isabel? And flash-lamp? Good! Now—there! Good luck, old girl."

Neither Masters nor McRae stopped to watch her as she hurried silently up the steps to the broad piazza of the hotel. Masters was already at the Mount Alto. McRae could see the lights in the office of the Royal Edward. Each was for himself.

Quickly Isabel crossed the porch and entered the beautiful marble lobby of the Roxburghe. She was quite calm and enjoying the moment to its utmost. She had her pistol, and she never forgot that she was young and pretty and a woman. Often she would laugh and tell the men that they worked at a disadvantage beside her, because of her sex.

At first the lobby seemed to be empty. Then she could make out in the half-light the forms of two negro porters sleeping in the beautiful rocking-chairs where the old dowagers held court during the daytime. And at the office-desk two men, white, quite young, about twenty-four, perhaps, and most harmless-looking, were playing a game of craps on the hotel-register. Isabel almost laughed.

She walked noiselessly past the two sleeping negroes, pulling her thick, blue veil over her face as she went, and stopped before the astonished gamesters at the desk.

"Is the safe open?" she asked quietly.

The two gamesters turned and faced her open-eyed, open-mouthed, speechless. Neither moved an inch when they saw the little pearl and silver revolver in her hand. They were very young, very correct in dress and manners, and they looked just what they most likely were, college youths. The idea of leaving them in care of a safe filled with valuables and money, the only waking persons in a house of five hundred men and women, struck Isabel as being almost ludicrous. True, there within reaching distance, was the alarm. Simply by laying a finger on it the entire servants' quarter could be aroused. Yes, and the telephone stood at the blond young man's elbow.

Perhaps he remembered this, for he reached out and had almost unhooked the receiver when Isabel called a halt, sharply.

"Don't!" she said, fondling her pistol with loving touch. "No, don't!"

"What—what do you want, madam?" began the other young man in his best desk-manner but in a none too steady voice.

"I want you to sit down in that chair there with your hands folded in your lap," said Isabel quietly. "I want your companion to go open the safe and give me the box with the guests' valuables and the tray of money which didn't go to the bank this afternoon. Now, you might as well do this, and do it right away. I have confederates outside, within calling distance, and if either of you make the slightest move, I will shoot to kill! I don't want to use violence, remember, but I will. I have nothing to lose—not even time. Now, you open the safe and hand me the boxes, and you sit down quietly and wait until it is over with. Then you can continue your game."

"We—can't do this," spoke up the blond man. "We will never open the safe to you, never."

"It contains nothing of value anyway," put in the other weakly. "All the money was deposited; we deposit every day, and the jewels and valuables are kept in another—place. That's the truth."

"Then give me the two empty boxes in the safe," said Isabel. "Quickly—I wont wait! If you refuse I will call my friends. You may alarm the hotel, true, but you will be dead before help arrives. Come now, open the safe—I cannot wait!"

"I think perhaps, you are—ill, madam," hazarded the blond young man. "Harry, if you will get the lady a glass of water—"

Isabel smiled, for she rather admired their courage, and they must have seen

by this time that they hadn't even a fighting chance against her silver and pearl toy.

"Thanks, I'm not ill, and I'll wait until I leave the Roxburghe for my water," she said. "Don't go, Harry. Instead you sit down there, and you, please, Mr.—? Oh, well, never mind the name—you, open the safe and hand me the strong-boxes—the empty strong-boxes, yes. Ready now, one, two, three—"

Harry made a little gesture of despair and sank into a chair; with an oath the blond young man set to work to open the safe. Isabel waited, outwardly calm, with her pistol carefully poised. The very air seemed charged with the dramatic intensity of the moment.

Then the man at the safe lifted out an ordinary tin box and passed it over to his companion. Isabel put out her hand for it, and Harry, in turn, gave it to her.

"The other please, quickly now!" she said.

Again the blond man reached in the safe and brought out a tin box. This he likewise passed to his companion, but when Isabel reached to take it from him, the blond man shook his head.

"Not that, here's the other one," he said quickly. "You keep that, Harry."

He brought out yet a third box, and held this one himself for Isabel to take. Instinctively she felt that something was wrong; for a second she hesitated and her breath came irregularly. Something told her that the next move would either make or mar the situation, and though the blond man raised the lid of his box disclosing a series of velvet jewel-cases to her view, she felt that she must not for a second lose sight of Harry and the tin box he held on his lap.

Only a second she hesitated; then she fired. The bullet lodged in Harry's wrist and his box slipped to the floor with a crashing sound. And she breathed more freely as the cover fell from the box and she saw inside a new revolver. The blond man reached for it the very moment she did, but Isabel caught at it savagely and turning her own on him, kept him at a distance.

"Don't move! not a sound!" she cried warningly, but the report of the gun and the crashing of the tin box to the floor, had awakened the sleeping negroes. They stood up, stretched, and one of them started toward her.

"Stay where you are!" Isabel cried, and her tone made the fellow hesitate.

She turned to the two clerks. Harry's wrist was bleeding freely.

"I'm sorry, but I warned you," she said. "It's only a scratch, but it must be attended to at once. We can't stay here this way all night or you will bleed to death. A physician can fix you comfortably in a moment. Therefore I am going to ask you two men to go in the next room, close the door and remain there ten minutes. When you come out, you may alarm the hotel, set detectives on my trail, or what you will. Only go in that room, please!"

The blond man cast one glance in the direction she indicated with a sweep of her hand. It was a box-like place six feet square, and with only one outlet, the door leading into the lobby. Still—he looked at Harry and hesitated.

"Old man," he began, "we'd better—"

"Wot's de mattah here, Mistah Pennell?" interrupted a voice. "Anybody sick—"

One of the negroes had come up from behind Isabel; the other was still standing rooted to the spot, open-mouthed, staring, where she had halted him.

A little cry escaped her—she could not help it. She was caught. Then—the lobby was plunged into sudden darkness. She turned, stumbled against a chair bruising her head, dropped her own revolver, and fled from the place. In her arm she still clutched tightly the one tin box.

Twice she slipped, once falling down full length and dropping the box. But she kept on, silently, swiftly, feeling with her hands against chair-backs and marble columns. The four men were shouting and calling to each other now. She heard one of them swear when he found the alarm had refused to respond. One of the negroes was yelling for the police—she knew it was not a white man by his accent. Still she kept on through the spacious marble lobby, groping her way in the inky blackness of the place. Then she smelled the salt

air, fell down two short steps, and knew she was safely out on the porch. At the same moment McRae's voice sounded in her ear.

"Here! Isabel!"

She put out her hand and he caught it, half leading, half dragging her down the steps of the hotel to the Boardwalk. Here again was darkness, for even the arc-lights were out.

Holding her tightly by the hand McRae began to run down the Boardwalk, but even as they went the people began to pour out from the hotels, talking, laughing, crying, shouting, whistling, cursing. No one knew just what to make of the situation, and accordingly different persons accepted it in different ways.

"Here! Up!" whispered McRae suddenly.

Isabel felt herself lifted over a railing. Mac followed her. Again they started to run—again along the Boardwalk she thought, until a moment later, she saw that they were on one of the piers that at this point stretched far out into the ocean.

"Oh, not like rats in a trap!" she gasped.

"Yes," he answered. "Little can be done back there until daylight, and if the worst comes, and we don't want to be taken alive, why—"

"Oh, it's been a horrible night," she moaned. "I think I never want to sail again Frank. I—I shot a man!"

"I saw you do it," he told her. "I had no gun myself—lost it at the Royal Edward. Yes, I had a little trouble there, but I have something to show for my work. But I was thinking of you, and when the lights didn't go out in the Roxburghe at the time appointed, I became frightened."

"But the lights went out!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; I cut the current myself," he nodded. "The Roxburghe has its own plant, and when the city-plant's lights failed, the ones in the Roxburghe kept burning. I fixed them—just in time, too."

"Yes, you did," she said. "Oh, Frank, if we get out of this to-night, never, never again for me! Yes, I've said that before, but now I mean it. We'll go away—anywhere—and forget the Night Sailors as completely as if they were only an ugly dream."

"Indeed we will," echoed McRae. "Little girl, we will, and we'll get out of this hole, too. We must!"

They sat there at the far end of the pier, huddled close together, talking and planning for their future. Once Mac tore off his coat and put it around Isabel's shoulders. The contents of the tin box he had placed in the belt he wore around his waist. There were money and jewels and he had got more from the Royal Edward and the Oceanvue, but they didn't stop to count their booty then. Suddenly he caught her arm.

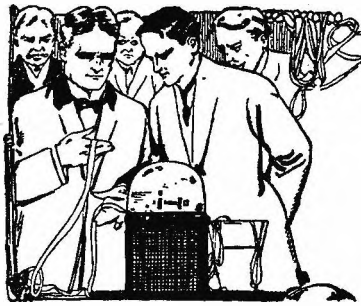
"Look!" he said hoarsely. "Look!"

She followed his quivering finger. The mast-lights of a boat were passing along out at sea, perhaps a hundred yards from the pier.

"Isabel," he said, "that's the Night Sailor—it's Masters! Look at my watch—he has not found us at the Inlet, and he has set sail alone. Give me my signal whistle from my coat pocket! Quick—so—!"

He caught the thing and putting it between his lips, whistled shrilly out across the water. A second, a minute. He whistled again. Another agonizing silence, then—an answering call! It was Masters! Seemingly he had grasped the situation, for the yacht swung closer and closer to the pier. When it was fifty feet away, Mac spoke to the girl beside him.

"Come, jump, we'll have to swim!" he said. "Masters can come no further—it is not safe. But we can make the yacht easily. Thank God, Isabel, that we're nearly through with the Night Sailors!"



The Mistake that Drager Made

By
MORTIMER CARLETON

DRAGER'S first thought, as he scrambled out of the laurel which had broken his fall, was of Vera. He found her, conscious but dazed, just clear of the car.

"Hurt, Miss Bardon?" he questioned, lifting her to her feet.

"N—no," she responded, and steadied herself against the slant of the tonneau. "Help father!"

Roger Bardon reclined ungracefully in the dust. He too was conscious—vociferously so.

"I forgot you were along, Vera," he apologized, blinking at his daughter through one begrimed eye and holding his handkerchief to the other. "Of all the infernal luck! Wires down—car smashed—and Coyne's brokers raising particular h—hob with the market!"

He leaned heavily on Drager's shoulder.

"What in—what happened, anyway? I can't see. Something in my eye."

"Let me look, father."

For one excruciating moment Bardon submitted the injured orb to a hurried examination. The upper lid was bruised and bleeding.

"We must get you to the brook," Drager decided.

"Vera can patch me up," Bardon objected. "Look the car over, Guilbert. We're losing valuable time."

While Miss Bardon guided her father down the road to the brook, Drager turned to the car. The front axle had snapped close to the hub of the left wheel. He wiped off the dirt and grease and studied the fracture dubiously.

"Cut!" he exclaimed. "More of Coyne's work. Cut just enough to cause a breakdown. The consummate scoundrel!"

He considered this villainy until his sharp, impulsive wrath dwindled to a deliberate resentment and he became aware that his pulse was throbbing painfully. The car, the dusty road, the silent woods where the laurel gleamed pink and white, seemed curiously remote—as if they were of another world. The fever was coursing his veins again. Yet his mind remained extraordinarily clear.

"Miss Bardon!" he called. "I'm going back for the other car. Wait here for me."

He set out briskly, heedless of the dust and the mounting sun. Half an hour later he paused thoughtfully at the junction of the drive from Coyne's grounds and that from Donbilt, the Bardon's summer home.

"The scoundrel cut our wires," Drager reasoned, "and then contrived the broken axle to prevent our reaching the station 'phone in a hurry. Such overwhelming favors demand immediate reciprocation."

Selecting two stones from the roadside, he proceeded up Coyne's drive. He knew and loved every foot of the land he was traversing. Deepwood had once belonged to the Dragers. Guilbert Drager himself, after prolonged architectural studies abroad, had drawn the plans for the house, garage, electric-plant, and stables, and the execution of these plans had been the last great pleasure his father and mother enjoyed

together. From the house-warming William Drager and his wife had gone forth to preside at the formal opening of the new "cut-off" on the mountain division of the Atlantic & Eastern Railroad. A speeding train, a broken rail—and Guilbert Drager was left desolate amid the newness of Deepwood. Shortly after this tragedy, Wall Street had experienced a brief but violent storm in the course of which Macey Coyne had indubitably possessed himself of the Atlantic & Eastern, thereby maiming the railroad system and shattering the fortune which William Drager had built up.

"I warned your father, Guilbert," Roger Bardon had explained when Coyne brazenly made Deepwood his residence. "Coyne hit us hard when we weren't ready for him. Your father tied up too much hard cash in concrete and granite. Those plans of yours, lad, came high. You'd better drop architecture and learn a little banking. I'll take you on as my secretary, and in another year or two you and I will give Coyne a dose of his own medicine."

In Drager's phrase, Macey Coyne was a hulking buccaneer disguised as a gentleman. Big, agile, blandly unscrupulous, with the eyes of a hawk and the smile of a cherub, he sailed the financial sea, swooping upon ill-protected treasure-ships and exacting ransom of their captains. And this he did, not seriously as one impelled by overweening ambition, but lightly as one in search of new diversions. Drager believed that Coyne could cut a man's throat and smile during the operation. He probably smiled when he employed some one to saw half through the axle of Roger Bardon's best motor car, and again when he hired some one to cut Roger Bardon's private wires from Donbilt to New York.

Such favors, however, may be reciprocated. Upon this assumption Drager proceeded expeditiously to the spot where Coyne's private wires could most conveniently be severed. A quarter of a mile from the junction of the Deepwood and the Donbilt roads, Coyne's drive made a detour in passing the falls in Deepwood glen. But his telephone wires ascended directly through the woods by a precipitous path which the linemen had cut.

Quite deliberately Drager entered the path, keeping his eyes on the trees from which the wires were strung, until he came to a smooth, young chestnut. Up this he climbed high enough to reach the wires. Then, winding one leg about the trunk, he drew from his pockets the stones he had picked up, and very carefully hammered the wires between them until they snapped.

"I wish I could hear Coyne's acknowledgments of this favor," he said to himself, as he surveyed his work. "It's cost me a pretty headache."

Despite his feverish condition he hurried through the woods to Donbilt. When he reached the lawn, he found Felix, Mr. Bardon's valet, watching one of the gardeners weeding Vera Bardon's flowers.

"Tell Edwards to get me the little car, Felix," Drager ordered. "And he'll have to go down to Elder brook with the truck team. Axle's broken on the big car."

Felix sped shadowlike.

"Wooden sort of chap. No feelings at all," Drager inwardly commented when the valet reappeared with the car. "But very efficient. And intelligent."

"Shall I go, sir? You're looking a bit shaken, sir."

"Eh?" said Drager, surprised. "Shaken? No, Felix, I'm simply thoughtful."

Felix got out, and Drager drove off, his fever-ridden mind toying whimsically with the valet's show of feeling. Perhaps Felix harbored the fugitive sympathy that one underling has for another. Possibly, wooden though he seemed to be, he had once aspired to the hand of a damsel far removed, and so had detected in Drager's bosom similar aspirations which Drager had been vainly trying to stifle from the moment he became Roger Bardon's private secretary.

When Drager arrived at the scene of the accident, the disabled car had been dragged to one side of the road, and Bardon and his daughter were waiting.

"Mr. Coyne happened to pass," Vera explained in her serene manner—the

manner, so it seemed to Drager, of a slim, brown-eyed, wholly adorable angel unaware of the earthly havoc she works when she gazes from the parapet of heaven.

"The whelp swaddled my eye," Roger Bardon confessed, indicating the fresh handkerchief that encircled his head.

"Mr. Coyne was most solicitous," Vera added. "He offered to wire for Dr. McInroy, and he will have the telegraph people repair our wires when they come to fix his. His wires are down, too."

"I hope his brokers are as much at sea as ours are," said her father, ungratefully. "But he acted da—dashed confident when he went on. He's won the first move all right. We may as well go home."

Drager was not at all surprised at Coyne's confidence. If his own reading of the situation were correct, Coyne had every reason to feel confident. Bardon & Company, the Continental Railway bankers, had consistently refused to buy back at Coyne's price the Atlantic & Eastern. Necessary as that road was to the Continental system, Roged Bardon did not relish paying an exorbitant sum for it to the man who had snatched it out of William Drager's stricken hands with exactly this end in view. He preferred to try to catch Coyne in a declining market, and for the past week Sand, his broker, had been selling stocks freely, especially stocks in which Coyne was known to be heavily interested. This manœuvre had caused declines under cover of which Sand was about to begin buying Atlantic & Eastern. Coyne, however, had evidently been on his guard, for Atlantic & Eastern stock had suddenly started upward and for two days had held its advance. And then Coyne had cut Bardon's wires.

To Drager it was all clear enough. Coyne knew that Bardon was planning to purchase control of the Atlantic & Eastern in the open market. Besides Drager, only Vera Bardon was in her father's counsel. Sand, to be sure, might have guessed Bardon's purpose, but he was too old and experienced a broker to act upon mere surmise. It followed, then, that Vera had betrayed the secret. Not deliberately—ah, no! Drager fondly held her incapable of such baseness. She had revealed the plan quite inadvertently—as a girl very naturally might when a bland buccaneer like Coyne with a taste for barbaric shirts and a recklessly gallant manner succumbs violently to her charms!

As an affluent friend and neighbor, Drager would not have hesitated to warn Vera against Coyne's cherubic smile and guileful speech. But as a more or less impecunious dependent in her father's house, he could only stand aside—like Felix, a mute nonentity.

This attitude, however, was not an admission of defeat. Though Drager could say nothing to Roger Bardon of his analysis of the situation, he felt free to pit himself single-handed against the enemy. And he began by accompanying his employer from the motor car to his room, ostensibly to assist the injured banker in removing his begrimed clothing.

"My eyes ache like h—hen's teeth!" Bardon complained irritably. "Where's that idiot Felix?"

"Here, sir," said the valet from the doorway. "Your clean things, sir, are laid out on the bed."

"Why in—why don't you make a noise once in a while like an ordinary human?" the banker fumed. "If you weren't such a handy jackass, Felix, I'd twist your neck—just to hear you yell."

"Get Mr. Bardon some fresh bandages, Felix," Drager ordered.

Felix vanished.

"What shall you do about the A. & E?" Drager whispered.

His employer indulged in a lurid expletive.

"Swearing's an awful habit," he apologized. "But it's da—demned satisfying. When I got married, my wife tried to break me of it, and Vera's tried, and I've tried. But I began as the cussing banker, and I suppose I'll end cussing."

He adjusted the handkerchief over his eye.

"Coyne can go to h—Hoboken with his old A. & E. and every other d—

demented road in the country. I'm done up, Guilbert."

"Leave it to me, Mr. Bardon," Drager eagerly seized his opening. "I'll go down to the station myself to meet Dr. McInroy, and while I'm waiting, I'll get Sand on long-distance and—"

"Your fresh bandages, sir," said Felix, appearing wraith-like from nowhere.

Bardon submitted to the valet's skilled fingers.

"Shall I go ahead?" Drager asked.

The banker grimaced painfully, then nodded assent. And Drager walked dizzily away, planning trouble for Coyne.

At the head of the stairs he met Vera. She was dressed in soft, clinging white, and to Drager's fevered gaze she seemed, in her cool slim beauty, a beatific vision. Her dark eyes, inscrutable as a mountain tarn, gravely studied him, and he furtively clenched his fists to steady himself.

"You look overwrought, Guilbert," she said. "You're not worrying over the break in our wires?"

"No," Drager disclaimed. "Sand will know what to do."

"Mr. Coyne is no better off," she suggested.

Drager's fingers sank deeper into his palms.

"Coyne has two eyes," he said slowly, with quiet penetration. "And a motor car with sound axles. And an underground source of information. He's that much better off."

She faced him blankly. Then, as his meaning flashed upon her, the color surged in her dusky cheeks, rose-red, rich, glowing.

"Guilbert!" she protested. "Guilbert!"

As if there were nothing more to be said, she turned and left him.

Drager stared after her. The hall seemed very dark.

"It's true, then," he muttered. "It's true!"

He swayed. and drew his hand across his eyes. But the urgency of his message to Sand made self-mastery imperative.

"Felix!" he called.

The valet stood before him.

"Has Edwards dragged in the big car?"

"Ten minutes ago, sir."

"Tell him he's to take me to the railroad station."

Drager entered his own room, bathed, and put on clean raiment. The cold shower cooled his burning skin, though it quickened the throbbing across his temples.

He sought the veranda. From the driveway to the east of the house came the drumming of a motor, and expectant of Edwards, Drager turned in that direction.

But on rounding the corner, he recognized Macey Coyne's low-hung, eighty-horse monster. Beneath a mountain ash near the drive Coyne himself, in a barbaric pink shirt and white flannels, was seated worshipfully beside Vera Bardon.

"You men!" Vera was saying. "Forever at each other's throats. Why can't you be content, Mr. Coyne, with your present achievements? There's so much in the world besides the stock market! If I were a man—"

Drager retreated. What he had involuntarily overheard, confirmed his suspicions and quickened the dull rage in his heart against the man who could thus brazenly exploit a girl's ingenuousness.

He drove recklessly down the mountain with Edwards—so recklessly that Edwards, hardened veteran though he was, ventured to remonstrate.

"Dangerous, Edwards, to speed a little?" Drager reproved him. "I find it exhilarating. If you don't like it, you may get out and walk."

At the railroad station Drager found Coyne's chauffeur waiting for the afternoon train.

"Expecting guests at Deepwood?" he casually inquired, offering his cigar case.

"Not exactly," the man replied, savoring the cigar. "Couple o' linemen from town. Blooming wires broke. Mr. Coyne came down this morning and got after the telegraph company hot. You could 'ear 'im, sir, all over the station."

Drager looked at his watch, and returned to Edwards.

"There's half an hour before train time, Edwards," he said in a low tone. "Get Coyne's man and his car to Dahlwinkle's tavern, keep him there till I get away with Dr. McInroy and some other men that I'm expecting, and you'll earn the mate to this."

He slipped a five-dollar bill into Edwards' hand. Ten minutes later Edwards had persuaded Coyne's man to let him try the car, and the two spun off in the direction of Dahlwinkle's.

Drager entered the railroad station, and shutting himself carefully in the long-distance booth, held converse with Sand in New York. Coyne's brokers, he learned, had been buying Atlantic & Eastern stock throughout the session, forcing the price up three points.

"Sell them all we've got," Drager ordered. "Do it cautiously, Sand. We don't want to break the market till Bardon & Company have unloaded everything—Understand? A. & E. Central Valley, United Can—everything we're holding. Bardon was hurt this morning. Axle snapped as we were hurrying down the mountain—Yes, we've sent for Dr. McInroy—Serious? Can't tell yet. He struck on his head—Keep this to yourself, Sand, until you've sold our line of stocks."

Sand's concern was genuine and deep. His voice broke as he asked Drager to let him know of any change in the banker's condition.

"First thing in the morning," Drager promised. "And Sand—we can't be too cautious. The accident has upset our household, and there'll be servants running in and out of our market-room to-morrow. Every time I tell you to buy, you'll understand I mean you're to sell. Get that perfectly clear?—All right—Good-by."

Emerging from the booth, Drager paced the platform until the train from New York rumbled in. When he caught sight of Dr. McInroy descending from the Pullman, he unceremoniously waved that gentleman to the motor, and then hurried back to the smoking-car in time to meet two men with a heavy valise, a coil of wire, and climbing-irons.

"You've come about the wires?" Drager accosted them. "It's a pity you fellows can't string wires so they'll stay up. Hustle along!"

The men followed him meekly to the car, and as they began the trip up the mountain, Drager ordered them to watch the wires overhead. Half a mile from Donbilt he put the linemen down.

"The wires cut across the hill here," he explained. "You'll have to follow them on foot to the house."

He drove on slowly, wondering if Coyne were still with Vera under the ash. Dr. McInroy questioned him about the accident, then chatted pleasantly of the weather, the clear mountain air, and the trout-fishing. Drager responded mechanically. The physician's ordinarily deep bass sounded thin—as though Drager had dived into seething water and Dr. McInroy were talking to him from the shore.

When they reached the *porte-cochère*, Drager's vision swam, and he reeled a little in his attempt to assist the physician to alight. The weakness, however, was momentary. Before Dr. McInroy had ascended the steps and greeted Vera, who stood waiting in the doorway, Drager had himself in hand again.

At seven o'clock he went to the servants' sitting-room to learn what progress the linemen had made. They reported that the supposed break was a cut, which they had duly repaired.

"I'd give a year of my feverish existence," Drager inwardly commented, "if I could throttle the vandal who did it."

He entrusted the men to the housekeeper, impressing upon her the importance of keeping them at Donbilt until he was quite sure their services were no longer required. Then he joined Vera in the library to hear Dr. McInroy's report.

"Mr. Bardon's eyelid has been badly bruised," the physician said. "He must keep both his eyes bandaged and avoid excitement."

"You might as well tell him to avoid breathing," Drager declared. "If I could drop our neighbor Coyne from some high cliff into a deep and forgotten lake—"

Drager stopped short, conscious of Vera's questioning gaze. Presently he

stumbled away to his room. The moment he felt his bed beneath him, he sank into a troubled sleep. Throughout the night weird phantoms arrayed in vivid pink urged him to the edge of a black, unfathomable pit, and he awoke burning and unrefreshed.

"Coyne has all the luck," he groaned, trying to summon strength for his bath. "Bardon smashed up, I'm burning up, and Vera—"

He struggled into his clothes, and after making a pretense of breakfasting, shut himself in the market-room. With slowly reviving energy he put a fresh roll of tape on the stock-ticker, laboriously wound up the weights, and then called Sand's office on the telephone.

Sand himself responded with an anxious request for the latest bulletin.

"Slightly better," Drager reported. "McInroy has bandaged him up—What's that? Concussion of the brain—McInroy hasn't said. He's waiting for developments—Yes, I'll keep you posted. Got the orders distributed?—Good! Remember my instructions."

At ten o'clock Bardon insisted on being led downstairs to the market-room where he could at least hear the sound of the ticker. Vera volunteered to read the tape, while Drager sat at the telephone. After vainly protesting, Dr. McInroy borrowed Drager's casting-rod and stalked gloomily away to the haunts of the trout.

The market opened strong and active under the leadership of Atlantic & Eastern. At the end of the first hour transactions in this stock amounted to a total of over fifty thousand shares, and the market showed no indication of breaking.

"One thousand A. & E. at ninety-seven and an eighth—five hundred at a quarter—one thousand at five-eighths, three-quarters, seven-eighths!" Vera recited in her clear contralto. "Three thousand shares at ninety-eight!"

"A new high record," murmured Drager anxiously. "What's Central Valley?"

"A point off," said Vera. "United Can. is down half a point."

Felix, the valet, came in with a basin of water, towels, and absorbent cotton.

"The doctor's orders, sir."

"Da—dash the doctor!" Bardon snorted. "If Coyne thinks he can frighten me off by running the price up, I'll show him! Guilbert, tell Sand to buy ten thousand A. & E. now—at the market."

Drager glanced at Vera. The tape hung disregarded in her fingers and her eyes met his expectantly. Why expectantly? Drager asked himself, and all at once it flashed upon him that in attributing her treachery to girlish ingenuousness, he had made a mistake. It was no artless girl who sat there at the ticker, undismayed by his glance, but a woman grown, with a secret love in her heart—a love that even now was doubtless anticipating its reward when she should tell Coyne of this day's transactions in her father's market-room.

Fighting against a feeling of deadly sickness, Drager turned to the telephone.

"Buy ten thousand A. & E., Sand!" he shouted. "Understand?—Buy—ten thousand."

"D—dry your hide, Felix!" Bardon exploded. "What are you trying to do—give me a sponge bath? I want the water on my eyes, not down my neck!"

"Atlantic & Eastern is down an eighth," Vera announced. "Ninety-seven and three-quarters—five hundred at five-eighths—one thousand at a half—one hundred at a quarter—three hundred at an eighth—a thousand at ninety-seven!"

"What's Coyne think he's doing?" mused Bardon.

"Ninety-seven and an eighth," Vera continued reading the tape. "Ninety-seven again. Ninety-six and seven-eighths—ninety-seven!"

"I wish you'd leave me alone, Felix, and get out," her father complained. "Man alive, not so tight! D'you want to press my eyes clean into my brain?"

Felix departed, closing the door softly. A moment later Drager saw him saunter across the lawn. The valet's movements struck Drager as curiously aimless—as though in his desultory examination of the shrubbery the man were parading his lack of any definite intention. The next instant he disappeared from view, and Drager was

aware that Vera had leaned forward in an attempt to follow his progress. Did she know where Felix was going?

Again the feeling of deadly sickness assailed Drager. He got up abruptly and left the room.

Without any attempt to conceal his purpose, he struck across the lawn in the direction Felix had taken. The valet had entered the woods, following the path of the telegraph wires. Not a hundred feet from the point where the wires had been cut, Drager caught sight of him. He was inserting a piece of paper beneath a mossy bowlder.

Stepping from the path into the laurel, Drager waited until Felix retraced his steps to the house. Then, with no little curiosity, the secretary approached the bowlder and extracted the paper.

"Buying A. & E. on scale up," he read. "Determined to get control in open market."

Drager stared at the words in sheer amazement.

"Felix—the wooden, the efficient Felix! I suppose that Edwards, and the gardener, the gardener's assistant, and the cook, and the parlor maid, are likewise Coyne's creatures. I wonder that he hasn't bribed me!"

The anger Drager had felt when he saw how the axle of the motor car had been tampered with, surged anew within him, making his fevered pulse gallop madly. It left him white, determined, uncannily deliberate. As he carefully restored the paper to its hiding-place, he smiled. Then, retreating into the woods where he could see without being seen, he stretched out, head pillowed on his arm, waiting patiently.

He was roused by the snap of a dead stick. Peering forth, he saw Macey Coyne pondering the valet's communication.

"I trust the information is to your liking," Drager remarked, getting to his feet and facing his enemy.

"Trying to outbid me," smiled Coyne. "Have a cigaret?"

"No, thank you," Drager declined pleasantly. "It's probably made of dynamite. So you think we can't buy the Atlantic & Eastern in the market?"

"Not all of it," replied Coyne. "Not a third of it. If you want a majority interest, you'll buy it of me at one hundred and twenty-five dollars a share."

It was neither prophecy nor threat. It was just a matter-of-fact statement so genially delivered that despite his wrath Drager was compelled to admiration.

"I'm glad to know your terms, Coyne," and Drager eyed him gravely. "If I consulted my personal feelings in the matter, I'd tell you to take yourself and your terms to everlasting perdition. But if you complied, you'd probably wrest control of the traffic in lost souls from old Beelzebub and deprive us poor sinners here on earth of our eternal rest. So I'll refrain."

"You ought to see a doctor, Drager," Coyne mildly advised. "You seem feverish."

"Wires fixed yet?" Drager inquired.

There was a glint of steel in Coyne's hawklike eyes.

"I'm going to break those telegraph people," he informed Drager. "Their inefficiency annoys me."

"I wouldn't,"Drager counseled. "The men came yesterday, and I led them astray. *Mea culpa,* oh, Lord Coyne!"

"Got some new cuss-words, haven't you," Coyne responded, his heavy lips shaping to the cherubic smile that portended evil.

"I could quote you some very choice and appropriate Latin," Drager mocked him. "Only it would be good words wasted."

"What d'you want anyhow?" demanded Coyne, his smile broadening dangerously.

"Oh, I thought you might offer to buy me if I made myself agreeable. Of course I'd come a little higher than Felix, and the gardener, the cook, and the parlor maid. But I could assure you ungarbled information."

"You're a smart little boy, aren't you," said Coyne, and swung his open palm against Drager's cheek.

"You're hardly my size," declared Drager, taking a sharp breath. "And I'm not in condition, But—"

He struck with his clenched fist. Coyne parried the blow, and laughed like a boy. Then Drager saw his great arm shoot out viciously. The impact

made the calm, green world quiver and whirl mistily before Drager's eyes, and he went down.

"Symbolic of what's coming to you and Bardon in Wall Street," Coyne's mellow voice sounded somewhere above him. "When I get through with you two nurselings, your own mothers wont—"

Coyne's voice ceased so abruptly that Drager tried to raise his head to learn the cause. The effort, however, made him close his eyes and stretch out his arms to stay the mad heaving of the universe. His hands encountered cool, soft arms; he felt his head lifted until he breathed a subtle fragrance, and gentle fingers caressed his brow.

"You coward!" Drager heard. "You blackguard!"

He opened his eyes, and glimpsed heaven in Vera's face just above him. And then he sank away into black and fathomless chaos.

When he again beheld the world of light with eyes that saw and mind that heeded, Drager found himself in bed. At his side stood Dr. McInroy and another man of medical aspect. Near them was a nurse with a glass of medicine in her hand. And from the foot of the bed Roger Bardon and Vera were gazing at him as though awaiting judgment from his lips.

Drager's eyes rested on Vera.

"Has Coyne gone home?" he asked.

"Home to the far-off mountains after more gold dust," Roger Bardon chuckled. "It was a da—danged clever stroke of yours, lad—your telling Sand I was hurt and advising him to sell everything. The trick smashed Coyne in as pretty a slump as Wall Street has had in three years. He was loaded up with A. & E., and when he went under, we gathered it in at 60. You're like your father, lad, in that quiet way of—"

"Mr. Bardon!" remonstrated Dr. McInroy. "You'll bring on a relapse. You promised me—"

"Go to the—eh—ah, beg pardon, Mac," Bardon spluttered. "If you'd been off your head for six tremendous weeks, you'd want to know all you'd missed!"

"Six weeks!" Drager murmured, and fell asleep.

From that day he gained strength with astonishing rapidity. As the physicians agreed, he was an extraordinary case—breaking all precedents in his recovery, just as he had broken all precedents in being up and about for three days with fever raging in his veins and a temperature high enough to justify the engagement of an undertaker.

"Did I—was I fantastically delirious?" Drager asked Vera, the afternoon they helped him into a reclining chair on the veranda and she came to relieve the nurse.

"What do you mean?" she replied, a slight color beneath the dusk of her cheeks.

"Did I—er—babble vacuously? Or did I ponder over the destiny of man and other—er—abstruse problems?"

The brown of Vera's eyes filled with a dancing light, like a bit of sunshine in the still depths of a woodland pool.

"I heard nothing," said she, "that I hadn't known for ever so long!"

"How cryptic!" Drager commented, wondering if she referred to either—or both—of the secrets he had cherished.

"You were highly poetic at times," Vera went on, rather pensively. "Sometimes, Guilbert, I think there should be a law compelling people to utter the beautiful thoughts which they keep locked up in so miserly a fashion. Such thoughts are so scarce in the world!"

"What of the ugly thoughts?" asked Drager. "The thoughts that were mean and hateful and wrong — altogether wrong?"

"Those weren't really yours," Vera answered unguardedly.

"I must have turned my mind inside out before your eyes!" Drager said miserably. "I may as well go out there to the edge of the cliff, Vera, and let you push me off."

"What have I said!" exclaimed Vera in some confusion. "But there! It was my fault, Guilbert. I was foolish enough to think that I could—could influence Mr. Coyne to cease harassing you and father. And you didn't know that."

"I ought to have known," Drager abased himself. "I guess I'm only half a man, Vera!"

A silence fell between them—a silence that seemed to hold enthralled the sunlit world of distant hill and valley on which Drager gazed. From the topmost branch of a white birch on the lawn a vesper sparrow, bidding the sun adieu, filled the stillness with swelling melody. The sweetness of life—the mystery of love, was the burden of its song.

"Well," Drager summed up, "you know the worst of me, Vera."

There was no reply. He looked up anxiously.

"The worst of me, Vera," he repeated.

"And the best, Guilbert," she said bravely.

There were tears in her eyes. But behind the tears was a shining light. And Drager, feeling its glory, forgot then and there that he was her father's impecunious secretary.

The Bond of the Sea

By L. M. MONTGOMERY

Author of "ANNE OF GREEN GABLES"

I

A LATE September wind from the northwest was sweeping over the waters of Racicot Harbor. It blew in, strong with the tang of the salt seas, past the grim lighthouse rock on the one hand, and the sandbars on the other, up the long, narrow funnel of darkly blue water, until it whistled among the masts of the boats at anchor, and among the stovepipe chimneys of the fishing village. It was a wind that sang and piped and keened of many things—but what it sang to each listener was just what was in that listener's heart. And Nora Shelley, standing at the door of her father's bleached cottage on the gray sands, heard a new strain in it. The wind had sung often to her of the outer world she longed for, but there had never been the note of fulfillment in it before.

"There's a new life beyond, Nora," whistled the wind. "A good life—and it's yours for the taking. You have but to put out your hand and all you've wished for will be in your grasp."

Nora leaned out from the door to meet the wind She loved that northwest gale—it was a stanch old friend of hers. Very slim and straight was Nora, with a skin as white as the foam flakes crisping over the sands, and eyes of the tremulous, haunting blue that deepens on the water after a fair sunset. But her hair was as black as midnight, and her lips blossomed out with a ripe redness against the uncolored purity of her face. She was far and away the most beautiful of the harbor girls, but hardly the most popular. Men and women alike thought her proud. Even her friends felt themselves called upon to make excuses for her unlikeness to themselves.

Nora had closed the door behind her to shut in the voices. She wanted to be alone with the wind while she made her decision. Before her the sandy shingle, made firm by a straggling growth of some pale sea-ivy, sloped down to the sapphire cup of the harbor. Around her were the small, uncouth houses of the village—no smaller or more uncouth than the one which was her home—with children playing noisily on the paths between them. The mackerel boats curtsied and nodded outside; beyond them the sharp tip of Sandy Point was curdled white with gulls. Down at the curve of the cove a group of men were laughing and talking loudly before French Joe's fish-house. This was the life that she had always known.

Across the harbor, on a fir-fringed headland, stood Craigielea. John Cam-

eron, childless millionaire, had built a summer cottage on the point two years ago and given it the name of the old ancestral estate in Scotland. To the Racicot fishing folk, the house and grounds were as a dream of enchantment made real. Few of them had ever seen anything like it.

Nora Shelley knew Craigielea well. She had been the Cameron's guest many times that summer, finding in the luxury and beauty of their surroundings something that entered with a strange aptness into her own nature. It was as if it were hers by right of fitness. And this was the life that might be hers, did she so choose.

In reality, her choice was already made and she knew it. But it pleased her to pretend for a little time that it was not, and to dally tenderly with the old loves and emotions that tugged at her heart and clamored to be remembered.

Within, in the low-ceiled living room, with its worn, uneven floor and its blackened walls, hung with fishnets and oilskins, four people were sitting. John Cameron and his wife were given the seats of honor in the middle of the room. Mrs. Cameron was a handsome, well-dressed woman, with an expression that was discontented, and, at times, petulant. Yet her face had a good deal of plain common sense in it, and not even the most critical of the Racicot folk could say that she "put on airs." Her husband was a small, white-haired man, with a fresh, young looking face. He was popular in Racicot, for he mingled freely with the sailors and fishermen. Moreover, Craigielea was an excellent market for fresh mackerel.

Nathan Shelley, in his favorite corner behind the stove, sat leaning forward with his hands on his knees. He had laid aside his pipe out of deference to Mrs. Cameron, and it was hard for him to think without it. He wished his wife would go to work; it seemed uncanny to see her idle. She had sat idle only once in his remembrance—the day they had brought Ned Shelley in, dank and dripping, after the August storm ten years before.

Mrs. Shelley sat by the crooked, small-paned window and looked out down the harbor. The coat she had been patching for her husband when the Camerons came still lay in her lap, and she had folded her hands upon it. She was a big woman, slow of speech and manner, with a placid, handsome face—a face that had not visibly changed, even when she heard the Camerons' proposal.

They wanted Nora—these rich people who had so much in life wanted the blossom of girlhood, such as had never bloomed for them. John Cameron pleaded his cause well.

"We shall look on her as our own," he concluded. "We have grown to love her this summer. She is beautiful and clever—she has a right to more than Racicot can give her. You have other children—we are childless. And we do not take her from you utterly. You will see her every summer when we come to Craigielea."

"It wont be the same thing quite," said Nathan Shelley drily. "She'll belong to your life then—not ours. And no matter how many young ones folks has they don't want to lose none on 'em. But I dunno's we ought to let our feelings stand in Nora's light. She's clever, and she's been hankering for more than we can give her. I was the same way once. Lord, how I raged at Racicot! I broke away finally—went to the city and got work. But it wasn't no use. I'd left it too long. The sea had got into my blood. I toughed it out for two years and then I had to come back. I didn't want to, mark you, but I had to come. Been here ever since. But maybe 'twill be different with the girl. She's younger than I was—if the hankering for the sea and shore hasn't got into her too deep maybe she'll be able to cut loose for good. But you don't know how the sea calls to one of its own."

Cameron smiled. He thought that this dry old salt was a bit of a poet in his own way. Very likely Nora got her ability and originality from him. There did not seem to be a great deal in the phlegmatic, good-looking mother.

"What say, wife?" asked Shelley at last.

His wife had said, in her slow way, "Leave it to Nora," and to Nora it was left.

When she came in at last, her face stung to radiant beauty by the northwest wind, she found it hard to tell them after all. She looked at her mother appealingly.

"Is it go or stay, girl?" demanded her father brusquely.

"I think I'll go," said Nora slowly. Then, catching sight of her mother's eyes, she ran to her and flung her arms about her. "But I'll never forget you, mother," she cried. "I'll love you always —you and father."

Her mother loosened the clinging arms and pushed her gently towards the Camerons. "Go to them," she said calmly. "You belong to them now."

The news spread quickly over Racicot. Before night everyone on the harbor shore knew that the Camerons were going to adopt Nora Shelley and take her away with them. There was much surprise and more envy. The shore women tossed their heads.

"Reckon Nora is in great feather," they said. "She always did think herself better than anyone else. Nate Shelley and his wife spoiled her ridiculous. Wonder what Rob Fletcher thinks of it."

Nora asked her brother to tell the news to Rob Fletcher, but Merran Andrews was before him. She was at Rob before he fairly landed, when the fishing boats came in at sunset.

"Have you heard the news, Rob? Nora's going away to be a fine lady. The Camerons have been daft about her all summer, and now they're going to adopt her."

Merran wanted Rob herself. He was a big, handsome fellow and well-off—the pick of the harbor men in every way. He had slighted her for Nora and it pleased her to stab him now, though she meant to be nice to him later on.

He turned white under his tan, but he did not choose to make a book of his heart for Merran's bold black eyes to read.

"It's a great thing for her," he answered calmly. "She was meant for better things than can be found in Racicot."

"She was always too good for common folks, if that is what you mean," said Merran spitefully.

Nora and Rob did not meet until the next evening, when she rowed herself home from Craigielea. He was at the shore to tie up her boat and help her out. They walked up the sands together in the heart of the autumn sunset, with the northwest wind whistling in their ears, and the great star of the lighthouse gleaming wanly out against the golden sky. Nora felt uncomfortable and resented it. Rob Fletcher was nothing to her; he had never been anything but the good friend to whom she had always told her strange thoughts and longings. Why then should her heart ache over him? She wished he would talk, but he strode along in silence, his fine head drooping a little.

"I suppose you have heard that I am going away, Rob?" she said at last.

"Yes, I've heard it from a hundred mouths, more or less," he answered, without looking at her.

"It's a splendid thing for me, isn't it?" dared Nora.

"Well, I don't know," he said slowly. "Looking at it from the outside it seems so. But from the inside it mayn't seem the same. Do you think you'll be able to cut twenty years of life out of your heart without any pain?"

"Oh, I'll be homesick, if that is what you mean," said Nora petulantly. "Of course I'll be that at first. But people get over that. And it is not as if I were going away for good. I'll be back next summer—every summer."

"It'll be different," said Rob stubbornly, thinking as old Nathan Shelley had thought. "You'll be a fine lady—oh, all the better for that perhaps—but you'll not be the same. No, no, the new life will change you—not all at once, but in the end. You'll be one of them, not one of us. But will you be happy? That's the question I'm asking."

In anyone else Nora would have resented this. But she never could feel angry with Rob.

"I think I shall be," she said thoughtfully. "And, anyway, I must go. It doesn't seem that I could help going even if I wanted to. Something out beyond there—is calling me—always has been calling me ever since I was a tiny girl and found out there was a big world far away from Racicot. And it

always seemed to me that I would find a way to it some day. That was why I kept on going to school long after the other girls had stopped. Mother thought I'd better stay home; she said too much book learning would make me discontented and too different from the people I had to live among. But father let me go; he understood; he said I was like him when he was young. I learned everything and read everything I could. It seems to me as if I had been walking along a narrow pathway all my life. And now it seems as if a gate were opened before me and I can pass through into a wider world. It isn't the luxury and pleasure, or the fine house and dresses that tempt me, though the people here think so—even mother thinks so. But it is not. It's just that something seems to be in my grasp that I've always longed for and I must go —Rob, I must go."

"Yes, if you feel like that you must go," he answered, looking down at her troubled face tenderly. "And it's best for you to go, Nora. I believe that and I'm not so selfish as not to hope that you'll find all you long for. But it will change you all the more if it is so. Nora, Nora, whatever am I going to do without you?"

The sudden passion bursting out in his tone frightened her.

"Don't, Rob, don't. And you wont miss me long. There's many another."

"No, there is not. Don't fling me that dry bone of comfort. There is no other —can be no other—none but you, Nora, and well you know it."

"I'm sorry," she said faintly.

"You needn't be," said Rob grimly. "After all, I'd rather love you than not, hurt as it will. I've never had much hope of getting you to listen to me. You're too good for me—I've always known that. A girl that is fit to mate with the Camerons is far above Rob Fletcher, fisherman."

"I never had such a thought," protested Nora.

"I know it," he said, casing himself up in his quietness again. "But it is so. And now I must lose you. But there'll never be any other for me, Nora."

He left her at her father's door. She watched his stalwart figure out of sight around the point, and raged to find tears in her eyes and a bitter yearning in her heart. For a moment she repented. She would stay—she could not go. Then, over the harbor, flashed out the lights of Craigielea. The life behind them glittered, allured, beckoned. Nay, she must go on—she had made her choice. There was no turning back now.

II

Nora Shelley went away with the Camerons and Craigielea was deserted. Winter came down on Racicot Harbor, and the colony of fisherfolk at its head gave themselves over to the idleness of the season—a time for lounging and gossiping and long hours of lazy contentment smoking in the neighbors' chimney corners, when tales were told of the sea and the fishing. The harbor laid itself out to be sociable in winter. There was no time for that in summer, when people had to work eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. In the winter there was spare time to laugh and quarrel, woo and wed, and—were a man so minded—dream, as Rob Fletcher did in his loneliness.

In a Racicot winter much was made of small things. The arrival of Nora Shelley's weekly letter to her father and mother was an event in the village. The postmistress in the Cove store spread the news that it had come, and that night the Shelley kitchen would be crowded. Janet Shelley, Nora's younger sister, read the letter aloud, by virtue of having gone to school long enough to be able to pronounce the words and tell where the places named were situated.

The Camerons had spent the autumn in New York, and had then gone south for the winter. Nora wrote freely of her new life. In the beginning she admitted great homesickness, but after the first few letters she made no further mention of that. She wrote little of herself, but she described fully the places she had visited, the people she had met, the wonderful things she had seen. She sent affectionate messages to all her old friends, and asked after all her old interests. But the letters came to be more and more like those of a stranger and

one apart from the Racicot life, and both the father and the mother felt it.

"She's changing," muttered old Nathan. "It had to be so—it's well for her that it is so—but it hurts. She aint ours any more. We've lost the girl, wife—lost her forever."

Rob Fletcher always came, and listened to the letters in silence while the others buzzed and commented. Rob, so the harbor folk said, was much changed. He had grown unsociable, and preferred to stay at home and read books, rather than go a-visiting as did others. The Harbor folk shook their heads over this. There was something wrong with a man who read books when there was plenty of other amusements. Jacob Radnor had read books all one winter and had drowned himself in the spring—jumped overboard from his dory at the herring nets. And that was what came of books, mark you.

The Camerons came later to Craigielea the next summer, because John Cameron's health was not good. It was the first of August before a host of servants came to put it in habitable order, and a week later the family arrived. They brought a houseful of guests with them.

At sunset on the day of her arrival Nora Shelley looked out across the harbor to the fishing village. She was tired after her journey, and she had not meant to go home until morning, but now she knew she must go at once. Her mother was over there; the old life called to her; the northwest wind swept up the channel and whistled alluringly to her at the window of her luxurious room. It brought to her the tang of the salt waves and filled her heart with a great, bitter-sweet yearning.

She was more beautiful than ever. In the year that had passed she had blossomed out into a gracious fulfilment of womanhood. Even the Camerons had wondered at her swift adaptation to her new surroundings. She seemed to have put Racicot behind her, as one puts by an old garment. In everything she had held her own royally. Her adopted parents were proud of her beauty and her nameless, untamed charm. They had lavished every indulgence upon her. In those few short months she had lived more keenly and fully than in all her preceding life. The Nora Shelley who went away was not, so it would seem, the Nora Shelley who came back.

But when she looked from her window to the waves, and saw the blaze of the sunset in the windows of the fishing houses, and heard the summons of the wind, something broke loose in her soul and overwhelmed her, as a billow of the sea. She must go at once—at once—at once. Not a moment could she wait.

She was dressed for dinner, but with tingling fingers she threw off her costly gown and put on her dark traveling suit again. She left her hair as it was and knotted a crimson scarf about her head. She would slip quietly away to the boathouse and get Davey to launch the little sail-boat for her—and then for a fleet skim over the harbor. She hoped not to be seen but Mrs. Cameron met her in the hall.

"Nora!" she said in astonishment.

"Oh, I must go—I must go," the girl cried feverishly. She was afraid Mrs. Cameron would try to prevent her from going, and all at once she knew she could not bear that.

"Go where? Dinner is almost ready, and—"

"Oh, I don't want any dinner. I'm going home—I shall sail over."

"My dear child, don't be foolish. It's too late to go over the harbor to-night. They wont be expecting you. Wait till the morning."

"No—oh, you don't understand. I must go—I must. My mother is over there."

Something in the girl's last sentence or the tone in which it was uttered brought a look of pain to Mrs. Cameron's face. But she made no further attempt at dissuasion.

"Well, go if you must. But you cannot go alone—no, Nora, I cannot allow it. The wind is too high, and it is too late for you to go over by yourself. Clark Bryant will take you."

Nora would have protested but she knew it would be vain. She submitted somewhat sullenly, and walked down to the shore in silence. Clark Bryant strode beside her, humoring her mood. He was a tall, stout man, with an ugly, clever face. He was as clever as

he looked, and was one of the younger millionaires whom John Cameron drew around him in the development of his huge financial schemes. Bryant was in love with Nora. This was why the Camerons had asked him to join their August house party at Craigielea, and why he had accepted. It had occurred to Nora that this was the case, but as yet she had never taken the trouble to think the matter over seriously.

She liked Clark Bryant well enough, but just at this moment he was in the way. She did not want to take him over to Racicot. Just why this was so she could not have explained. There was in her no snobbish shame of her humble home. But he did not belong there; he was an alien, and she wished to go back to it for the first time alone.

At the boat-house Davy launched the small sail-boat, and Nora took the tiller. She knew every inch of the harbor. As the sail filled before the wind and the boat sprang across the up-curling waves her brief sullenness fell away from her. She no longer resented Clark Bryant's presence; she forgot it. He was no more to her than the mast by which he stood. The spell of the sea and the wind surged into her heart and filled it with wild happiness and immeasurable content. Over yonder, where the lights gleamed on the darkening shore under the arch of golden sky, was *home*. How the wind whistled to welcome her back! The lash of it against her face—the swing of the boat as it cut through the racing crests —how glorious it all was!

Clark Bryant watched her, understanding all at once that he was nothing to her, that he had no part or lot in her heart. He was as one forgotten and left behind. And how lovely, how desirable she was! He had never seen her look so beautiful. The scarf had slipped down to her shoulders, and her head rose out of it like some magnificent flower out of a crimson calyx. The masses of her black hair lifted from her face in the rush of the wind and swayed back again like rich shadows. Her lips were stung to scarlet with the sea's sharp caresses, and her eyes, large and splendid, looked past him unseeing to the harbor lights of Racicot.

When they swung in by the wharf Nora sprang from the boat before Bryant had time to moor it. Pausing for an instant she called down to him carelessly, "Don't wait for me. I shall not go back to-night."

Then she caught her scarf around her head and almost ran up the wharf and along the shore. No one was abroad, for it was supper hour in Racicot. In the Shelley kitchen the family was gathered around the table when the door was flung open and Nora stood on the threshold. For a moment they gazed at her as at an apparition. They had not known the precise day on which the Camerons were expected at Craigielea.

"It's the girl herself! It's Nora!" cried old Nathan, rising from his bench.

"Mother!" cried Nora. She ran across the room and buried her face in her mother's breast, sobbing.

When the news spread, the Racicot people crowded in until the house was full. They spent a merry, whole-hearted evening of the old sort. The men smoked and most of the women knitted while they talked. They were pleased to find that Nora did not put on any airs. Old Jonas Myers bluntly told her that he didn't see as her year among rich folks had done her much good after all. "You're just the same as when you went away," he said. "They haven't made a fine lady of you. Folks here thought you'd be something wonderful."

Nora laughed. She was glad that they did not find her changed. Old Nathan chuckled in his dry way. There was a difference in the girl, and he saw it, though his neighbors did not. But it was not the difference he had feared. His daughter was not utterly taken from him yet.

Nora sat by her mother and was happy. But, as the evening wore away, she grew very quiet and watched the door with something piteous in her eyes. Old Nathan noticed it and thought she was tired. He gave the neighbors a good-natured hint and they presently withdrew When they had all gone Nora went out to the door alone.

The wind had died down, and the shore, gemmed with its twinkling lights, was very still, for it was too late an hour for Racicot folk to be abroad in

the mackerel season. The moon was rising and the harbor was a tossing expanse of silver waves. The mellow light fell on a tall figure lurking at the angle of the road that led past the Shelley cottage. Nora saw and recognized it. She flew down the sandy slope with impulsive, outstretched hands.

"Rob—Rob!"

"Nora!" he said huskily, holding out his hand. But she flung herself on his breast and clung to him, half laughing, half crying.

"Oh Rob, I've been looking for you all the evening. Every time there was a step at the door I said to myself, 'That is Rob now.' And when the door always opened to let in another my heart died within me. I dared not even ask after you for fear of what they might tell me. Why didn't you come?"

"I didn't know that I'd be welcome," he whispered, holding her closer to him. "I've been hanging about hoping to get a stolen glimpse of you. I thought maybe you wouldn't want to see me to-night."

"Not want to see you! Oh, Rob, this evening at Craigielea, when I looked across to Racicot it was you I thought of before all—even before mother."

She drew back and looked at him with her soul in her eyes.

"What a splendid fellow you are, Rob—how handsome you are!" she cried. All the reserve of womanhood fell away from her before the inrush of new emotions. For the moment she was a child again, telling out her thoughts with a child's frankness. "I've been in a dream this past year—a lovely dream—a fair dream—but only a dream after all. And now I've awakened. And you are part of the awakening—the best part. Oh, to think I never knew before!"

"Knew what, my girl?" He had her close against his heart now; the breath from her lips mingled with his, but he would not kiss her yet.

"That I loved you," she whispered back. "Oh, Rob, you are all the world to me. I belong to you and the sea. But I never knew it until to-night. Then I knew—it came to me all at once, like a flood of understanding. I knew I could never go away again—that I must stay here forever, where I could hear the call of winds and waves. The new life was good—good—but it could not go deep enough. And when you did not come I knew what was in my heart for you as well."

That night Nora lay beside her sisters in the tiny room that looked out on the harbor. The younger girls slept soundly, but Nora lay awake, to listen to the laughter of the wind outside, and con over what she and Rob had said to each other. There was no blot on her happiness, save a sorry wonder what the Camerons would say when they knew.

"They will think me ungrateful and fickle," she sighed. "They don't know that I can't help it, even if I would. They will never, never understand."

Nor did they. When Nora told them that she was going back to Racicot they laughed at her kindly at first, treating it as the passing whim of a homesick girl. Later, when they came to understand that she meant it, they were grieved and angry. There were pleadings and tears and reproaches. Nora cried bitterly but stood rock-firm. She could never go back to them.

They appealed to Nathan Shelley finally, but he refused to interfere.

"It can't be altered," he told them. "The sea has called her and she can listen to naught else. I'm sorry enough for the girl's own sake. It would have been better for her if she could have cut loose from it all and lived your life, I dare say. But you've made a fair trial of it and it's no use. I know what is in her heart—it was in mine once—and I'll say no word of rebuke to her. She's free to go or stay as she chooses—just as free as she was last year."

Mrs. Cameron made one more appeal to Nora. She told the girl bitterly that she was ungrateful.

"I'm not that," said Nora with quivering lips. "I love you and I'm grateful to you. But your life isn't for me after all. I thought it was—I longed for it so. And I loved it, too—I love it yet. But there is something stronger in me that holds me here."

"I don't think you realize what you are doing, Nora. You have been a little homesick and you are glad to be back. But after we have gone and you must settle into the old Racicot life again you will not be contented. You will find

that your life with us will have unfitted you for this. There will be no real place for you here—nothing for you to do. You will be as a stranger."

"Oh, no. I am going to marry Rob Fletcher," said Nora. She spoke quite simply.

"Marry Rob Fletcher! And you might have married Clark Bryant, Nora."

Nora shook her head. "That could never have been. I thought it might once—I know better now. You see, I love Rob."

There did not seem to be anything more to say after that. Mrs. Cameron did not try to say anything. She went away in sorrow.

Nora cried bitterly after she had gone. But there were no tears in her eyes that night when she walked on the shore with Rob Fletcher. The wind whistled around them and the stars came out in the great ebon dome of the sky over the harbor. Laughter and song of the fishing folk were behind them and the deep solemn call of the sea before. Over the harbor gleamed the lights of Craigielea. Rob looked from them to Nora.

"Do you think you'll ever regret that life, my girl?"

"Never, Rob. It seems to me now like a beautiful garment put on for a holiday and worn pleasantly and easily for a time. But I've put it off now and put on workaday clothes again. It's only a week since I left Craigielea, but it seems long ago. Listen to the wind, Rob. It is singing of the good days to be for you and me."

He bent over and kissed her. "My own dear lass," he said softly.

The West Lake Meteorite Mystery

By WILLIAM P. TIEBOUT

ALLISON and I were lounging on the veranda of the West Lake Inn, smoking and star-gazing, when, with a flash, there burst upon our sight a great fire-ball which seemed to come from nowhere in the sky and with frightful speed swoop to the earth. It brought Allison and me to our feet on the instant and we gazed, transfixed with astonishment, for the brief moment that the fiery sky-visitor, in its passage through space, was within the range of our vision. Allison was the first to recover from the startling phenomenon.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he gasped. "I'll bet the thing struck within a mile of this place! It seemed near enough to scorch us!"

I nodded and sat down to regain my composure. Allison stood, leaning over the veranda rail, gazing at the rising meadow, topped with a few stark trees silhouetted against the dark sky. Behind these the meteorite had disappeared from our sight.

When he finally plumped into his chair I found my tongue.

"Where did it come from, Tommy?" I asked. "It seemed to bore a hole in the darkness and drop like a rock. Do you suppose we would have seen it sooner had the stars and moon been out? Could it possibly have shot through the clouds and haze and passed to earth during the short time we saw it?"

Allison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know, Baker," he replied. "It certainly was the best piece of fireworks I ever saw. But I *would* like to know where it landed."

"We'll have to wait until morning for that bit of news," I ventured. "Unless you, in the love for your work, will run down the thing."

Tommy laughed and shook his head.

"No, I'll not go," he answered. "I don't propose to interrupt my vacation evenings by trailing meteorites however interesting they may be."

By the way, I had met Allison for the first time, three weeks before. As a staff man on the —— *Tribune* he had worked himself into a nervous breakdown, and was forced to take an extended lay-off. West Lake with its quiet, and its excellent opportunities for healthful pleasures, fishing, hunting, and the like, had appealed to him and he had settled himself for a six weeks' stay. I had come to know him well during our brief acquaintance. We had spent many enjoyable days together, on the lake and in the field, and all thoughts of the falling meteorite were banished from our minds as we planned for the morrow. We retired that night having agreed upon another fishing excursion.

I arose early and aroused Allison as I passed his room. When I descended to the lower room for breakfast, there was an air of suppressed excitement about the place that attracted my attention. My curiosity was soon set at rest by the waiter to whom I gave my order. He informed me that one William Bradley had been killed the night before by a falling meteorite! His body had been found early in the morning in a field on the Nash farm!

Bit by bit I drew out the meager details the waiter was possessed of. Bradley had been killed as he was crawling over or through a fence. His head had been frightfully crushed when the fiery object struck him. I learned too, that Bradley had been visiting Nash and had started for his home, across fields, at about 9 o'clock. I remembered that it was scarcely fifteen minutes after this time when Allison and I saw the sky-visitor plunge to the earth. Allison's judgment of distance had been correct. The meteorite certainly had struck close at hand!

Tommy came downstairs a short time later and lingered over his breakfast as I told him the story. When I had concluded and he had finished munching his toast, he spoke.

"I think our fishing trip has blown up, Baker," he said. "I can hardly throw the paper down on a story like that. We'll look into the thing, and I dare say it will prove an unusual diversion to you. It's even something new for me and I'll rather enjoy it."

"All right," I agreed. "I've eaten. As soon as you're ready we'll go."

"We'll go now, then," he remarked rising from the table.

He slipped a tip into the waiter's hand and secured instructions as to the location of the Nash farm. We were off together and after ten minutes' walking arrived at the place, a great, old-fashioned, brick homestead setting close to the road, with its barns and stock sheds scattered about within a radius of a hundred yards. In the doorway of a long, narrow, low building a short distance from the house, was a man, who, from the description we had received, we knew to be Nash.

As we approached, he closed the door behind him and slipped a padlock into the latch. Allison introduced himself as having come from the *Tribune* and we soon heard the story from Nash's lips. Bradley had visited with him the night before and had left for home at about 9 o'clock. Nash said he had not seen the meteorite fall and knew nothing of the affair until his hired man came running in with the story that Bradley had been killed in a field about half way to his home. Nash went with the man to the scene of the tragedy and found Bradley lying beside the broken fence. He dug the meteorite up with a hoe he happened to have in his hands. It was still warm.

Allison finally induced Nash to guide us to the spot where Bradley had been found and the three of us set off, Tommy keeping up a running fire of mixed and apparently irrelevant questions regarding Bradley, his family, his means, and so on.

As we topped a small knoll, Nash reached out his arm.

"There," he said, pointing to the south, "is where it happened. You can see the piece of fence that was broken down."

I followed his direction and saw a long, low, three-board fence dividing two rolling meadows. A portion of it, hardly more than a five-foot section,

was broken down. As we neared the spot I could see the earth torn up, where the meteorite struck and had been dug out later. On the scene of the tragedy Allison inquired for the man who had found the body and Nash replied that he had gone to town but would return in the evening.

"It's of no consequence," Tommy assured him. "I thought I might be able to get a few more details from him."

The half hour's scrutiny which Allison gave the scene and its surroundings bored me exceedingly and I was glad when he said he had seen enough. We headed back to the house with Nash then, and Tommy announced that he would go to the hotel and send his story to the *Tribune*.

We had gone scarcely one hundred yards down the road when Allison grabbed me and pulled me into the hedge.

"Come on now," he said, laughing at my surprise. "Step lively. This is no fishing trip. We're on business to-day."

"What do you want?" I grumbled.

"I want you to stick close to me," he answered, "and keep behind this little rise, out of sight of the people in that house. We'll skirt the Nash place and go to Bradley's."

"Why on earth don't you take the road?" I objected.

Tommy grinned. "It isn't always advisable to let other people know what you're going to do, Baker," he chuckled. "It's none of Nash's business where we go, and what he doesn't know wont hurt him. I want to get all I can out of this thing without having the various parties smother the details in a general story, understand?"

I nodded. "Come on, then, let's hustle," I advised him. "This thing's drying out for me. You spent enough time at that broken fence to get material for twenty stories."

Tommy said nothing, but quickened his pace as he walked, half-stooped, behind the low ridge that hid us from the sight of the Nash house. When we struck a thin, scattered wood he slowed up.

"Now we're all right," he assured me. "We can cut right through these fields. We'll be there in five minutes."

We were, and found in the house of sorrow, neighbors and friends endeavoring to console and assist the bereaved family. Tommy drew aside one of the men and engaged in a brief, whispered conversation. Finally he turned to me.

"Come on," he said. "I've secured permission to look at Bradley."

I halted, undecided, and then made up my mind.

"No," I replied. "I've no desire to view such a grewsome sight. You'll have to go alone."

Tommy waited not to argue the question with me but went inside. I stayed in the yard and walked about until he reappeared some minutes later. There was a burning light in his eyes and his hand trembled on my arm as he led me away from the house.

"Baker," he said, in a voice of forced calmness. "I'll tell you something if you'll agree to keep the secret."

"Fire away," I urged.

"That man was no more killed by a meteorite than was Julius Cæsar."

"What's that?" I questioned, unable to grasp the import of his statement.

"I said, 'that man was no more killed by a meteorite than was Julius Cæsar,'" he repeated. "He was murdered!"

I stopped stock still in my tracks and gazed at him, aghast. Incredulity must have shown in my face.

"You needn't look like that," he declared. "It's the honest truth. I know what I'm talking about, and I'll show you that I do later on."

"Why man, you're crazy," I cried, unable to bring myself to believe him. "Everything is clearly against such a thought!"

"Everything seems to be against it," he corrected.

"But we saw it ourselves, last night!" I reminded him.

"I know it, I know it," he admitted. "And that's something I'm not able to figure out. But we'll get there, Baker. We'll get there."

"*You* may," I answered caustically, "but as for me, it seems to be too much the fiction of a brilliant imagination to be followed very far."

Tommy hunched his shoulders and we walked on in silence for some distance. Then he finally spoke again.

"It's very likely," he remarked, half to himself, "that this meteorite story has already reached the city. If it hasn't, it soon will, and that means that every one of the other papers will send a man down here hot foot. I'm going to ask McCray to assign Holwell to this thing, that'll give me a chance to work, unobserved, on the murder end of it. Holwell can catch the other fellows and tip me off if they hit the right trail. I actually believe they'll fall for this meteorite gag, though. You have, haven't you?" he observed, teasingly.

We arrived at the hotel in time for luncheon. After eating I went with Allison to the telegraph office, where he filed a lengthy code message to McCray, his city editor.

"That'll bring Holwell on the hop, skip and jump," he predicted.

When his code telegram was finished Allison wrote a longer note, folded it, and handed the paper to me.

"When Holwell comes," he said, "give him this. You'll know him by his red hair, and he'll have his right hand in his coat pocket, unless he's changed his habits since I saw him last. He'll inquire for you at the hotel. Don't give it to any one else. I'm going back to the house for a change of clothes and then I'll duck. You toddle along some distance behind me."

With a wave of his hand he dodged out of the telegraph office and was gone.

II

As Allison had predicted, the afternoon train from the city brought a corps of newspaper men, and among them, as they bustled up to the Inn, was a dapper little fellow with bristling red hair. I recognized him as Holwell. He rubbed his nose nervously with one finger as he stepped up onto the hotel veranda and, after eyeing the few men sitting there for a moment, he came over to me. His right hand went into his coat pocket as he approached.

"Mr. Baker?" he inquired politely, and I nodded.

"I'm Holwell," he said. "Allison told you—"

"Yes, he told me," I interrupted, as I rose with a smile and grasped his hand.

In the grill-room we talked of the fatal occurrence over our ale, and I told Holwell many details with which he was not familiar and which Allison had not mentioned in the note entrusted to my care.

"As far as the meteorite story is concerned," Holwell finally said, "there's mighty little for me to do. I'm here merely as a blind to cover Allison's movements from the rest of the fellows, as you probably know. I'll have to go along with the bunch to make things look good, and file stories regularly to the paper on the thing as it seems to be, until Allison is ready to spring his sensation."

His remark gave me the opening I had been seeking during the conversation.

"And do you really think it's murder?" I asked.

Holwell raised his brows and tapped his glass with the heavy ring he wore.

"If Allison says a thing is so," he replied, "it's a pretty safe bet he knows what he's talking about. He's sharp, he is, beyond the ordinary by far. It's a ten to one shot the other fellows wont fall into his view of the affair, and I'm blamed certain I never could have figured it out that way. But Allison's old in the business, and shrewd, and mighty observing.'

The concert of voices in the Inn office told us the newspaper men were off in a squad for the Nash farm, and Holwell arose.

"You'll come along, wont you?" he queried. "I'll trust you in that bunch since Allison says you're O. K.," he finished, laughingly.

"Yes, I'll go," I assented. "It'll be fun to watch the other fellows on the trail."

We followed closely in the rear of the bunch as they ranged over the Nash place to the spot Allison and I had visited in the morning. The men stamped around the scene of the tragedy, leaned on the broken fence, and passed comments on the affair. Holwell and I merely walked among them and listened to the conversation. It was fun for us. Whatever their thoughts may have been, by their expressed opinions the rest of

the fellows were well satisfied with the meteorite story and evidently discerned nothing to lead them to anything else. To tell the truth, neither Holwell nor I, though we looked sharply, could see an iota of evidence to substantiate Allison's theory.

With one accord the fellows turned back to the village for a look at the sky visitor that had done the damage, and Holwell and I followed.

"I haven't seen the thing yet," I declared. "We'll go along."

We found the meteorite at the general store, where the proprietor was exhibiting it as a trade-drawing device. The bowlder was shaped like a large egg and was probably 15 or 16 inches in length. It had a smooth, hard surface over which was spread a peculiar, black, soot-resembling substance. Some of this had been rubbed off by the stone's plunge into the ground and by the frequent handling to which it had been subjected.

After the examination of the big rock, the newspaper men went back to the hotel to eat supper and later to scribble off accounts of the tragedy for their respective papers. Holwell sat down with the rest and spent considerable time over his story. I smiled as I noted the gist of it.

"Is that what you're going to print to-morrow morning?" I asked.

"Sure," Holwell half whispered. "We'll go along with the rest of the papers on this story until Allison is prepared to hand out our own sensation. It's a dead certainty that these fellows haven't struck the trail, for unless I'm mistaken Allison got his best clue up at Bradley's and this bunch never so much as thought it worth while to go near the place. The game's too deep for them all right."

After gossiping with the rest of the newspaper men on the veranda of the hotel until 11:30 o'clock, Holwell and I retired. I had invited the youngster to share my room with me and he had accepted. We had partly disrobed when he slipped on his clothes again and announced his intention of making another visit to the telegraph office.

"I'm going to get a peek at those other stories," he explained. "It's the only way to be sure." He crept out quietly and I heard him descending the creaky rear stairs. He came back in a very few minutes and announced that everything was all right.

"How does it come that you were able to look at the copy the other men filed?" I inquired.

Holwell grinned and pulled a half-filled bottle from his pocket.

"Here's the combination to that operator," he laughed. "I soon sized him up."

The youngster's resourcefulness and self-confidence were amazing.

Some time after 1 o'clock I was awakened by the lad crawling over me. As I sat up in bed the patter of pebbles sounded against the window pane. Holwell looked out.

"It's Allison," he exclaimed, under his breath. "He'll be up here in a minute and we'll find out what he's got."

A few moments later there was a soft rap at our door and Holwell opened. Allison came in, shook hands with the youngster and me and sat down.

"Well, what have you learned?" Holwell queried at once.

"Now, be patient, kid," Allison teased, "and I'll tell you all I know, but I came here to-night more for the purpose of giving orders than anything else. Are the others on?"

"Nope," was the confident answer.

"Seen their copy?"

Holwell nodded and Allison had to laugh.

"It was real sensible of you to take that precaution," he praised.

After a moment's thought he went on. "What I want you to do, Holwell," he said, "is to let McCray know the minute these other fellows quit the place. Unless they stumble onto something they'll probably go to-morrow. To cover our game, you'll have to go along. Fall off unobserved at one of those two-by-four stations between here and Belle Valley and scud back to this burg as quickly as a livery rig will let you. And Baker," he concluded, turning to me, "when he gets back, bring him up to the woods where you and I turned off to go to Bradley's. I'll be waiting there."

I inferred by his silence that he had finished his instructions to Holwell, and impatient to know the latest, I asked:

"Aren't you going to tell us any news?"

Allison stretched out full length across the bed, his hands clasped behind his head.

"To tell the truth, fellows," he asserted, slowly, "I've got mighty little to talk about. Not half as much as I expected to have by to-night. I'm camping at a little farmhouse just over the ridge behind Bradley's, and have done considerable snooping around to small advantage.

"I turned up one mighty peculiar phase of the case yesterday afternoon, however, when I heard Mrs. Bradley's story. Bradley, much to my surprise, was an inventive genius, and at the time of his death was engaged in perfecting an appliance designed to give aeroplanes automatic stability. In the long, low building we saw on the Nash farm is an aeroplane partially completed, upon which the creation of Bradley's mind has been worked out.

"Tests on a working model had proven that the man's improvement was successful beyond all possible doubt, and Nash agreed to finance Bradley in building an aeroplane if a tight partnership were formed. It was done, but when Nash saw that considerable money was likely to result from the patent, a haggling sprang up over the division of the proceeds, Nash claiming the greater share because he had risked his cash in the venture, and Bradley claiming the major portion because it was his invention.

"Bradley probably never told his wife just how serious his differences with Nash were, but the woman did know that her husband had been offered $5,000 for his interest in the strange partnership. When he refused to accept it, Nash had threatened to burn the shop aeroplane in course of construction rather than submit to Bradley's demands. This the man had told his wife, and though the difficulty was patched up for the time being in some manner, the story furnished me with a mighty plausible motive, for other neighbors have told me that Nash's avarice beggars description.

"I have also learned that our friend Nash is badly agitated over the tragedy, so much so that he has taken to roaming the fields in an effort to settle his disturbed mind. It must be an awful shock to have one's close friend killed by a meteorite, eh? Now, unless Nash beats me to it, I think I'll have a very interesting bit of evidence to exhibit to you and Holwell when you come to the woods to-morrow, or rather this evening. I'd almost forgotten it's early morning, and that reminds me I've a little errand I must do before day-break, so good-by."

Allison went out as abruptly as he had finished his story and left Holwell and me gazing at each other through the darkness of the room.

III

Allison had guessed right. The afternoon train from the West Lake bore away the small squad of newspaper men who had been assigned to special duty on the meteorite story and Holwell went with them. As I did not expect him back for several hours, I walked about the village and returned to loaf on the veranda of the hotel. Holwell showed up at about 5 o'clock, the livery horse dripping with foam and the driver considerably perturbed at the prospect of driving a tired animal back home.

"I had to go a blamed sight farther than I expected to," Holwell explained. "We reached Linesville before I found an opportunity to slip away from the bunch and fall off. It's been one grand, hot drive over here. We'd better eat before we go up to the woods, eh?"

I agreed, and we went inside to supper. We speculated upon Allison's work for the day and wondered anxiously whether he had met with the success he hoped for. At the conclusion of our meal we started for the place where Tommy had bidden us to meet him. As we approached the edge of the woods nearest our path, Allison rolled from beneath some bushes into the thick grass, and rising, greeted us with a laugh. There was an exultant tone to his voice as he grabbed us by the arms and cried out:

"I have it! I have it!" He dragged us over to the clump of bushes where he had been hidden.

"Look here," he said, with shining eyes, as he held up to our view a heavy, blackened paper cylinder. "See that! That's the meteorite we saw fall, Baker! A rocket! and here," he dodged into the bushes again and hauled out a bundle of wire that might have formed the foundation of a woman's summer hat, "is the framework of the big paper balloon that bore it aloft. A time fuse did the rest, and it was a mighty good imitation, we'll have to admit."

I started in dumb amazement. Holwell was quivering with excitement.

"Then the story goes to-night?" he cried.

"Yes," Allison returned, "and we wont trust it to the wires, either. They might leak. You take it to town on that evening train. And tell McCray I've the goods to furnish the climax and I'll give it to him to-morrow morning."

Allison yanked a roll of paper from his pocket and handed it to Holwell.

"Hurry to make that train," he ordered. "And be back on the early morning train. Bring a man from headquarters with you. Merrill will give you one on the strength of that story; and we'll need him. Tell McCray to hold open for an extra at about 10 o'clock in the morning. Now, so long."

Holwell started for the station, while Allison and I stood and watched him hurry across the fields. Finally Tommy spoke.

"Let's take a walk down to Nash's," he suggested. "I want to have a look at things."

We approached the place from the rear, having cut across the meadows, and found Nash nailing boards over a window in the long work-shop.

"Hello, Mr. Nash," Allison said, easily, as we walked up to the man. "What's wrong that you have to take such precautions? Are the neighbors nosey?"

Nash was plainly angry.

"Decidedly so," he said, viciously. "To such an extent that they actually broke into the place during the night. I'd like to know who did it. I'd make them sweat for the job, you can bet."

Our visit was brief. Nash did not seem inclined to talk and Allison did not attempt to break his shell of reserve. We walked down to the hotel and while I was dying to hear Tommy's story, I was too prudent to press him to tell what he cared to keep to himself. We talked little on the way to the Inn, but when we were in my room Allison unloosened his tongue.

"Now then," he said, with a smile, "I suppose you want to hear the whole thing?"

"I'll listen to all you care to tell," I answered, intimating that if he could bridle his tongue I could conquer my curiosity. Tommy snickered.

"I suppose I have been rather aggravating, Baker," he apologized. "But it's my nature. I'm selfish and want to keep everything to myself. But I know you're just dying to hear it," he concluded, with an absolutely detestable emphasis, as he leaned his chair against the wall and hooked his heels in the lower round.

"To begin with," he recalled, "you and I saw that meteorite fall, and we accepted it at its face value. In bed that night I got to thinking the thing over, and I'll put it to you now, just as it came to me then. Can you imagine what sort of a trail a rock, white-hot, would leave in traveling through space? Would its tail be made of seemingly minute crystals of fire as the thing we saw had, or would it be more apt to show a smooth, luminous flame as an appendage? While I had never seen a meteorite in flight before, the appearance of that thing the other night struck me as rather queer. It didn't coincide with my preconceived idea of how a meteorite should look. Just then, however, I let the matter pass, as I realized that these shooting stars are sometimes surrounded by mighty curious and unexpected conditions.

"The next morning we heard that a man had been killed by the thing. I was willing to accept that story as the truth, Baker; in fact, I had to, for the time being. But in all my life I had never before heard of a meteorite striking a person. Still I had to concede that such a thing might happen.

"It was at the scene of the tragedy on the Nash farm that my scattered thoughts on the subject first took the form of suspicion. Did you notice that fence? No, I remember now, you gave the scene nothing more than casual at-

tention. Well, on the top of each one of those broken boards was the unmistakable indentation of some heavy instrument. In other words, it showed that they had been broken, one at a time, by separate blows. If that meteorite had struck them, what in all probability would have been their appearance? Don't you think that red-hot rock would at least have left a few scorched splinters?

"And then the hole from which that big bowlder was dug. If you think, you will remember that it was fully a foot west of the line of the fence and slanted slightly from the east. Now, if the meteorite had fallen at that angle it could not possibly have touched the bottom board of that fence. The other two would have been struck slantingly, on the sides, not on the top, and the breaks would have splintered the boards in a much different fashion than they were. And, Baker, if that big rock had been dropped from the heavens, would it have stopped at a three-foot depth in that soft, sandy loam? Those are the thoughts that crowded my mind as we were examining the scene of the tragedy, and what I saw at Bradley's bolstered up my suspicions.

"You shied at taking a look at the dead man. I wish you had gone with me. You wouldn't have thought I was crazy when I told you he was murdered. What do you think would be the condition of Bradley's head had he been struck by that thing? Crushed to a pulp, eh? Well, it wasn't. The left side was stove in by two separate and distinct blows. And that was all. There were no signs of contact with a fire ball weighing maybe 15 pounds. There was nothing to indicate that the man had been struck with an object hurled with superhuman force. I've seen men hammered to death with clubs who bore marks more frightful than his.

"That convinced me the man had been murdered, though why, how, or what connection the meteorite bore to the crime, I had not then been able to conceive. And I haven't got to the bottom of the whole affair yet.

"You will remember Nash told us the body had been found by one of his farm hands. After I left here, the night before last, I crept down to the Nash place and had a talk with the man. He had just returned from the city, where Nash told us he had gone. He was a simple-minded fellow and he told a simple story. His employer had sent him out in the fields, early in the morning, to look for a cow that had not come in with the herd the night before. In making his search for the cow the man found Bradley's body. He ran back to the house, summoned Nash, and the two went out to the field again. As they rushed past the barn, Nash snatched up a hoe with which he later dug up the meteorite! The farm hand told me the rock was warm when Nash pulled it out of the hole and that the ground near it was dry, whereas the surrounding soil was moist!

"What do you think of those for unfavorable circumstances? I was stumped for a minute and almost believed I had let my imagination run away with me. But the man's answer to my next question put me back on the trail! Mr. Nash had made a mistake—the cow he thought lost had gone into the stock sheds with the rest of the cattle the night before. This they discovered later on.

"Then I started out on a hunt for evidence to establish the commission of the crime. As I told you when I was here last night, I had seen Nash wandering, aimlessly it seemed, about the fields adjoining the spot where the meteorite was found. I watched him for some time and was finally convinced that he was making a very thorough and systematic search for something.

"That gave me a tip, and when he went to his house early in the evening I took up the trail. I eliminated all the ground Nash had gone over and working farther to the south, trod through the tall grass for an hour and a half, fearful all the time that Nash would bob over the hill and catch me in the act. Suddenly, I stumbled over this old rocket case, and half of the meteorite mystery was solved for me. It certainly substantiated the murder theory to a remarkable degree and gave me a clue as to how Nash had attempted to cover his crime by one of the most elaborate schemes you have ever read about.

"The fact that we had seen the rocket only in descent assured me that it had not been shot into the air. I sat down then and tried to figure out how Nash could have raised it to the clouds, later to be dropped, aglow, to the earth. It came to me like a flash—by a balloon, of course! Within the radius of a hundred yards, but farther to the east, I found the balloon, of paper, with the thin tissue covering shattered to shreds!

"By the simple expedient of inflating that balloon with hot air, Nash had raised his rocket to the sky. A time fuse lighted the rocket and cut it loose for its spectacular plunge to the earth. In the wire frame of the balloon when I found it, was a long thin stick, fastened with small springs. The time fuse also released these, and the stick, striking against the tissue paper, ripped it from top to bottom and caused a rapid descent. Nash was too wise to burn the balloon in the air. It would have given the game dead away.

"All of these facts I was in possession of last night, when I visited you and Holwell in your room, but that streak of perversity in my nature prohibited me from telling of these things until I had succeeded in connecting Nash with the rocket and balloon. You will remember I told you I had a very important errand to attend to before daybreak. I came directly to the Nash place from the hotel, sneaked around to the rear of the workshop and broke in through the window you saw Nash nailing up as we came by.

"Inside I found some pieces of tissue paper identical with that used in the balloon, and I also found another rocket fully prepared and ready for use and the cardboard shell of a third one. But these things were of small importance compared with my other discovery. Nash, feeling secure in the complexity of his ruse, had neglected to do away with the instrument with which he had slain Bradley! Thrown under a bench, among shavings and pieces of wood, was a large sledge hammer to which, smeared with blood, were these pieces of hair! Sheer luck put my hand on the thing."

Allison stopped for a moment and dug an envelope from a coat pocket. He handed it to me and I pulled open the flap. Inside were probably twenty or thirty dark hairs stuck together with blood. I was too wrapped up in the narrative to pass comment on his find, as I passed the envelope back to Tommy.

"I carried away the hammer," he went on, "a few pieces of the tissue paper and the empty rocket shell, with the certain conviction that Nash was the guilty man. With an overwhelming desire to get hold of something that would fasten the crime onto him beyond all possible doubt, I went back to Bradley's house this morning and looked over the clothes the unfortunate fellow wore on the night of the tragedy. I found this!"

Tommy reached in a coat pocket again and drew out another small bundle. He unwrapped a celluloid collar and handed it to me.

"See that finger print in blood? It is possible that it was made by one of the men who carried Bradley's body from the field to his house, but I'll gamble a fortune that it proves to be Nash's."

"You may be right," I asserted, "but might it not have been made by Nash after the body was found in the field?"

"No, for the hired man told me that neither he nor Nash touched the body until the neighbors came. He remained in the field with the corpse while Nash went to summon help, and he says that while he assisted in carrying Bradley home, Nash had no hand in it whatever. So there you are! All I want to find out is where Nash killed his man, where that blamed stone came from, and how it was heated. When Holwell comes back with his detective we'll gather in Nash and soon clear up the rest of this thing."

Allison retired to his own room in the hotel late in the evening and I went to mine. For me it was a night of sleeplessness, for I lay awake hours thinking over the incident and the things that Tommy had told me. The more I thought of them, the more I was convinced that he had figured out the situation to a nicety, and I was impatient for the morning and the thrilling experiences it promised.

I was awakened by Allison hammering on my door.

"Aren't you going to get up," he joked, when I called to let him know I was awake. "You sleep well with such creepy things on your mind." I smiled grimly. If he only knew!

It was nearly time for the morning train before we had finished breakfast, and Allison then suggested that we go to my room and wait for Holwell and the man from headquarters. They came, shortly after 8 o'clock, and I met Bingham, the detective.

The four of us went to Nash's farm, where we found the man engaged in hauling débris from the workshop and dumping it against the corner of the building. The scant ceremony with which he was taken into custody amazed me, and the horror and fright that shone in Nash's face I'll never forget to my dying day. It was apparent that the man, in his warped condition of mind, had expected his cunning scheme to work right, and the idea of arrest was farthest from his thoughts.

Nash had stopped his work as we approached his shop, and Allison, with the air of an animal about to launch itself upon its prey, reached out his hand and bade the fellow good-morning. Nash accepted the hand and acknowledged the salutation. In an instant Bingham had snapped a cuff on the wrist Allison had caught, and Nash was apprised of his arrest.

No sooner was Nash in custody than Allison turned to Holwell.

"McCray is waiting for this, for an extra, is he?" he queried.

Holwell could do no more than nod.

"Then hurry to my room at the hotel and in the top drawer of the bureau you'll find the story I wrote before I went to bed last night. It has everything up to this point. Shove it on the wire at once and tell McCray we'll send the wind-up in an hour. See that it's rushed through."

As Holwell dashed away to the Inn, Allison and Bingham led Nash into the house, where his elder sister, with whom he lived, fainted dead away when she heard the awful news. We brutally left her to the care of the hired man and hustled the cringing prisoner into another room. Nash's backbone was gone, and he dropped, wilted, into a chair by the table and buried his face in his arms.

Tommy left us and dashed out of the house, returning a few minutes later with a big bundle, wrapped up in newspapers, under his arm. This was laid on the floor and undone. Then he leaned over Nash and with a callousness that astounded me, poured into the ears of the broken man all the details of the murder as he had discovered them. Nash sat, with his face still buried, shaking with sobs, as the narrative went on. He was finally jerked back in his chair to face the bloody sledge with which the deed had been done, the burnt rocket, the fragments of the torn balloon and the pieces of cardboard and tissue paper found in his workshop. He was confronted with the story of Mrs. Bradley, who had told of the quarrels her husband had related to her, with the two deep holes found in the head of the dead man, and with the marks of the sledge where the boards of the meadow fence had been broken. I stood breathless with astonishment, watching and listening, until finally Tommy grabbed the man by the shoulders and almost screeched:

"It's right! It's right, isn't it? You did kill him, didn't you?"

Nash, ghastly white and choking, stared for a moment at Tommy's tense face, nodded, and then wilted in his chair. Allison dropped into a chair with a sigh and responded to Bingham's smile of satisfaction.

"It came easier than I expected," he whispered to me. And then aloud:

"Get him a drink, Baker, and when he recovers we'll hear his story."

It was half an hour before Nash regained his composure and was able to talk. Then, urged and questioned by Tommy and Bingham, he related, disconnectedly, the story of the crime.

He and Bradley had quarreled over the division of the proceeds which the patent promised. On the night of the murder, as he and Bradley were working in the shop, the old fight was renewed, after Nash had understood Bradley was agreeable to an equal division. In the heat of the argument Nash, who was working at the forge, swung at Bradley with the heavy sledge. Before he realized what he had done,

he had struck the man twice and Bradley was dead.

Realizing the consequences that would result from his awful deed, he sat down to devise some means of hiding the crime. He could not dispose of Bradley's body, for his family knew where he was and Nash would be held accountable. Then his mind, even in that moment of stress, hatched the cunning meteorite scheme.

Nash said he and Bradley had almost completed their aeroplane. In fact, they were to make the first flight within a week. As a means of surprising the natives the machine was to be sent up at night, in Bradley's hands, and he was to drop several of the rockets which he and Nash were making for that special purpose.

As Nash sat thinking, his eye lighted upon the one finished rocket and the scheme was at once formed in his mind. When it was about 8:30 o'clock in the evening, he set to work to carry it out. From the tissue paper he and Bradley had used in experimenting with models, he constructed the balloon and formed its rude foundation from what wire he found in the shop.

He tied the rocket to the framework of the balloon and manufactured a time-fuse that would burn through the string, thereby releasing the rocket and firing it. Then he inflated the balloon over the forge, pasted a piece of tissue paper over the lower aperture, and sent the contrivance aloft. He had realized that he must dispose of the balloon as it might furnish a clue, and knowing that to burn it would undoubtedly lead to the early discovery of his scheme, he devised the simple expedient of tearing the paper with the stick and springs, the time-fuse again effecting the release.

Everything worked to perfection and Nash was certainly justified in believing that his ruse had successfully hidden his crime.

After he had arranged his aerial display the rest was easy. In the early hours of the morning he carried Bradley's body to the field where it was found, broke the boards of the fence with the same sledge that had killed the man, and laid the corpse among the wreckage. Then he got a post-hole digger and sunk a place for the bogus meteorite.

Just before daybreak he barred a big rock from the foundation of his workshop, heated it in the forge and carried it to the spot in a tin pail. He dumped it in the hole he dug and threw in just enough earth to keep its warmth and make the thing look plausible. When his hired man showed up to do the chores he sent him to the fields to look for the cow that was never lost. It was unnecessary for him to say any more.

Tommy motioned to me when Nash had finished and I followed him outdoors.

"I want to have a look around that workshop," he said, "I've an idea what we see will substantiate his statements in every respect."

We first went to the heap of débris Nash had been hauling out of the shop as we approached, and kicking away the pile of sticks and shavings, exposed a great, gaping hole in the foundation.

"Well, there's where the meteorite came from, Baker," Tommy announced. "Let's go in the shop. I didn't have a very good chance to look around when I was here before."

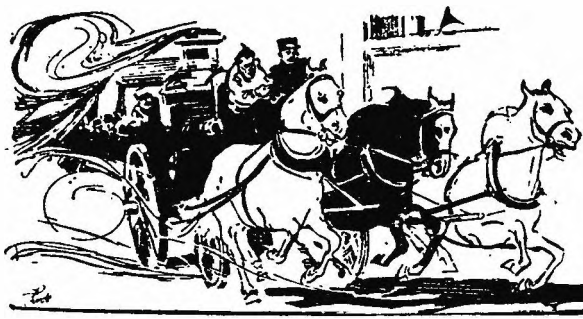
Inside was the great white aeroplane Bradley and Nash had been building, and in one dark corner was a small, portable forge. From beneath a workbench Tommy hauled out a long-handled post-hole digger, to which was clinging some soft loam.

"Well, so far, so good," he remarked, as he held up the instrument.

His eyes roved to the dark floor for one brief instant and then Allison dropped the implement he had in his hand.

"Baker, look here," he urged, as he grabbed my arm, "we're at the bottom of the West Lake meteorite mystery at last!"

He pointed to a dark, dry blood stain in a corner beside the work-bench.



Holly of "Big Nine"

By FRANK X. FINNEGAN

THIS is the third of a series of six complete short stories, in each of which Mr. Finnegan will record the steps taken by Holly in achieving a lieutenancy in a great city's greatest fire station, where traffic is thickest in the streets and where the fireman risks his life at the clang of a gong.

No. III—A RISE FROM THE RANKS

PIPEMAN Ned Holly, accustomed as every fireman is to surprises, sudden alarms and the happening of the unexpected, was none the less agitated when Capt. McDermott ordered him to report to the office of Chief Doyle at his earliest convenience, throwing a veil of mystery about the matter that piqued the curiosity of every other member of "Big Nine" as keenly as it did that of Holly himself.

"I don't know what it's about," declared McDermott, "but when I was in headquarters this morning the old man told me he wanted to see you and I said I'd shoot you right down there as soon as I got back. He said there wasn't that much hurry about it, but I suppose you might as well go this afternoon as any time."

"In on the carpet, eh?" commented Jim Doody, making a sly kick at his friend Holly—who was playing with Roxy, the company's dog. "I thought he'd get you sooner or later. You went to that run we had out to the brewery last week without any necktie on—he'll probably set you back five days' pay for that."

Holly laughed as he held out a stick for the dog to jump at.

"Yes, and I didn't have my rubber boots shined, either," he admitted. "Maybe that's it. Well, if I get fired I guess 'Big Nine' will worry along without me."

Lieutenant Ambrose, who had been ostentatiously attending to his newspaper and avoiding the conversation, as he usually did when Holly was the center of a group, looked over the top of the paper at this sally long enough to scan the pipeman from head to foot with a sneering smile.

"No, I'm afraid we'd have to shut up shop and go out of business if you left us," he drawled. "That would be a calamity."

A sharp retort rose to Holly's lips and his face flushed angrily but before he spoke he caught the eye of Captain McDermott and a quick shake of the head with which the company commander urged him to ignore the slur.

"I wouldn't be surprised if you had a boost waiting for you down there," interjected the captain. "You remember what the chief said to you about wanting some new lieutenants that day we were at the Belvidere apartment house fire? Maybe that's what he wants to see you about."

"I'll bet it is!" declared Doody. "Cap', you've hit it right! Chief Doyle isn't the man to make a bluff like that without making good the first time he has a chance."

Holly tossed the stick to the end of

the engine house for Roxy to chase and turned with a doubting smile.

"Oh, no," he protested, "nothing like that! Why, that was nearly three months ago—he's forgotten all about me long ago. He only said that because he wanted to hand me a little bouquet that day—I think you put him up to it, Cap'."

"Not on your life!" declared McDermott, warmly. "He was right there on the job and saw you save that woman with your belt when the ladder fell short and he told me then that he would like to have a few lieutenants like you—fellows that used their brains once in a while. He said he had too many of the other kind now."

Lieutenant Ambrose threw down his newspaper, stood up and stretched his arms above his head, looking at Holly with a superior smile.

"Rather a new idea, isn't it," he said to McDermott. "To make a lieutenant out of a man in his first year on the department? In my time a man had to show something before he got advanced."

"I think we can leave that part of it to the chief," retorted Holly, quietly. "He's done pretty well so far at running the department without calling in a board of strategy to help him."

The undisguised enmity of the lieutenant was the principal thing Holly had had to contend with since the day he joined "Big Nine" as a new pipeman six months before. Ambrose had bitterly resented the assignment of a recruit to the "crack" engine company of the city before the youngster had gone through a course of training at an outlying "house" and he had been at no pains to conceal his attitude from Holly. The rapid progress of the new pipeman in the esteem of his fellows, his quick perception of a fireman's duties and his daring in their performance, had all tended to intensify the lieutenant's dislike through that strange quirk in some natures which leads them the more bitterly to oppose those whom they have misjudged when the error of judgment is manifest. Ambrose had slated Holly for a failure from the outset and he seemed to resent the fact that his guess had turned out wrong. Thereupon he had persistently made the young fellow the victim of such petty tyrannies as were within his power as the junior officer of the company, hoping to break his spirit or provoke him to an overt resentment which might be classed as insubordination. Holly, however, keeping a tight rein on his temper, bided his time and swallowed the slights and innuendoes of the lieutenant as best he could, determined not to play into the hands of his jealous superior by openly quarreling.

As he started to the City Hall that afternoon to answer the summons of the chief, his spirits were as light as though Ambrose were on another planet. Despite the doubt he had so quickly expressed in regard to the possibility of a promotion being the object of his call "on the carpet," he had high hopes that it might be so. The Fire Marshal had specifically mentioned a lieutenantcy when he stopped to compliment him for his heroism at a fire three months before—why should it not be possible that the time for his promotion had come? Ordinarily such promotions were first announced in general orders issued from headquarters, but none of Holly's career with "Big Nine" had been along ordinary lines and it would be by no means surprising should his first advancement from the ranks be marked by an unusual circumstance. With his mind prepared for anything the Fates might send him, he walked into Chief Doyle's office—but the Fates were busy before he arrived and had the stage set for his appearance.

"I am Ned Holly, of 'Big Nine,'" he reported to the attendant in the outer office. "The chief sent word he wanted to see me."

"Holly?" repeated the clerk, glancing at memorandum pad. "Oh, yes. Walk right into the private office—the chief is out but will be back in a few minutes."

Holly pushed open the swinging door to the sanctum, stepped inside—and found himself looking into the laughing eyes of a pretty girl who was lolling languidly in a big chair beside the open desk of the Fire Marshal. She sprang up as he entered and when Holly, murmuring an apology, began to retreat to the outer office, she called him back.

"Don't go on my account—please," she said. "I'm just waiting."

He had re-entered by that time and as he looked full at her for the first time, he gave a little start of surprise. At the same instant she stopped short in her explanation and cried impulsively:

"Why, its *my* fireman!"

The blush that suffused her charming face when she realized what she had said was as nothing compared to the wave of crimson that Holly felt sweeping over his neck and features as he recognized the girl he had rescued from annoyance by a street "masher" a few months before and whom he had seen momentarily in the crowd at the Belvidere Apartments fire where he distinguished himself as a lifesaver.

"How do you do?" he stammered awkwardly. "I—I'm very glad to meet you again."

"I didn't mean to say what I did," she exclaimed. "It just slipped out! You see, I always have referred to you as 'my fireman' since that time you were so kind to me—because—well, you know I am Chief Doyle's daughter."

Holly was recovering his equilibrium by that time and he managed to place his hands on the back of a chair and call up a smile of friendliness to aid in dissipating their mutual embarrassment.

"So I was told," he said.

"Who told you?" she demanded at once, looking at him archly.

"One of the boys of 'Big Nine,'" he laughed. "Why do you ask?"

"That's just what I want to know," she persisted. "Why did you ask?"

"Let's sit down," he suggested. "I've been sent for by your father for some mysterious reason and I've got to wait until he returns. I hadn't counted on the good fortune of finding you here—now I'll welcome any dose of discipline he may hand out."

She dropped into the big chair beside the desk and Holly sat near her. Now that the awkwardness of his sudden discovery was past, he was enjoying the situation to the utmost and he resolved to make the most of it before the return of the chief should end it.

"I asked you why it was you inquired about me," she suggested.

"For the very good reason that I wanted to know," said Holly boldly. "You don't imagine I had forgotten you after that meeting on the street! Why, I kept an eye open for you every time I got into a crowd after that—I had half an idea that I would see you again some place. You know, you did leave me very unceremoniously that day—without giving me time to catch my breath."

"Why, the very idea!" laughed Miss Doyle. "As if you expected me to give my card to a man I had never seen before!"

"No, it wasn't that," admitted the fireman. "But I thought—well, I don't know just what I thought. But I knew I'd like to see you again and then, that day at the fire, when you spoke to me as I passed, of course I asked who you were. And, luckily for me, my old friend Doody happened to know."

"And then what?" she asked breathlessly.

"Nothing after that," continued Holly with a smile, "until I walk in here and you call me 'your fireman.' I think there are a few explanations coming from your side of the desk."

"Oh, that!" she exclaimed, blushing again at the recollection. "I was going to tell you about that at the start—it was too absurd! You see, father doesn't want me to know any firemen—he has always refused to take me around with him when he visits the engine houses and all that, although I've begged to go with him for the fun of it. So when I told him about that dreadful experience on the street and how you came to my rescue, I wanted to know who you were."

"Thank you," interrupted Holly, "I am more than honored."

"Why, of course I would want to know!" she protested. "Especially as you belong to the department—and I have been in the atmosphere of the fire department ever since I was born! But father wouldn't do a thing to help me find out—said I was better off without knowing—and then when I saw you saving that woman at the Belvidere and asked him about you, he wouldn't tell me a thing! So just for fun and to tease papa, I've called you 'my fireman' whenever I spoke about it."

"Which I hope was often," ventured

Holly. "And now, if you will allow me, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Holly."

"I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Holly," she said with mock gravity, "I am Miss Doyle."

They were laughing merrily over their little farce when the door was flung open and Chief Doyle stalked in and stopped, staring in surprise. Holly arose in some confusion and bowed diffidently. It remained for the girl to save the situation.

"Papa, this is Mr. Holly, the gentleman who came to my rescue when I was spoken to on the street that time," she said. "He came down to see you and found me here, so we have been in a way renewing a rather informal acquaintance."

The chief nodded brusquely to the pipeman and then a slow smile spread over his grizzled features.

"I don't suppose there's any need of my introducing you to each other," he said. "You seem to have saved me the trouble. I want to talk to you a few minutes, Holly."

Marguerite slipped toward the door but her father checked her exit.

"Don't go," he said, seating himself at the desk. "This isn't any secret and I'll be through in a minute. You remember I told you some months ago that I would need a new lieutenant one of these days," he went on, turning to the fireman.

"I have never forgotten it," said Holly with a smile.

"Well, I've kept you in mind ever since," continued Chief Doyle. "And now I've arranged things so I can give you that promotion you have been waiting for. I am sending out a general order this afternoon making several transfers and other changes in the department and one of them is that you rank as lieutenant, taking effect at 7 o'clock this evening."

"I don't know how to thank you, chief," began Holly, but the Fire Marshal cut him short.

"Don't try," he said shortly. "There is nothing to thank me for. Any member of this department who gets a promotion has to earn it first—then it's coming to him and there is no reason why I should get any thanks for giving him his due."

"I suppose this will mean that I am to be transferred from Big Nine," suggested Holly.

"No, you will stay right where you are," said the chief. "That is one of the changes I am making. Big Nine has enough work to keep two lieutenants busy and you can divide it up with Ambrose. By the way," he added, "I understand he and you don't quite hit it off down there."

"Well, I think he would be better pleased if I were at some other house," admitted Holly with a smile, "But I don't let him bother me much."

"That's right," Doyle growled into his beard. "You just tend to your business and don't mind that fellow. You'll probably have less trouble with him now that you will be on an even keel with him—he's one of those fellows that like to rub it in on those that happen to be under his orders. McDermott has told me something about it and that's one reason. I'm glad to give you this promotion, so he wont be able to annoy you. That's all, Holly."

The newly made lieutenant arose and had begun again to murmur his thanks when Marguerite, who had been listening with a happy little smile, came forward with outstretched hand.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you, Lieutenant Holly," she said. "I know you will wear your new honors well."

He took her hand and as he bowed over it a moment, smiling his thanks, the chief looked up again.

"Oh, by the way," he said. "I forgot to thank you for the service you did my daughter that day. I am very much indebted to you. But don't think for a minute it had anything to do with this lieutenantcy business," he added stormily.

Holly laughed.

"I am not as foolish as that," he said. "What I did is not worth mentioning—I just happened to be lucky enough to be on the spot. Good afternoon, Chief—and Miss Doyle," he added, bowing himself out. He hurried through the outer office and down the long marble hall to the street.

"Lieutenant Holly!" His pulses beat rapidly with excitement and delight as he repeated the phrase in his mind and he found himself smiling outright in his happiness as he hastened through the crowds in the street. At last it had come—the promotion he had dreamed of and hoped for, that would place him on an equal rank with his enemy, Ambrose, that would give him a title and the decoration of the silver trumpets for his coat collar! And to make his cup of joy overflow, the girl he had sought so long had witnessed his elevation from the ranks and had cemented the friendship begun under such unconventional circumstances.

Suddenly, above the roar and clatter of the street noises his quick ear caught a sound which sent his day-dreams flying and brought him to a pose of alert attention while he sought for its source—the clang of a fire engine gong! A fireman, like a policeman, is always on duty if an emergency presents itself; and although Holly was still on leave of absence from the engine house for his visit to the chief's office, he felt himself as much bound to join in that "run" as though he had been sitting under the "joker" when the alarm struck in. He saw the crowds scatter right and left at the crossing as the clangor of the gongs grew louder and more insistent; and then the gray noses of the dashing team that pulled the engine of "Big Nine" swung around the corner in Holly's direction. Close behind the smoking engine the rest of the apparatus was thundering and rattling over the cobblestones as Holly stepped off the curb, waved his hand to the boys on the hose-wagon where he usually rode, and waited for the lumbering hook and ladder truck that brought up the rear and, with its side running-board, offered the best chance for a flying leap from the pavement. As it drew near Holly saw O'Brien swing out from the truck with a welcoming arm outstretched to help him and he seized a stanchion and swung himself aboard and into O'Brien's clutch without difficulty.

"What is it?" he shouted into the ear of the big fireman who held him momentarily until he was sure of his footing.

"I don't know," yelled O'Brien. "A 'still' from some place—I was asleep when it came in."

The truck turned the next corner and when Holly glanced ahead as it rounded the curve he saw their destination. Crowds were running from every direction toward the Grand Hotel, one of the largest as it was the oldest hostelry of the city; heavy clouds of smoke pouring from the windows above the first floor told him that the fire had already gained considerable headway in the flimsy old building.

"There we are!" he cried, pulling off his coat and reaching for a heavy canvas jacket that lay across the ladders. "We've got a day's work ahead of us here!"

Tucking his natty uniform cap under his coat, he donned one of the helmets swinging from a hook on the side of the truck and except for the lack of heavy boots, he was equipped for service. He dropped off the truck as it swung into position a few doors from the burning hotel and reported to Captain McDermott who had rattled past in his light buggy a few moments before.

"All right, Ned," yelled the captain. "Take hold wherever you can. I was afraid we wouldn't have you with us this time."

"I can smell smoke for two miles," retorted Holly with a grin. "You can't lose me as easily as that;" and he dashed into the fray with "Big Nine."

The Grand Hotel had been erected in an era of building construction when fire escapes were a minor consideration, when floors, stairways and wainscots were made of wood, when metal lath was undreamed of and steel girders had not been designed. As a result, it was a fire-trap through which the flames rioted as readily as they eat up the barrels and boxes of an election night bonfire, rushing up the stairways and elevator shafts, spreading right and left through the hallways and into the rooms with almost incredible rapidity. The occupants of the rooms on the second and third floors were aroused to their danger at the earliest outcry from the employees in the hotel office and fled to safety down the smoke-filled stair passages before the fire reached them. Some few of the

guests who had rushed to the old-fashioned ladder fire-escape in the belief that it was all that stood between them and cremation were laboriously crawling down the ladder when the firemen arrived and Capt. McDermott had a ladder raised to rescue them from where the fire-escape ended at the second story windows even before the engine had coupled up to the fire plug at the corner. Pipeman Holly, obeying the captain's instructions to take hold anywhere there was work to do, was the first to run up this ladder and, amid the cheers of the excited crowd, assist three hysterical women and two badly scared men to descend from the rusty old platform on which they had stood shrieking for help, although the fire had not begun to approach that part of the building.

By the time the last of these had reached the ground in safety, two leads of hose had been carried into the main door of the hotel by the men of "Big Nine" and another company had lined up to attack the fire on the flank through the side windows. Holly found himself standing beside Chief Doyle and Capt. McDermott in front of the building, with a moment's breathing space.

"Is everybody out?" asked the chief anxiously.

"That's what the clerk says," responded McDermott. "I got to him as soon as I reached here. Holly and Miller got those people off the fire escape and I think they were the last to leave. Here's the clerk now," he added as a wild-eyed little man rushed up to them, pointing madly behind him and gasping for breath.

"The help!" he moaned. "We forgot the help!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Doyle.

"The hotel girls live on the top floor," he gasped. "Some of them were asleep—I don't know if they all got out or not—they are on the roof of the annex behind the hotel and they can't get down."

Captain McDermott began to run toward the alley with Holly at his heels.

"Get a ladder up here, quick!" shouted McDermott. "Around in the rear! There's some people on this annex!"

Holly ran with him to the mouth of the alley beside the hotel and saw at a glance that even the longest ladder on the truck would not avail to reach the roof of the annex on which he saw half a dozen girls running wildly about amid billows of smoke, kneeling in prayer at the edge of the roof or calling wildly for help. That part of the hotel known as "the annex" was a smaller building in the rear of the hotel proper, joined to it by open hallways on each of three floors, but considerably narrower and one story lower than the main building. What Holly realized would defeat the efforts of the firemen to raise a ladder in the narrow alley was a high brick wall forming one side of an open yard behind the hotel, which would effectually prevent the end of a ladder from dropping across the width of the yard to the roof on which the shrieking girls were imprisoned. A ladder might with great labor be raised over the wall and dropped inside the yard, where it could be used to advantage, but there was scarcely time for such an attempt. Already the annex on the ground floor of which the kitchen was located, was a mass of flames and the roof threatened to fall in before many minutes elapsed.

"It wont do, Cap!" Holly yelled into McDermott's ear. "We can't handle a ladder here on account of that wall. I'll go up there and see what I can do from above!"

"Wait a minute!" shouted the captain. But Holly was gone; he feared if he remained another moment he might be ordered not to attempt the hazardous feat he had in mind and he dashed away before his commander could detain him. Into the smoke-wreathed doorway of the hotel he plunged, past Doody and "Spud" Miller and the rest of them who were playing on the blazing woodwork of the lobby from a point a few feet inside the entrance, and on up the stairway. It was so wrapped in smoke that Holly had to guide himself by the handrail as he struggled upward in the stifling heat but he had learned some tricks about breathing in such an atmosphere that served to protect his throat and lungs to some extent and he climbed the blazing stairways flight after flight almost as rapidly as though they were not being swept by smoke and flame. The rear rooms on the top floor were

given over to the employees, except the last two on either side of the hallway, which were used as store-rooms for old furniture and the brooms, sweepers and other equipment used by the help. All the doors stood open as they had been left when the terrified girls rushed to the rear window to escape the smoke and flames that met them at the stairway and as Holly passed rapidly along the hall he glanced into each room to assure himself that all had fled in time.

When he reached the window at the end of the hallway the roof of the annex was but a few feet below him and the six panic-stricken girls turned to him as their deliverer. The sight of his helmet and smoke-blackened face at the window seemed to be an answer to the prayers they had been sending up from the time they had jumped to the roof and found themselves trapped thirty-five feet from the ground with no means of escape from their temporary refuge.

"Save us! Save us!" shrieked the girls nearest the window. "The roof is going to fall in! We must jump!"

"Don't jump," yelled Holly, taking a quick survey of the situation from his vantage point at the window, "you will be killed! Hold on a few minutes—it will be all right!"

Behind the hotel stood an office building, the windows of the fourth floor of which were practically on a level with the roof of the annex but separated from it by a light-court about twelve feet wide. Holly saw that if he could bridge this gap in any way there would be a chance of dragging the six girls to safety; quick work would be necessary, as the flames were already bursting through the skylight in the roof of the annex and curling around its edges from the windows below. His only hope was to stumble upon something in the store-room that would serve to cross the chasm between the edge of the roof and the opposite wall. There was not one chance in a million of carrying the girls to safety down the blazing stairways by which he had just ascended—he doubted if he could himself escape by that route, so closely had the fire followed him. Turning into the smoke-filled store-room beside him, Holly looked around desperately for something that would mean the saving of six helpless women and perhaps himself from an awful death. And he found it. Stretching from end to end of the room against the rear wall, lay a step-ladder fully fifteen feet long that was kept for use in the old-fashioned high-ceilinged rooms and hallways of the hotel when house-cleaning and similar work was in progress. The fireman fell upon it with eager hands, dragged it to the window overlooking the roof and shoved it out.

"This will do the business, girls!" he shouted encouragingly to the moaning chambermaids and scrubwomen as he jumped down among them. "We'll be out of here in a few minutes!"

"No, no! We are going to burn!" shrieked one of the girls who was lying prone on the roof close to the coping. "My leg is broke!"

"You wont burn if you do what I tell you!" said Holly firmly. "Nobody's going to be hurt a bit!"

Meanwhile he had carried the step-ladder to a point on the edge of the roof directly opposite one of the windows in the office-building and raised it on end, planning to let it drop across the opening between the buildings, crash through the window and rest on the sill, forming a shaky but certain means of escape, provided the roof held until all were across. Around him the hysterical women gathered, begging and praying to be allowed to cross first—all but the one who lay helpless amid the smoke. In the street far below and the windows of a score of surrounding buildings, excited spectators who had been watching the girls penned up on the roof and fearing momentarily to see them swallowed up when it should cave in, sent up a cheer when Holly appeared with the step-ladder, although they did not understand how he expected to use it. When they saw him poise it opposite the window, his scheme was immediately apparent and a roar of approval and encouragement came to him above the throbbing of the engines and the noises of the fire. He was about to let the ladder drop forward when it suddenly occurred to him that a miscalculation of the distance or an accidental rebound of the step-ladder after it struck might cause it to fall into the light-court below, car-

rying with it their last hope of safety. If he only had a rope to anchor it by and control its fall after it left a perpendicular position! For an instant he had a wild idea of climbing back into the main hotel building and searching in the store-room for a coil of rope, but the billows of smoke and tongues of fire that were shooting from the window through which he had passed but a few moments before told him that was impossible.

Then an inspiration came to him as one of the women threw her apron over her head and began to rock forward and backward in despair. Those aprons; Each of the six women wore one and, knotted end to end, they would make a rope of considerable length and sufficiently strong for his purpose.

"Take off those aprons!" commanded Holly. "Quick, now! I need them!"

The weeping women dumbly obeyed, tossing the aprons at his feet while he lowered the step-ladder to the roof again. In a few moments he had knotted the aprons together and attached one end of his improvised rope to a step of the ladder about four feet from its lower end. The heat and smoke were increasing in volume so rapidly that he worked with feverish haste, for he heard crashes and booms from below that told him the floors of the annex had fallen in and it was a question of but a short time when the beams supporting the roof would be burned through. Raising the step-ladder once more, he calculated the distance to the window as nearly as he could with his eye so that the upper end of the ladder would strike the lower sash of the closed window opposite. Then, holding his rope of aprons with both hands, he let the ladder drop forward.

The hearts of a hundred spectators in the windows and on the roofs overlooking the blazing hotel stood still as the long ladder shot down toward the opposite building and then followed a tremendous cheer as it crashed through the glass of the lower sash and rested on the window-sill. The plan had succeeded—the daring fireman had built a bridge to safety!

Scarcely had the ladder settled into place when one of the panic-stricken girls rushed upon it and attempted to scramble across on her hands and knees, but Holly stopped her with a grip of steel on her shoulder.

"Here, you!" he yelled. "Are you going to run away and leave this girl with a broken leg to be burned! She goes across before any one else does!"

Turning quickly, he picked up the moaning woman who had broken her leg in jumping from the window to the roof and started to carry her across the frail bridge. As he looked toward the window on which the step-ladder rested his heart bounded with joy and relief for the streaming features of Pipeman "Jim" Doody were thrust through the broken glass and behind him hovered "Con" O'Brien, of "Big Nine's" truck crew. Capt. McDermott, realizing the drift of Holly's scheme as soon as he saw him at the edge of the roof with the ladder, had rushed a squad of firemen up through the office-building to help.

"Come on, Ned!" yelled Doody. "This will hold you! Hurry it along, old boy! You haven't got much time left!"

Carefully picking his way from step to step of the ladder, like a man walking the ties of a railroad trestle, Holly carried the moaning girl across the chasm and dropped her into the waiting arms of Doody. Then he retraced his steps to the blazing roof where the women were struggling for first chance at the ladder.

"Wait until I get across!" he shouted sternly and they fell back until he was again beside them.

"Hurry now—on your hands and knees!" he ordered, starting the nearest one on the dangerous trip. The flames curling around the edge of the roof, were licking the ends of the ladder as the girls crawled to safety one by one and were hauled through the window by Doody and O'Brien and thence hurried down the stairs of the building to the ambulance surgeons in the street. As the sixth girl started on her journey and Holly was left alone, the roof began to sag into the inferno of flames beneath it and the step-ladder was blazing fiercely at the hotel end. Doody shouted hoarsely a warning to Holly.

"Come ahead, Ned!" he yelled, reaching impatient hands to seize the last of the rescued women. "Your ladder is going! Hurry up!"

"All right!" called Holly. "It wont bear two of us now. I'm coming, all right!"

Shielding his face from the flames with his hands and arms, he crouched on the edge of the roof, watching with swollen and smarting eyes the progress of the girl—the triumph of his daring effort. Then, as she was dragged through the window to safety, he started across.

But he had waited a minute too long and the fire had eaten too deeply into the flimsy ladder that stretched between life and death. As he reached the center of it, crawling painfully toward the eager hands that were waiting to help him, there was a sharp crack, the weakened ends of the ladder snapped and Holly fell with it, down to the bottom of the light-court three stories below.

When next he opened his eyes he thought he was in his bed in the dormitory of "Big Nine's" house, for his glance rested on a white coverlet and everything was very quiet. But a sharp pain in his leg when he attempted to move and an indescribable odor of cleanliness, drugs and disinfectants wakened him to the truth—he was in a hospital! He had been hurt! Slowly it came back to him—that desperate journey across the light shaft, the snapping of the ladder, the fall—and then blankness. He wondered what had happened after that and carefully moving his head on his pillow, he saw a nurse making lace under an electric light a few feet away. He called to her softly and she came to him.

"Am I badly jammed up?" he asked. "I don't remember much about it."

"Oh, no," she said briskly. "You have a couple of broken ribs and a badly sprained leg. You'll be all right in a few weeks."

Holly groaned with dismay.

"A few weeks!" he echoed. "Great Scott! I don't want to stay here on my back for weeks!"

"Oh, that isn't bad," said the nurse with a smile. "Think how much worse it would be if you had broken your leg—then it might be a few months before you got around. You ought to be glad you got out so easily—and besides, you're a hero, you know! The newspapers are full of it—how you saved those six women and nearly lost your own life. You can read them after awhile."

"I don't want to read them," growled Holly. "That's all rot! What time is it?"

"Seven o'clock," replied the nurse. "And, oh! I nearly forgot! There's a young lady coming to see you at seven o'clock, provided you were awake then. She said if you were asleep, she'd wait until you woke."

"A young lady?" queried Holly, trying to sit up. "Who is it?"

"How should I know?" laughed the nurse. "I'll send her in and then you can find out. I guess you'll know her, all right."

She slipped out softly and a moment later Marguerite Doyle opened the door and tip-toed in with a great bunch of roses in her hands. She smiled shyly when her eyes met Holly's.

"I hope you wont mind my coming," she began. "I—I was at the fire and I saw it all—it was glorious!"

"Please don't!" said Holly, almost sharply. "It isn't fair to talk that way to a fellow when he's down."

"All right," she said contritely. "I wont. I know how you feel about it—you're just like papa. I guess all firemen are the same about the things they do like—like that. But I did want to know how you were and bring you these flowers, Mr. Holly."

"Thank you," said Holly, with a smile, "It's very good of you, indeed."

She came a step closer and laid the roses in his hands and he buried his face in them a moment while she stood by, smiling happily.

"And now that you have remembered my name," he said mischievously, "I suppose I'll be 'Mr. Holly' all the time—I wont be 'your fireman' any more."

Marguerite blushed but she looked at him with level, roguish eyes.

"Why, don't you know what time it is?" she asked.

"It's a little after seven o'clock," he replied wonderingly.

"Of course it is!" she said. "You're not 'my fireman' any more—you're 'my lieutenant' after this!"

And before Holly could muster his scattered senses, she had stooped suddenly, kissed him lightly on the forehead and fled.

The Hands of the Enemy

By

JOHN BARTON OXFORD

IN THE private office of the senior member of Shea, Collins and Shea, counsellors-at-law, young Dan Shea, broad of shoulder, thick of neck, the big muscles of his forearms made prominent by the rolled-up sleeves of his faultless negligée shirt, smiled placidly at his father, who scowled at him from his chair behind the heavy mahogany desk.

"I say you'll give it up," the elder Shea announced, bringing one doubled fist down on the desk top by way of emphasis.

Young Dan slowly shook his head. "Oh, no," he said quietly. "You're a bit off there. I shall do nothing of the sort."

"Wont you, though?" sneered Tim Shea. "Would you mind giving me your reasons?"

"Not in the least," said Dan, sprawling his big frame luxuriously in one of the leather chairs. "It all sums up very briefly. I like the game. It's meat and drink to me, and I think I may say without undue conceit, I seem to be fitted for it."

He glanced meaningly at a morning paper lying on the desk before his father. Tim Shea's glance followed that of his son.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I've read it, of course. I congratulate you on your victory, I'm sure. Let's see, you—" he paused to turn the pages of the paper, "you 'put him into the sand man's domain in the tenth with a wicked uppercut to the jaw,' according to this classic bit of contemporary literature. You've good cause no doubt to be proud—as proud as I am that with all the chances you have, your way in the world mapped out and made easy for you, as Lord knows mine never was for me, you choose to go in for this sort of thing—to mix with touts and pugs and crooks and—"

"We've been over all that several times," young Dan interrupted him with a sigh of weariness.

"We're going over it now for the final time," snapped his father. "This thing has gone quite far enough. It's got to stop, and when I say that I mean it."

Young Dan said nothing. He merely lifted his eyebrows in a suggestion of his own doubt on the point.

"And if you don't see fit to come to your senses and quit it," the other went on with heat, "I'll not bother with you longer. Someone else will get your chance here in the office and I'll cut you off without a cent."

For the first time the smile left the younger man's face. His jaw tightened, very much as his father's jaw was prone to do when that worthy gentleman was angry.

"It is barely possible I might be able to make my own way in the world," said Dan, as he arose from the chair and moved towards the door.

"At any rate," he turned to say with his hand on the knob, "I'm inclined to think I prefer making a try at it rather than give up what you ask."

There was a grunt of disgust from behind the desk as the door opened and

closed, leaving the elder Shea alone to his unpleasant thoughts.

He sat there for some time, the heavy frown still on his face and his fingers toying with the pile of unopened letters on the desk before him. Then with a sudden grim smile he caught up the telephone.

"Two—three—double O," he called into the transmitter, and a moment later: "Hello! Mr. Burns there?—All right! Tell him when he comes in, if you will, that Mr. Shea would like to see him—Thanks! Good-by!"

With the same grim smile on his lips, he began opening the morning mail. He was still intent upon that task when the door opened and a clerk from the outer office announced: "Mr. Burns, to see you, sir."

A moment later a small, sharp-featured man was blinking his watery eyes as he stood at the door of the private office.

"Hello, Ginger," said Mr. Shea, springing up. "They gave you my message, did they? Come in and have a chair."

Cautiously he closed the door behind his visitor and locked it.

"Well, what on earth can the likes of me be doin' for you, Timmy?" Burns inquired, as he sank into the proffered chair and took a cigar from the box Shea pushed towards him.

"Ginger, you follow the ring game pretty closely, don't you?" Shea asked.

Burns nodded as he lighted his weed and sniffed the smoke with critical satisfaction.

"You've heard of this Kid Cullen?"

Again Burns nodded, glancing sharply at Shea as he did so.

"Do you know who he is?"

Mr. Burns chuckled under his breath. "I've heard his last name—his real name, that it—is Shea," said he.

"You've heard correctly, Ginger," said Shea, with a tightening of his lips. "Now, the reason I've sent for you is just this: I want this Kid Cullen, otherwise Dan Shea, licked—I want him licked good and plenty. Are you on, Ginger?"

Mr. Burns opened his mouth, but no sound came forth. He stared at Shea in frank unbelief.

"Say, look a-here, Timmy," he said at length. "Are yuh crazy, or what ails yuh? That boy's clever—oh, a rare clever one. The likes of him don't grow on every bush. If I had a son like him, with his speed and sand, and if I had your money to back him with, I'd see that he went to the top. That's what! He's got it in him. Take it from me, Timmy, with the right handlin' that lad, in a couple of years or so, could put the best of 'em away."

"All of which is no doubt perfectly plausible," said Shea, "but the point is, it doesn't happen to suit my plans for him. I want him here—I want him to succeed me in the firm. His mind isn't in the work—it's on how long it took him to put Pete Ryan out, or how many rounds Sandy Malone is going to last with him.

"Talk is useless with him. I've threatened to throw him over and cut him off, and he merely laughs. Therefore I want him licked—I want him licked so thoroughly that it will sicken him of the game once for all. And if you can engineer it, it will be well worth your while."

"H'm!" mused Mr. Burns with understanding. "So that's it, is it? Well, well, now, Timmy, if that's what you want maybe it wont be so hard to do it, after all. It'll cost yuh money—"

"Hang the expense!"

Burns leaned confidentially forward in his chair. "Say, here is how it might be done," said he. "That son of yours has been tryin' for some time to get up against Shorty Griggs, but Shorty recognizes a comer when he sees one and he's ducked him so far. But maybe, with the means behind me I might make a match bechune the two of 'em, only—and listen to this, Timmy—when the mill is pulled off, it wont be Shorty in the ring at all, but Tige Moran, who looks enough like Shorty to be his twin. Yep, Tige Moran that's sure a whirlwind with his dukes, and that'll give this son of yours the finest beatin' he's ever had in his life. He can do it because Dan aint had the proper handlin' yet; because Tige knows more about the game in his little finger than Dan does with his whole body. How'd that go, eh, Timmy?"

"Any way to have him thrashed," said Shea between his set teeth.

"And look a-here," Ginger went on, "this son of yours backs himself in the ring; puts up his own stuff—see? He'll be dead sure he can trim Shorty, so if it's worked right he'll come up heavy. We can egg him on and get him to put up about all he's got. I know his kind. They'll go the whole hog, if you play 'em right. Then you'll not only have him licked, but busted as well. That'll make it a cinch for you, Timmy. Licked and busted all in one fell swoop. Say, he'll take to law or anything else you want under them circumstances."

"And you think you can fix this up for me, Ginger?" Shea asked, his eyes glowing at the prospect.

"Uh-huh! Guess I can pull it off all right, but you'll have to stand behind me with the coin," said Burns.

"Any amount you want within reason, Ginger, if you'll only make a success of it," Shea declared.

"No fear of that," Burns declared. "Dan's got speed and sand, as I said, but he aint no match for Tige Moran, who is a artist at the game, for sure. He'll eat Dan up. That's what! Got the nastiest left hook I ever seen. It sure oughter work slick as grease, Timmy."

In two weeks' time the sporting pages of the papers announced that a twelve round bout had been arranged between Kid Cullen, one of the fastest men among the newcomers, and Shorty Griggs, the "western cyclone."

In his private office Mr. Shea read it all and chuckled delightedly. Nor were the many absences of his son from the office—absences necessitated by his training for the forthcoming mill, commented upon by the senior member of the firm of Shea, Collins and Shea.

Mr. Burns was in and out at all hours, reporting progress and pocketing the checks which Shea made out to his order with a prodigal hand.

"Say, we got his goat, all right," Burns announced upon one of these visits. "The bunch has been worryin' and harryin' him, tellin' him what Shorty is goin' to do to him, till he's comin' up with every last red cent he's got. Says he's goin' to eat this Griggs party alive, and that Griggs aint nothin' but a four-flush blowhard. Yep, he's comin' up with his coin real regal. I didn't suspect he had so much. They say he's got somethin' like five thousand in the bank. He'll have the whole blamed wad up on himself before we're done with him. Yuh want it all covered of course, Timmy."

"Sure thing," Shea declared. "This scheme of yours of breaking him is a corker, Ginger. Cover every cent he offers. I'm behind you."

Daily Mr. Shea read the comments in the sporting section of the papers on the impending battle; and the accounts of his son's ability and his progress in his training at last began to cause him something approaching uneasiness.

"You're sure he's goin' to get licked, aren't you, Ginger?" he asked Mr. Burns one day, after a particularly glowing eulogy of his son's prowess in one of the afternoon papers.

Mr. Burns wagged his head knowingly. "Aw gee, Timmy," he remarked. "He's goin' against Tige Moran, and against Tige Moran he's got about as much chance as a piece of ice in a blast furnace. Say, Tige'll eat him up. He'll half kill him—"

"I want him licked—just *licked*. I don't want him injured any more than is necessary," Shea instructed. "At the same time I want the licking thorough."

"Just leave that part of it to me," said Burns, "and say, yuh'd better make me out a check for another thousand. I hear he's got all his coin up but that amount. He'll be comin' up with the last of it in a day or so."

The mill was scheduled to take place at the South Side Athletic Club on the afternoon of May 15th. For a week before that date, Dan Shea was absent from the office. The elder Shea, smiling knowingly to himself every time he thought how soon it would be that his son would be glad to seize the opportunities he now neglected, said nothing. He spent a great deal of his time reading, on the quiet, newspaper clippings, which had been furnished by Burns, and which recounted the ring achievements of one "Tige" Moran.

The day of the bout came at last. Shea had made arrangements with

Burns, who was to be at the ringside, to report the progress of the mill to him over the telephone.

It was a rather restless morning that Mr. Shea passed in the private office, and when the lunch hour had come and gone, and three o'clock, the hour set for the affair at the South Side Athletic Club to begin, drew near, his restlessness increased.

Nervously he picked up the morning's paper and glanced at the front page, where his son's portrait beside that of a beetle-browed individual, labeled "Shorty Griggs," decorated a space several columns in width. Then, for want of something better to do to pass the slow-moving minutes, he began re-reading the text beneath the pictures.

In the midst of this the telephone bell rang. Shea feverishly caught up the receiver and pressed it to his ear.

"Hello!" came the voice from the other end of the wire. "That you, Timmy? Say, the second round's just finished. Guess it aint goin' to last much longer. Griggs—ahem!—caught the Kid one in the plex and follered it up with a hook to the jaw that had him groggy. Nothing but the bell saved him. Guess he'll wade in the next round and finish him up. The Kid seems sorter dazed by the whirlwind style he's up against. So long. 'Phone you about the finish shortly."

Shea, grinning to himself, paced up and down the narrow space of the office, picturing the scene at the Athletic Club. Impatiently he awaited the jangling summons of the telephone. It seemed an interminable time before Burns rang him up again.

"End of the third, Timmy," the voice announced. "The Kid come back strong, considerin' the beltin' he got in the first two. Did some pretty footwork and got a couple of corkers into Shorty's ribs. This round was all his. Say," the voice was lowered confidentially, "I guess likely Tige was givin' him confidence to come on, and when he does come, it'll be to his finish—see?"

There ensued another period of impatient waiting. Five minutes went past—ten—fifteen. Shea was about to call up the Athletic Club again when Ginger Burns, wild-eyed, pale and breathless, stumbled to one of the leather chairs and sank into it.

"Come up in a taxi," he panted. "Drove like the devil. Couldn't get to the telephone booth for the push. Say—say—"

"What's happened?" Shea asked, leaping to Burns' side and shaking him roughly. "What's the matter with you. What are you trying to tell me? Is Dan hurt?"

"Hurt?" choked Ginger Burns, straightening his limp form with an effort. "Dan hurt? Gee, I guess he aint hurt! Say, he handed Tige one in the fourth that dropped him like a log. Yep, he hadn't come to, when they got him to his dressin'-room. I can't get it through my head yet, it all come so fast. Tige had him up against the ropes and I thought Dan was all in, when all to once he lets out one that fair lifts Tige into the air, and flops him face down on the mat. Say, he never moved after that. Gee, aint it fierce. And me backin' Tige—or Shorty Griggs, as it was supposed to be—for all I got out of you on this deal and a blamed sight more besides. You'd better let that lad stay in the ring, if he wants to, Timmy. Anyone that could put out Tige Moran like he done wa'n't never meant to be in the law business."

An hour later young Dan entered the private office. His father sat rigidly in his chair behind the mahogany desk.

"I've just come to say," said Dan, "that I've decided to follow the game permanently, father. I've made enough out of the mill to-day to put me on my feet financially and go after some of the really good ones. That's where the money is. I was a bit undecided, for all I said, after that last talk of ours. But this has decided me. The money that's come to me out of this—and why they backed Shorty Griggs so heavily I can't fathom yet—will give me a good start."

Tim Shea looked at his son, and his face softened. "All right," he said with a smile. "Go ahead, and luck go with you."

The Sequel to Smith's Story

By BETTY ADLER

COLLECTIVELY, they were loud. Taken individually, they were demure enough girls, as girls go.

One was pretty, with a frank, glad laugh—a dark petite girl with bright eyes. The second was short and chunky, with rosy cheeks—of a serious and practical turn of mind. The third was tall and slim and radiant, with brownish gold hair—and a droll sense of humor. Together, their individual traits became welded into one composite giggle—prolonged, lilting, a triple wave of merriment. Wherever they went they giggled from the sheer joy of things and people. If they stood on the hotel terrace and watched the sunset, they giggled because its colors didn't match their gowns and the sunset couldn't be changed. If they were in the dining room they giggled at the fly that skidded across the colored waiter's bald head, until they couldn't remember what they had ordered. When they inquired at the desk for their mail they giggled—when they didn't get mail and when they did. And the crusty clerk forgot that he told them on an average of three times each day that the mail only came at seven in the morning and five in the evening. He caught himself laughing with them. After a while the rheumatics and other ailment-tagged people spent a part of their symptom-discussing time in watching them giggle. The eight widows, the hotel poet's boast and his despair, who rocked so unrhythmically on the piazza, wondered if they could ever have been so silly—until they found themselves joining in, at absolutely nothing whatever. People began speaking to them who hadn't been on good terms with their own shadows. They mixed pretty well and always answered politely, but they seemed more in their element when they gathered on the veranda, put their heads together—and giggled.

"If anyone can tell me what we are giggling at," began the serious one, by way of conversation.

"Giggle and the world giggles with you—whine and your neighbor gets the habit," misquoted the pretty girl.

"Don't like your paraphrase," commented the tall, slim girl. "It lacks—um—"

"Mayonnaise," supplemented the serious girl, and the peal of laughter rose again.

"If I were a fish," said the pretty girl, decidedly, "I should feel that my memory had been slighted with such a thimble full of mayonnaise as that poor *filet de* something at dinner to-night."

"If you were a fish," returned the serious one, "you would be so busy keeping out of the way of some duffer's hook, you wouldn't have time to worry over the quantity of mayonnaise you would be laid out in."

"Well, I know one man whose bait couldn't woo me," and the pretty girl's nose went up in the first look of disdain that the porch group had seen.

The man with the fishing rod slow-

ly rounded the farther end of the terrace and walked rapidly toward them. He lifted his gray plaid cap with a bored air, including the whole line of rockers against the sun wall, and passed on.

"Oh, perfect man," railed the pretty girl in sarcasm. He had been there a whole day and had not even noticed her.

"There are only two kinds of men in the world," philosophized the tall, slim girl, "the perfect ones and the bunglers."

"Well, me for a bungler," giggled the serious one. "That proudly indifferent manner of his ought to have a Louis the Sixteenth setting. Wish he'd stumble over that string of fish."

"What do you wager that I can't make him take notice of us within the next twenty-four hours," the tall, slim girl spoke up. This man's supreme self-sufficiency was getting on her nerves.

"What do you want?" chirped the other two.

"The two things nearest your hearts," she insisted.

"Well, all right," agreed the practical girl, "I'll give you a life interest in my best bottle of face cream."

"I'll let you wear my love of a fuzzy *jabot* one whole morning."

"Done," was the reply, and they sealed it with a giggle so full of daring and melody that it caused the clerk to remark to the cashier with a yearning note in his voice, "At it again."

That night the Chicago man solved the problem himself by wandering over to the group and getting properly introduced. The man from Vermont did the honors.

"Mr. Smith of Chicago" bowed his acknowledgments with the same well bred, bored air with which he had carried in the string of fish. He was the type of American that is more cosmopolitan than Chicagoese, perfect in self-assurance, in dress and in manner, with a low voice, modulated to just the refinement of pitch. He had a railroad folder in his hand and remarked, with an elaborate show of ease, "What time do I get a morning train into Du Main?"

"Ten o'clock," replied the serious girl, promptly.

"I was thinking of spending the day there to-morrow," he went on.

"Friends there?" someone asked to boost the conversation.

The Chicago man dropped leisurely on the arm of a chair and a pensive look came over his face that brought in its wake a reminiscent smile. "Well, I had—once," he said.

"Then they found you out?" the Vermont man remarked, lightly. It was the vein his talk with the giggling trio always took.

The Chicago man resented the inference only for the fraction of a second, then he accepted it as a mark of friendly interest.

"I haven't been in Du Main for fifteen years," he said, slowly. "I had a strange experience then." He glanced over the bright-eyed group until his eyes rested on the tall, slim girl. She alone displayed no interest in the reminiscence. That goaded him on. "It would make a good plot for a story for you," he said. She had been tracing the pattern of the rug with her trim pump shoe. For a moment she did not raise her eyes. When she did he flinched uncomfortably before her level, searching gaze. "Who told you I wrote stories?"

"Oh, I have read them in the magazines. I knew when I was introduced to you," he floundered, his color rising.

"Oh," she said, and then the eyes of the three girls met and the laugh rang out spontaneously.

"Miss Berton doesn't write under her own name," ventured the pretty girl, and the Chicago man looked baffled.

"Well, anyway, tell us about that visit of yours to Du Main," suggested the serious girl, steering for safer waters. Then she reasoned there was no use of letting a plot go to waste.

The Chicago man beamed on her with the proper look of gratefulness for the rescue. "I was out on my first trip for the house. Of course I was young and inexperienced." The pretty girl nodded gravely as if she enjoyed the admission. "Sunday came and having nothing to do I wandered around and finally went into a church—a Congregational church. The minister invited me to take a seat in his pew and intro-

duced me to his wife and daughter. The daughter was a beautiful girl—and charming. At the conclusion of the service they asked me most cordially to come to their home for dinner. And I went."

"Ah—and the girl?" said the serious one, her voice full of interest.

"I said she was both beautiful and charming," was the non-committal reply of the Chicago man.

"Well," said the pretty girl, "what is the rest?"

"That's all," said the Chicago man. "It is up to the author to furnish the sequel."

"Huh, that's easy," said the pretty girl; "don't have to be an author to see through that. She threw you over for a better and a wiser man."

"Well, what do you think?" He turned toward the serious girl whose face showed her disappointment at the lack of any climax. "You must have had an honest face to cause those people to take you, a perfect stranger, into their home," she said.

The Chicago man was enjoying the situation. "Well, I'll admit I must have looked honest in those days. But you see I was very young. Miss Berton," he turned to the tall, slim girl, "what kind of a sequel would you put on that story?" In Miss Berton's eyes slumbered the same bit of daring that had been in them when she had flung out the challenge at sunset on the piazza to know this man.

"Well," she began slowly, "it might be worked out in a number of ways." The Vermont man, slipping over back of her chair, ostensibly to close the door, whispered as he passed, "Knock some of the conceit out of him."

"Of course you spent Sunday afternoon at the house," she queried.

"Yes, certainly."

Susie Berton leaned forward in her rocker and then the smile that crinkled her blue-gray eyes caught itself in the scarlet bow of her lips. It was a piquant face, fine of feature, and now it was all vivacious inspiration. "Well, let's see," she began. "I might have the sheriff stray in as a Sunday caller. He would have to be a nice gentlemanly sheriff—high social standing and all that—and he would be on friendly terms with the family. And he would recognize instantly in you the exact description he had received that morning of a noted criminal, wanted for something desperate. And the girl would be at the piano, playing a Bach symphony or something from Greig, with strong northern lovelights in it—and you would be looking into her eyes. The sheriff would take the telegram with the description out of his pocket and walk over to arrest you. Then the fact that he met you on the same social ground would stop him. The sheriff would be a big, powerful, splendid chap with a tremendous idea of the sanctity of his office, and of course he might care just a little for the girl, too." The room was very still. The speaker's voice took on a whimsical tone. "And then—I can't decide right now whether I would have you establish your innocence then and there or escape out over the back woodpile and hide in the dome of the capitol until nightfall. But you would bungle matters so it would probably take a serial story to get you out of it. Anyway, it ought to sell—don't you think so?"

Susie Berton had come here to escape her work and all the tiresome praise connected with it, and this, she told herself, was one man's punishment for piercing her vacation bubble. The color mounted slowly over the Chicago man's white cheeks and settled like a rim across his forehead and behind his ears.

And just as the situation became strained the man from Vermont unwittingly furnished the diversion. He had taken out his watch a few minutes before at the distant echo of a train whistle. A queer little wrought gold locket of Oriental design that served as a fob charm had become loosened and he was trying idly to press the two ends of the tiny gold circlet that held it together. He had looked up in surprise at the first hint of claws in the gentle manner of the tall, slim girl, and as he did so the locket rolled from his palm, hit a little spring at its side and, fatelike, opened as it fell at the feet of the Chicago man. Smith bent with alacrity to pick it up, trying to recover his

poise. As he raised the quaint bit of jewelry with his former indifference and self-assurance his gaze was suddenly riveted on the picture within. A flush mounted to his hair and then gave way to an odd pallor.

The two men's eyes met and locked in powerful conflict for a full minute. The trinket still lay open in the palm of the Chicago man and as the other slowly reached for it he said in even tones, charged like an electric current, "I knew the daughter of a Congregational minister in Du Main—about fifteen years ago."

"Oh, how very strange," chirped the pretty girl. "Do you know the young woman—Mr. Smith's heroine?"

Deliberately the Vermont man snapped the locket shut and dropped it in his vest pocket.

"I do not know her," he said, and once again his eyes challenged the Chicago man like steel.

The sound of hurrying footsteps in the rotunda beyond recalled the lounging room group to the new arrivals. In the pathway of light that swept from the wide portico to the platform across the roadway could be seen the hotel's private street car unloading the late comers. There was a rush to the veranda to see who came. They straggled across—a motley throng, women travel-coated and veiled, men tired and hot and grim. As the swift-footed porters ran back and forth with the luggage they circled just a bit more gently about the bent figure of a little old lady who leaned heavily on the arm of her younger companion, and was being guided slowly to where the wide portico sent forth its stream of light.

"Easy, mother, easy, there is no need to hurry," she was saying. It was one of those rare speaking voices, soft, clear with an undercurrent rich in melody. As they reached the arched wall of the ornate entrance, the light fell full on the younger woman, enhancing a quiet, pensive face, clear cut in its lights and shadows, with wavy brown hair blown into sun curls as a frame.

The three girls giggled a glad little note of welcome and the young woman half turned, looked back at them and smiled. There was just a perceptible start as her glance went over their heads to the straight, strong figure of the man from Vermont. And the pretty girl, turning to him with a laugh at the antics of a bell boy, saw his face so gray and drawn that she stopped in wonder.

As they wandered back into the lounging room to discuss the new arrivals, the man from Vermont was missing. The Chicago man seemed ill at ease and excused himself "to smoke," he said. The bridge table lured the pretty girl, the serious one discussed politics with a senator's brother, and the tall, slim girl escaped to her room and delved into neglected correspondence. And all the time she told herself there was tragedy in the air. When the other two girls came up for the night at ten o'clock they found her on the little arched stone balcony that ended the main corridor, outside of their rooms.

"What do you suppose made those two fellows disappear the way they did?" asked the pretty one. "Say, Sue, I am glad you handed him a remembrance for being so fresh about your writing," said the serious one. "Coming in soon?" they inquired in duet. "Yes, I'll be in presently for the good-night giggle," returned the tall girl, and they left her on the balcony with the moonbeams for company.

It was the Chicago man who opened the screen door and drew a long breath as he stepped out on the little stone porch. He caught sight of her and his cigar disappeared over the railing.

"You don't mind my coming out here, do you?" It was not what he said, but his evident agitation and the plea in his low voice that dispelled her momentary resentment of a reverie rudely broken. This man's armor of suave indifference had fallen away and the white moonlight on his face revealed a soul suffering agony. It was because he had trained himself to show no emotion that it was hard for him to begin. The girl sat very still—this was the man she had assured herself was so self-satisfied and complacent.

Finally he began; his voice always at the same modulated pitch, only some-

times the sentences were not well connected, as if he were not putting into words all the tattered ends as they surged through his brain.

"The girl who came to-night—Grace Weston—is the girl of my story. It is funny how it should all come to a climax here. And I must repair the wrong. It wasn't ever any more than a friendship—she is a fine girl. Now I see I nearly wrecked two lives—and it isn't a pleasant thought." The strained tone left his voice and he hurried through the explanation. "The Vermont man, Edgerton, is white, square—you know what men mean when they say that of each other. We have played pool many a time until two or three in the morning. He here with his sister and I with my invalid father—we needed each other to ward off the loneliness. I guessed there was some secret trouble—a girl perhaps. Now I know I was the cause of their estrangement." He moved out of the path of light and his blonde head leaned wearily against the pillar of the porch. "It was a schoolboy and girl love affair with them. Then I came along—and the flowers and candy I sent her made him jealous. I was flattered that they took me in. I wasn't serious—it was a matter of religion with me—my mother was high church and it would have broken her heart. And the girl didn't care for me, either—only to pique him. But she wore my picture in her locket and my frat. pin. Those things mean so much at twenty-two. It is funny how a man never thinks of the other fellow only in a 'serves him right' sort of way." He stopped.

"And you never went back to see her?'" she helped him gently.

"No, my route was changed. But we wrote letters madly for a time and I got full accounts of Roscoe's antics. I sent her a bracelet at Christmas—it always seemed to me that it was the real Samaritan act to take in a lonely, inexperienced boy, up against the hardship of his first trip. I couldn't forget it. I suppose I overdid the gratitude stunt." She was glad he didn't try to excuse himself. He was facing out the truth. "Now I know the bracelet was the last straw with him. He rebelled. They were to have married when he got his degree, the following summer. Well, he went to Alaska instead. It was the time of the gold fever there—perhaps you don't remember. He did the Chilcoot Pass and took all the other reckless chances to forget. And she waited at home."

"But you didn't know that you had been the cause," she commented.

"That doesn't alter the fact any," he returned grimly. "I know it now."

"And now?" she queried.

"I want you to help me," he said, earnestly. "You said to-night that I would bungle matters so it would take a serial story to get me out of it. Well, I have. Fifteen years is long enough for a serial story; now there must be a happy climax. And it is up to me to furnish it. But somehow I don't know how to begin. You, in your stories, find a way out, don't you?"

"Not always," she said, "some times my characters take things into their own hands and refuse to do as I would have them."

"But don't you see," he said, excitedly, "I've got to bring them together."

"Look," she whispered, suddenly.

They both leaned over the white stone railing and saw two people on the veranda below them. The tall, straight figure of the man from Vermont was against the balustrade of the terrace, silhouetted in the moonlight. Only the lighted cigar between his lips gave evidence that he was not carved stone, as were the ornate baskets with garden flowers that spilled their blossoms on the winds to the terrace at his feet. The girl, muffled in a long, graceful coat, her hair escaping like an aureole from its hood, had glided quickly from the wide doors to the edge of the stone railing. She seemed to breathe a sigh of relief at the momentary escape from the sick room.

Night hung low over the wooded hills, making a phantom of the city, famed in folder as "built upon waters." The little town, far below, slept in its sheltered amphitheatre. The trees on the moist, fern covered slopes cradled the winds that murmured a summer recitative to the stars. The gleaming

white length of the big hotel, with its quaint Moorish facade, threw fitful shadows across the wide gravelled driveway. From within the light laughter of the last group about the graphophone floated out over the deserted verandas to lose itself among the shivering moonbeams on the tree-topped knoll opposite. Grace Weston watched the moonbeams make the fantastic acquaintance of the long slim rays of artificial light that came through from the high portico windows, and smiled at their arch flirtation among the softly rustling leaves of the trees.

She had seen a phantom to-night and fifteen years were spanned as if they were an hour. She remembered that she had been able to laugh then just like that giggle she had heard when she arrived—light-hearted, care-free, joy-filled. The face she had seen might have been Roscoe's and yet—fifteen years might change any man, and he wasn't the kind who took the world into his confidence.

The girl on the balcony above saw the Chicago man's hand grip the stone railing and the veins stand out, hard and cruel. It occurred to her that if reparation were to be made it was already in higher hands than his. Providence, or was it circumstance, held the scales.

The man from Vermont had recognized the muffled form far down the long veranda as quickly as the watchers above and without a moment's hesitation he hastened to her side.

They heard her startled exclamation of surprise and his low incoherent attempt at explanation. Her silence was ominous. They hung on the magnetism of his tones—it did not matter that the words were wafted into the whispering pines by the winds. And still the girl stood there silent as the sphinx, while the moonbeams caressed her wind-tossed hair. They forgot they were eavesdroppers. There was so much at stake. Suppose she would not forgive. Fifteen years of heartache for a bit of lover's pique—because he denied her the right to explain.

They caught the words "That bracelet—what else could I think?"

Then she spoke. "I sent it back." Her voice was calm, without a break. Then with a hurt little moan, "You didn't think I would keep it when I was promised to you. And you went away without a word. What was your faith in me if just that could deny me the right to explain. No—no—I've found peace now—almost. You cannot come back into my life."

Then the fickle winds carried his bitter self blame out among the trees.

The man on the balcony swung one foot over the low railing, prepared to drop down the marble column to the moonlit tableau below. The girl's hand on his coat sleeve stayed him, "Don't," she whispered imperatively, with a woman's intuition, "you would bungle everything now."

They saw the girl on the veranda retreat toward the door, holding her head high. The man from Vermont stood where she had left him, his face bearing a stunned look, as of a worshiper before the barred portals of a mosque.

"I—I must." The Chicago man's agitation was at its height. He started again to leap the low railing. But he paused at the girl's tense "Wait."

They saw the girl on the veranda attempt to open the screen door, and as she groped for the handle, the moon came from behind a fleecy cloud and made a halo of light about her.

It was left to such a tiresome thing as the hotel graphophone to furnish the cue for the psychological moment. The dapper colored bell boy, putting away the records that littered the table, must have been in a sentimental mood, for he clapped the worn old ballad on the machine. There was a whirl, the needle wheezed and scraped and then in a full rich tenor came the refrain:

> Oh, the heart that has truly loved ne'er forgets
> But as truly loves on to the close.

The machine was stopped quickly, for the irascible old bachelor on the parlor floor shouted through his half-closed door. "I thought this was a health resort—I didn't know I had come to a conservatory of music."

But the air still vibrated with the song. The girl at the screen door half turned—her lips quivered, then she

held out both her hands; beautiful hands, slender, unjeweled. The man from Vermont sprang forward and caught them both in one of his big palms.

Just then the girl on the upper balcony touched the sleeve of the Chicago man. "Come away," she whispered and he followed her through the doorway into the brightly lighted main corridor. Her eyes were shining and on the long lashes was one big tear.

He wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "Anyway, it was a happy ending," she breathed as she turned toward her door.

"I don't know how to thank you for not letting me bungle it," he said.

Her answer was a sort of conundrum to him. "I'm glad you are a bungler," she whispered.

As she turned the knob and the door opened into the small entrance hall of the suite, something fell from the transom above, hit the soft carpet and rolled out toward the Chicago man. He stooped to pick it up and looked curiously at the article. What he saw was a bottle of face cream with a French label and tied to it was a fuzzy, pale blue bow that he remembered having seen the pretty girl wear at her throat the first morning at breakfast. As she took them from him, Miss Berton's face was scarlet. She started to murmur an apology, hesitated, and then fled within.

From behind the closed door of Suite "A," Smith, of Chicago, heard a smothered exclamation and then a peal of laughter, that simmered into a musical triangular giggle—rippling, glad, harmonious.

He stood at the turn of the hallway for a second as if it eased his overstrained nerves. The hotel poet, coming along the corridor carrying a pitcher of water, passed him, caught the lilt of the giggle and stopped. Then he quoted softly:

> Blessed are those who can laugh.
> Step up into the high places—
> Only the laughers belong.

The Man Who Did It

By RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

AS the group of panting runners rounded the last turn in the four-lap track and swung into the straightaway leading to the finish tape which had been hurriedly stretched by two officials, the little crowd grouped near the finish, pressed closer to the track.

Dingle McGuire raised himself on tiptoes and craned his thin neck as he peered anxiously down the track at the oncoming, white-clad figures. In the lead, running easily, his feet rising and falling with the precision of some tireless machine, loped Swansley, the much-touted English "miler," and even as McGuire looked, the Englishman's stride quickened. With no very apparent effort he spurted beautifully, outdistancing his nearest competitor by yards, as with hands flung high and a sardonic smile on his thin lips, he breasted the tape, the easy winner of his fifteenth race since he had come across the water some two months before.

A cheer, rather feeble in volume, arose from the spectators, who seemed to take it quite as a matter of course that the Englishman would win this race, as he had all the others he had entered. A trainer ran forward and slipped a gorgeous bathrobe over Swansley's shoulders, and led him, still fresh and

apparently able to repeat his recent achievement, towards the dressing-tents near the fence.

McGuire groaned. Once more had his hopes been dashed. Once more had he been forced to witness this paragon of a runner romp merrily away from the best he could produce, scour the country as he would for a man to beat him. This time it was no less a celebrity than Shiner Dolan—as game a runner as ever drew breath and whom McGuire had trained and coached as he had never trained and coached another man in all his long career—who staggered up to the finish, a poor second to the wonderful Englishman. The other runners were straggling up, panting and far spent, for the pace had been gruelling, but McGuire seemed not to see them. Elbowing his way through the crowd, he wound a sweater about the drooping Dolan's neck, and half-leading him, half-carrying him, made his way to the dressing tents.

Once there, he dropped his charge into a camp-chair, pulled off the spiked running-shoes, and laved Dolan's legs and his swollen feet with alcohol. For some time not a word was spoken between them. It was Dolan who made the first overture.

"I done my best, Dingle," he quavered. "I run with every ounce I had in me. But he's a devil for eatin' up pace. You couldn't tire him, not in a thousand years."

"I know it," McGuire snapped shortly.

Dolan glanced at him keenly. "Drop much?" he questioned.

"Only a hundred," McGuire replied, "and they gave me three to two and let me have the field against him at that. I aint got no kick comin' from that corner."

He paused to turn more alcohol on the sponge. "What's eatin' me is that I can't seem to beat him with nothin' I put up," he went on aggrievedly. "I thought you'd do the trick, Shiner, but even you've fell down, and if you can't beat him, I swear I dunno who can. It makes me hot to see him and his manager swellin' round, coppin' every race right and left and takin' it all so easy, like it was just what they expected to do. It would make me hot to see any Britisher do it, but them two and their supercilious ways has got me goin' for fair. No, I don't care a blood-red, continental darn for the money, Shiner. What I want to do is to beat him, jest once."

"You wont never do it with nothin' you can dig up on this side," was Dolan's gloomy prophecy. "I've seen some good ones and been up against 'em, too, in my day, but I never see no such cuss for the mile as he is. Better give it up, Dingle. You can't git nothin' to beat *him*."

McGuire's silence seemed to give tacit acquiescence to this statement. He tossed Dolan his street clothes from another chair and gloomily watched him don them.

Then he lighted his worn briar pipe, threw back the tent flap and stood looking out across the track with narrowed eyes.

He was standing thus, when Swansley's manager, a very dapper and very British young gentleman, sauntered up.

"Well, it's once more, Mr. McGuire—wot?" he said, smilingly.

"Looks that way, for sure," Dingle returned.

"Pretty clever chap, this Swansley, eh?"

"Good runner," McGuire agreed, heartily. "Corker—no doubt about it. But I'm goin' to git a man to beat him yet."

The other raised his eyebrows. It gave his face an expression that made McGuire's quick blood boil.

"Oh, don't be rash," laughed the younger man. "Better let well enough alone, y' know."

"I'll beat him yet," McGuire declared, obstinately.

"You haven't any money that talks that way, have you?" the manager questioned.

Promptly McGuire's hand went to his breast pocket. When it came out, it contained a young elephant of a roll.

"There's jest five hundred in this. I got that much that says so," he snapped.

"You'll only have till the tenth of September, remember," the other warned him. "We'll go back then, y' know."

"That's good enough for me," McGuire declared. "The five hundred that I beat him before the tenth of September. Are you on?"

"Why certainly, certainly," was the response, while the manager produced his own collateral. "It's like finding it, old chap, just like finding it. Who'll we leave the stakes with? Why not Mr. Dolan here?"

He stepped into the tent, counted off a number of bills and thrust them into Dolan's hands. McGuire followed suit with his own roll.

"Really, y' know, I'm just a bit sorry for you," the younger man taunted, as he left the tent.

When he was gone, Dolan sat fingering the money in his clutches.

"Well, of all the fools, Dingle!" he chided. "Say, what possessed you to do it?"

"He made me mad," snapped McGuire.

"And because he made you mad you're goin' to give him another five hundred, eh? That's a devil of a revenge, aint it?"

"Aw, I dunno as I *am* givin' it to him yet," McGuire demurred.

"Wait a little. Maybe—"

"Yah! Maybe we'll be havin' blockin' snowstorms in August," Dolan mocked. "You're gettin' dippy, Dingle. Come on home!"

That evening, in the little suburban town where he lived, Dingle McGuire sat smoking his ancient briar pipe and meditating deeply. From the outward looks of things he was in bad. Something like six weeks in which to find a man to beat the Englishman! Things certainly did not seem particularly auspicious for it.

One by one McGuire turned over in his mind the runners he knew who did the mile distance. There wasn't one of them on whom the Englishman hadn't something. Moreover, the defeat of Shiner Dolan that afternoon had shaken his confidence sorely, despite his boastful words to Swansley's manager. It didn't seem possible, that was a fact. Still—

McGuire took up his cap and, with the briar for company, went out for a walk and a breath of air.

Engrossed in his own thoughts, he paid not the least attention to whither his steps were taking him.

It was a small-sized commotion that brought him out of his reverie, to find himself on one of the short, elm-lined streets in which that particular town abounded. Ahead came growls, short yelps and the sound of running feet. Around the corner just ahead came a panting young man, and close to his heels sped a lumbering, gurgling bull-dog.

It took no very massive intellect to see the cause of the young man's haste, for now and then the dog with a snarl lurched at the flying heels, and every time he did so the young man's speed was very promptly accelerated.

Under ordinary circumstances the little affair would have been merely humorous; but to McGuire, watching with practiced eye the young man's terrific strides and the easy movement of his hips and knees, it was something rather more. It was an omen—a prophecy.

The young man turned post-haste into one of the many gates, stumbled up the veranda steps, and shot breathlessly through a door which was hastily opened and closed, leaving his disappointed pursuer growling on the veranda outside.

"Gee!" said Dingle, "gee! there's a cuss that can *run!*"

With which soulful comment upon the young man's recent feat, he tramped across the street, turned into the gateway through which the young man had disappeared, kicked the growling dog unceremoniously out of his way and rang the bell.

"I want to see the chap that just came in here," he said to the woman who answered his summons.

"That'll be Mr. Benson, no doubt. He just came in," was the reply. "He boards here, two flights back!"

McGuire mounted the stairs. In the room two flights back a very ruddy young man was just lighting the gas, panting breathlessly as he held the match to the gas-jet; but even in his panting, McGuire noted with satisfaction, he took his breaths deeply.

"This Mr. Benson?" McGuire asked, and, as the other nodded, he went on:

"You'll excuse me, I hope, for buttin' in like this, but I just saw you comin' down the street—"

"You own that dog?" Benson interrupted.

McGuire shook his head. "No, that aint it," said he. "I was interested in the way you run."

"Oh!" said Benson. The color in his face deepened. He hung his head. "I can't help it," he blurted out, defiantly. "I'm afraid of dogs, all of 'em. Congenital case, I suppose. They know it, too. The veriest cur can get me going, if he growls a couple of times."

"Don't blame you a bit. Don't like 'em any too well myself," said McGuire, "but that aint neither here nor there. Say, you can run some, can't you? Where'd you ever do any?"

"Oh, just a little now and then at some of the amateur meets. I was in the Pastime Club's relay team one season," the young man explained.

"You've got a corkin' stride and you use your hips right," McGuire declared. "Say, you wouldn't think of takin' up runnin' for a consideration, would you?"

Benson looked incredulous. "How much in it?" he asked, sharply.

"Oh, say five hundred or so, if you made good."

"You aint kidding me?"

"Never was so much in earnest in my life."

"How'm I going to make this money?"

"Did you ever hear of Dingle McGuire?"

"The trainer? Sure thing," Benson said.

"Well," Dingle confided, "I'm him. You've heard all about this feller Swansley that's come over from the other side and is cleanin' things up right and left over here, aint you?"

Benson nodded.

"Well, I want you to beat him, and after seein' your sprint to-night, I believe I can train you to do it. You've got the best stride I ever see, and you look as if you was built to do the mile. I've bet five hundred with Swansley's manager that I'll find some one to beat him before he goes back, which he does September tenth. Let me take you in hand, and I bet you can do it. You're the only hope I got, anyway. And if you do, the five hundred I win is yours. I don't give a darn for the money. If I come out whole I'll be satisfied. But I do want to beat that British swell-head just once. Will you try it?"

Benson meditated a moment. Then he leaned confidentially towards McGuire.

"Say, I could use that coin," said he. "It's worth making a try for, at any rate. I don't mind telling you there's a mighty nice little girl I know, and if I had five hundred dollars to start on, she and I would be married to-morrow. Yep, count me in on that deal."

"All right," said McGuire. "You're on. Swansley is entered for the mile open at the games at the Scots' picnic, September third. They're going to have it this year at Surfside Grove. There's a good track there. That's the place and the time you've got to trim him. I'll be round to-morrow night and we'll start in."

Thereafter there might have been seen plodding nightly through the suburban streets a tall young man, scantily clad in a running suit, and with him an older man on a bicycle, who now and then shouted a word of advice.

Benson proved the find McGuire had hoped him. Moreover, the glowing possibility of that five hundred dollars made him a willing worker. The only question in Dingle's mind was as to whether his charge could be coached sufficiently in those few short weeks before the third of September and the crowning test. There was so much to teach him about breathing, and using his knees and holding his shoulders and making every ounce of his strength and endurance tell, to say nothing of the inside tricks of the game, which any man going against such a man as Swansley must know more or less thoroughly.

But Benson worked like a Trojan, and seemed to forget nothing which had once been told him.

August advanced. McGuire gave his charge a time run over a mile course. It was a disappointment. Such time as Benson made would never beat Swansley.

Then two nights following, as McGuire trailed behind his charge watching his every movement from the rear, a small dog came bounding up to his bicycle and snapped at Dingle's feet.

McGuire had one of those brilliant moments of inspiration.

"Sic um, boy!" he urged, waving his arm toward the white-clad figure ahead.

With gleeful barks the dog followed orders. Ahead there was a cry of alarm. Away sped Benson with the dog at his heels, and behind them, his watch in his hand, rode McGuire on the bicycle.

It was only after several minutes of this that Dingle, riding up, shooed the dog from the trembling Benson. Then, as he returned the watch to his pocket with a joyous grin, he announced: "I guess you can count on that coin, Benson. I got a hunch you're goin' to run that Britisher off'n his feet."

It was the day after this that Dingle purchased a particularly large and agile bull-dog, took him home and tied him in the shed. Here each evening, when it was too dark for the dog to see him, he saturated his clothes with cheap musk and, seeking the shed, made queer, throaty noises, which seemed to drive the brute mad, if one were to judge by the way he leaped and twisted and strove to get at McGuire.

The third of September dawned clear and cloudless. There was not a breath of wind. The air was cool. All in all, the conditions for running were ideal.

At three o'clock the major part of the games had been run off, and the crowd was awaiting impatiently the event of the day—the mile open, in which the great Swansley was to appear.

In one of the dressing-rooms beneath the tiny grandstand, Benson was getting into his running suit, while McGuire was giving him the last word of instruction.

"It'll be a killin' pace," he said. "He'll hold back till the last turn before the finish. Then he'll let out. I've seen him run enough to know him. Keep right with him at the start, and when he sprints at the finish, you sprint, too, only sprint faster than he does. No livin' man can beat you, if you run your best."

"Say," said Benson, flushing under his tan, "I'm going to run my best, old man. You see, *she* is in the grandstand to watch me."

"Well, don't you dar'st to disappoint her, nor me, either," laughed McGuire, and just then a boy tapped on the door to summon Benson to the starting point.

"Say, what makes my suit and my running-shoes smell so queer?" Benson demanded, as he started for the track. "They're strong of musk."

"So?" said Dingle, innocently. "Maybe some's got spilled on 'em. I'm sorter partial to musk. I use it on my handkerchief sometimes."

It was some few minutes after the start of the race before McGuire appeared on the turf beside the track, and when he did come he was holding the leash of a particularly vicious-looking bull-dog, which sniffed the grass and now and then yelped and tugged frantically at the restraining thong.

McGuire glanced at the runners. They were bunched at the second turn, Benson and Swansley loping along side by side in the rear. McGuire's eyes lighted as he noted Benson's mighty stride, and the carriage of his shoulders. The boy was running like a veteran, now and then casting a sidelong glance at his redoubtable adversary, who plodded along with the same supercilious smile upon his lips which was there in every race.

Round the first lap they swung and the second. The pace had quickened. It was plain to be a killing race. One man after another dropped out, but in the same position in the rear Benson and Swansley plodded side by side.

They swung into the last lap. At the first turn the Englishman quickened his pace and drew up abreast the leaders. Benson, with no apparent effort did likewise. At the second turn, Swansley drew a few yards ahead of the bunch; so did Benson.

And so they came to the last turn, the crucial point, where they turned into the straight stretch for the finish tape.

As they reached it, quite as Dingle had predicted. Swansley sprinted. It was wonderful to see him. It seemed impossible that a human being could have so much stamina after such a gruelling pace.

Benson strove with might and main to keep the lead, but slowly Swansley forged ahead, and the finish-tape was but a scant two hundred yards away.

Then it was that Dingle McGuire stooped and slipped the leash from the dog. With a yowl of joy and his nose close to the ground, the brute sped onto the track and straight for Benson's heels.

Benson heard the snarl behind him. He turned and cast one agonized glance over his shoulder. Something like a gurgle sounded in his throat; no doubt, had he possessed sufficient breath, it would have been a howl of fear. And then he ran.

Whoops of joy went up from the grandstand, and Dingle McGuire turned somersaults beside the track, for Benson shot past the astonished Englishman and broke the tape before Swansley could thoroughly grasp what was happening.

Nor did Benson stop then. An excited official made a grab at him, which Benson eluded and, with the dog snapping at his heels, he tore straight for the high fence which enclosed the grove, topped it with a single bound and disappeared on the other side, while the dog, finding a convenient hole in the boards, crawled through and sped after the flying man.

Some minutes later, McGuire, following the sound of the dog's disappointed whines, came upon them—Benson perched in the branches of a friendly cherry-tree, while below him the dog howled and leaped and strove with might and main to get at his quarry. In a moment the leash was on again, the dog tied to another tree, and McGuire was coaxing Benson to the ground.

"Is that leash strong? Are you sure it will hold him?" Benson demanded.

"Sure thing! Come on down, lad," McGuire laughed.

Back to the enclosure they made their way, where a shouting crowd promptly fell upon Benson. Then a decidedly pretty girl made her way to his side, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him before them all.

"But what made you go over the fence like that, Arthur?" she asked, at length. "Surely, you weren't afraid of Mr. McGuire's dog."

"Modest, ma'am," McGuire explained, with never the flutter of an eyelid. "He knew the bunch would make a fuss over him and he tried to duck 'em till they'd cooled down a bit, but I brought him back.

"Now, come on and we'll get the spoils. A thousand, which Dolan is stakeholder for, and which you get half of; a solid silver cup from the committee in charge of the games, and—" here McGuire turned to the girl with a fatherly smile—"another hundred, which I risked on the lad by way of a little weddin' present for you if he won, like he's done. Come on and we'll rake in our winnin's."

The Test of Friendship

By PHILIP R. KELLAR

MIRIAM DALE and I shared our girlish joys and sorrows. If we drifted away somewhat in our days of greatest happiness, later we drew nearer together when the dark times came. Friendship does not thrive upon prosperity; it exists in spite of it. In adversity and sorrow we learn that each who suffers requires love and sympathy to brighten the dark hours that seem to lie ahead; and in giving this we do not deprive ourselves of anything. It is a great discovery, but each must make it for himself.

I can realize this now, as I look back over the years, but I was no such philosopher when my first great sorrow came. My impulse was to run and hide away from all, especially from Miriam. Later, when I recalled her never-failing love, I went to her.

We were school girls then, and that afternoon we had had a rare treat; we had been to the Saturday *matinée* at the Shakespeare to see Donald Hume in "The Prince of the Princess' Heart;" the sort of a play a school girl likes—and Donald was the prince of all our hearts.

We returned all in a flutter, for, through a friend of mother's, we had been given the great joy of meeting our "prince" and talking to him for a few minutes after the *matinée*. All the way back to the school we chattered about Donald and his handsome face and his charming manners and his romantic appearance—as school girls do when they haven't enough practical work to keep their minds otherwise occupied.

When the chaperon chided us we replied with a series of giggles that we had a right to be interested in things and persons theatrical, for my mother had been an actress when father transplanted her to his suburban castle, and Miriam's mother had wanted to be an actress, until Miriam's father had transplanted her from the city's social set to a castle adjoining ours.

We silenced the chaperon, probably with our silliness, but continued our own chatter, until we were near to quarreling as to which should have "The Prince" when our school days were over. It was a good-natured quarrel, I grant, but we pretended to be in earnest, and the pretense was near the danger point by the time we reached the school. As we passed down the hall Miss Seldon was standing in the door of her office and called to me:

"Miss Hudson, come into my office, please. I have something important to tell you."

Miss Seldon's office, a cozy room that bore on all sides the marks of her deft and dainty fingers and sweet thoughts, was nearly always a pleasant place to be, but there was something in her voice to-day that chilled my enthusiasm. We all loved Miss Seldon in spite of the fact that she was the proprietor of the "Seldon School for Girls."

"Mary," she spoke gently, "I have just received a telegram from your father asking me to send you home at once."

She stopped, and though I trembled, I tried to be brave and urged her to tell me the reason.

"Your mother is very, very ill; she wants to see you."

Miss Seldon put her arm around me. She was one of those rare natures who know when to keep back the words and let the love flow out instead. Presently she gave me the telegram—when she thought I could stand the additional shock of learning that my mother was dying and that I might not reach home in time to see her alive.

We were facing the door, but I turned, involuntarily seeking to hide myself. Miss Seldon left very quietly. I knew she had gone to help get ready my belongings, and I thanked her silently for doing it and not saying anything more.

I wanted to be alone. Mother was my best chum. Ever since I could remember we had been girls together, and I could not realize that the end of that sweet friendship was so near. I thought of my father, a strange, silent man, who loved me and his two boys—both much younger than I—but who never showed it. I thought of the boys and of myself, and wondered what would become of us. But most of my thoughts were of mother.

When I reached our room, Miriam, with drawn face, was just finishing packing my trunk.

"I thought I could do it, Mary," she explained, and I wondered if it were she or I who had changed so greatly and so quickly, for I felt a new note of tenderness and gentleness in her voice and manner, and loved her all the more, though at that time I did not think much about her.

Miriam came to our home three days later, when she heard that mother had left us. She shared my grief of griefs, as she had always done, but I could detect under the surface the old gay

spirit, simply held in leash. That experience seemed to have quickened my perceptions, to have caused me to step from girlhood into womanhood, and I seemed so much older than Miriam, although in point of years she was eighteen and I four months younger.

I learned then, too, how deep was my father's affection for his wife and children, perceiving this, as I was beginning to perceive other things, with my newly aroused sense. Father may have seemed cold and stern to others, but not to me.

After a few weeks father asked if I wanted to return to Miss Seldon's and finish, but the school seemed rather meaningless when there was so much to be done at home. I realized then how great had been mother's world and how exacting her work, and I wanted to stay at home and try to take her place. I knew that father was much pleased with my decision.

Two years passed and I saw Miriam only occasionally during the school season, but for several weeks each summer when she came to visit me. We were drifting apart, in thought and action, but we still loved each other. The winter of her twentieth birthday she was to make her début, she and her mother having persuaded Mr. Dale to go to the city for the winter so that Miriam might be placed in her proper social niche, the place where she belonged as the daughter of her mother. Miriam wanted me to be with her, but I begged off. The boys were to be sent away to school and I should have a little more freedom, but I did not wish to utilize it in that manner. Nor did father. We had decided that a short European trip would be better for me than anything else. I promised Miriam, however, that I would stay with her for a week upon my return.

When I came back, just after the holidays, Miriam was swimming strongly in the deep social waters of New York, apparently thoroughly enjoying the experience.

"Mary," she exclaimed when she had given me half a dozen hugs and kisses for the sake of old times and before returning to her society manner, "I'm having such a beautiful time and you just must stay long enough to get into the heart of it with me. It's fully as exciting as breaking the rules at school and a lot more alluring."

Let me say, before I forget it, that though Miriam talked to me as though she hadn't the slightest desire or thought to conceal her emotions, she already had acquired the social mask. Later on I learned that the mask was becoming a habit and that her outbreaks of frank feeling were fewer and fewer. They were bad form.

Though I refused to let her give any affair expressly for me, and though I did not accept all the invitations that came to me because I was her guest, the new life at first delighted me with its frothiness, its inconsequential gayness, its aimlessness. My European trip had been a light luncheon after two years of plain food, and this was the dessert. After I had sipped it, I told myself, I would return to my own work. Miriam could not understand my attitude.

"It's positively silly, Mary," she cried, "for you to be so thoroughly domesticated and bury yourself up in that big house at Castleton. The boys don't need you now; they're old enough to take care of themselves. You don't see me working myself tired for my brothers, do you?"

"You have your mother," I laughed. "And besides, your brothers are older than you."

Miriam always had been a persistent fighter, but she also possessed that rare quality of not continuing a struggle when there was little chance to win, and thus exhausting herself without accomplishing anything. So she did not urge me further.

The third day I met Donald Hume at an informal afternoon luncheon, and learned that he had been very attentive to Miriam for several months.

"I just had to know him," she exclaimed as she pinched my arm, "for the sake of old times, you know."

"Are you disappointed?"

"Disappointed?" She lifted her eyebrows. "Oh, no; though, of course, he isn't nearly as handsome and nice as we thought he was."

Something in her manner caused me to believe she had not told all that was

in her heart about Donald, and later, when I saw how attractive he was and watched them together, my belief ripened into conviction. It did not take long for me to perceive that he was in love with her, and that she would be in love with him except for his social position. Miriam, naturally, was not a snob, but the "aristocracy" of which she was a part was so new that it was not strong enough to be free from snobbishness. Three hundred years is too short a time in which to outbreed the snobbishness that is inherent in the average human being, who suddenly finds himself in a better position than he once held.

When Miriam confessed that she was "half engaged" to Donald I was not surprised.

"He makes love so beautifully," she said, "that it was all I could do to keep from throwing my arms around him."

Miriam sighed and I knew she was thinking of the "social gulf" between them, and wondering how it could be bridged, if at all. Miriam's snobbishness was the result of educational association, but it was a part of her so long as she let it stay.

"That is because he is such a good actor," I joked, "or maybe he is such a good actor—in the eyes of the girls—because he makes love so well. Are you going to marry him?"

The suddenness of my question startled her, and her reply was that she could not tell. Later in the week I was glad she had not given him a definite answer, for Donald had given unmistakable signs of wishing to flirt with me. When I was getting ready to go home, I said to Miriam:

"I'm glad you didn't give Mr. Hume a direct answer. I believe he is pretty much of a flirt."

"Do you think you know him well enough to make that criticism?"

I did not like the look in Miriam's eyes as she glanced at me and then turned away quickly. But I answered frankly.

"It is more from what I feel intuitively, than from what I know, that I make the statement. He hasn't been making love to me, if that is what you mean."

"You are prejudiced because he is an actor"—she had almost succeeded in getting the mask back over her face. "I am very glad, though, that you have not said what so many others do, that he is after my money."

We had all the money we needed to make us comfortable, and in any other city father would have been considered quite rich. But Mr. Dale was enormously wealthy, with interests in a hundred different things, and it was general talk that Miriam was his favorite child and would get most of his money. For an instant after Miriam spoke I thought of this, and of the lure of money, and then I dismissed it and gave her a big hug, saying:

"It doesn't make any difference. No man is worth enough to come between us, Miriam."

"Going back on your creed?" she smiled. "I'm surprised at you, Mary. You've always talked as if love were the one thing needful."

"It is, but I said that no man was worth enough to part us. I did not say love."

"Doesn't it mean the same thing?"

"No." I was surprised that I should feel so much older and also so much younger than Miriam. "Love isn't a question of sex, dear; it exists in spite of sex. We love people, not because they are men and women, but because of what they do. You were attracted to Donald not because he is a man, but because of what he has accomplished—or you think he has accomplished."

Miriam did not see it as I did, and so we dropped the subject. Nor was I surprised three weeks later when I received a letter from her saying they were definitely engaged. I sighed. I felt sorry for Miriam. The future would have seemed so much brighter if the real Donald Hume had been as Miriam and I had idealized him.

That was a terrible spring in the business world. Father grew more and more silent and careworn. He did not care so much for money in itself, but he reveled in the joy of achievement, and it hurt him to see his work crumbling in the general disaster.

From him I learned that Miriam's father was having a desperate struggle.

The many interests that had been sources of great revenues now began to eat him up, they became such great drains upon him. I was very sorry, though not surprised, when the morning papers late in May told us that Dale had failed. The next day we heard that he had shot himself and that night I received a frantic letter from Miriam, begging me to come to the city.

A house that is built upon the sand never tumbled into the waters of despair more quickly nor more deeply than did the Dale household. Mrs. Dale, whose life-blood had been a mixture of social and financial ambition, was prostrated. The two boys were stunned into inability to do anything or think anything. Ethel, the younger sister, was not old enough to realize the meaning of it all. So the burden fell upon Miriam, who had never assumed any responsibility nor had it thrust upon her.

Everything was lost, even honor, Miriam hysterically informed me upon my arrival. Donald was in the West, but had telegraphed that he would come as quickly as he could get away from the company. Miriam would not see any one else.

Sorrows seem long in their passing, but when they have taken their place in the past, the periods they consumed in the journey grow shorter as the years recede. To Miriam and to me the next few weeks dragged wearily. Mrs. Dale, too weak in spirit to face the world again, passed quietly beyond that world's ken, and I persuaded Miriam to bring Ethel and come home with me.

It was not until then that Donald came, explaining that he had had great difficulty in getting away because they had to hunt so long before they could find a man to take his place. I resented the pride he showed, and resented it still more when he seemed constrained in greeting Miriam. She was a pathetic thing then, and I thought that sympathy for her very evident incapacity might have made him more gentle. I blew hot and cold on Donald Hume in those days, first berating him, in my thoughts, for his cruelty and egotism; then excusing him when I saw how incapable Miriam seemed and learned how greatly he admired people who accomplished things. And when he left I felt that he had done the wise thing—for both of them—in permitting her to break off the engagement.

"It isn't because of the money, Miss Hudson," he tried to explain to me, "and I do hope you'll not think that. It's—it's because—well you know. She isn't the Miriam I thought she was."

"You worship only success," I said sneeringly, "and you think she is a failure?" He bowed his head, and I went on meaningly: "And I suppose you call making money, or having it, being successful?"

"That isn't fair, Miss Hudson," he answered quietly. "I do not count money as success; it is only one of the many signs of success. Good-by."

As the fire seems to purify the gold, by destroying the dross that seems to be, but is not, a part of it, so the furnace of suffering destroyed the dross that seemed a part of the real Miriam, and she came through the ordeal chastened from pride, firm in the courage of her own strength and determined to be and do something that she could call her own.

"You are right, Mary," she said quietly a month later. "Love does not depend upon sex. I see it now."

Her two brothers turned out worse than useless, and Miriam bravely set forth to fight the world and take care of herself and Ethel. Some of her old friends offered to help, but she refused to allow it.

"They only offer it," she explained, "because they think people will talk if they do not. Really, though, they do not want to give me anything or do anything for me—at least not as long as I am a failure myself and the daughter of a failure."

Three years Miriam taught school in a little town up the state. She wrote to me regularly every week, letters that were cheerful and hopeful and entertaining, and that grew better and better continually. In the summer I joined her for a few weeks at a quiet little lake in the mountains, where she and I became girls again, with Ethel as our playmate.

During those years I saw Donald Hume occasionally, and heard and read

of him often. He had climbed rapidly, as he discarded the *matinée* idolisms and gave the true artist underneath a chance to show itself. When I saw that it was not a tender subject with Miriam, I mentioned him and we frequently talked about his work. I saw a great deal of Donald for several weeks before I joined Miriam for our third summer outing.

"He's a much more charming man than he used to be," I remarked, after telling Miriam of his latest success, "but I think he still likes to flirt. I believe he would propose to me if I would let him."

"And you're afraid to let him, for fear you'll accept?" Her eyes twinkled. "I think I must tell him the first time I see him, that he really ought to try to capture you, Mary."

"Don't be silly," I retorted, but I could feel my cheeks reddening. I had thought a great deal about Donald for some months and had frequently asked myself if I loved him, or what he represented.

"Well," Miriam was provokingly calm, "I may see him this winter. I've quit teaching school and am going to New York."

In answer to my volley of questions, fired so rapidly she could not answer each one separately, she said that for two years she had been utilizing her spare time in writing short stories that were published under a *nom de plume,* and that she had written a play which a New York producer had accepted.

"He says the leading part seems to have been written especially for Donald and that Donald must and will play it."

"Miriam!" As I looked steadily at her, she began to flush, "and was it written for him?"

She shook her head slowly and her eyes filled with the far away look a woman has when she is seeing beautiful visions. "I didn't realize it. As I remember him, the character of the hero in 'A Woman's Heart' doesn't fit him."

"Perhaps you idealized him," I replied, feeling that Miriam still loved Donald, "and you made the character as you think Donald would be if he were himself."

"Well, Mary," she laughed. "This never will lead to anything. I just hope the play is good and that he does his part well."

So we dropped Donald, each believing the other was in love with him, and talked of the play, for it was a safer subject. When I had read it I wanted her to have it produced under her own name, but she said she did not want any of her old friends and acquaintances—not even Donald—to be in a position to say they had helped her.

"Isn't that stubborn pride, Miriam?"

"I don't think so, dear," she replied quietly. "I just want the play to stand or fall on its own merits."

It stood, and it was a great success. I never saw a more surprised man than was Donald Hume when the manager brought him to the office after the opening performance to meet the author. He saw me first and was surprised because I was there. But when he saw Miriam and the manager told who she was, Donald was speechless for a few moments. I caught the manager's hand and pulled him out, whispering to Donald as I passed:

"Win her; don't be a stupid."

I decided that it would be a foolish waste of time to wait for Miriam, so I went to our hotel. An hour later she came in, her face radiant.

"Donald is outside," she cried, joyously, "and wants to come in and tell you something."

Miriam opened the door; Donald walked in, and she darted out and closed the door before I realized what had happened. Donald looked very much embarrassed.

"Well," I smiled in spite of a little pang, "you asked her again,"

"I—er—" he stammered. "Why no, I didn't. I couldn't—because she wouldn't let me and because—"

He stopped. I have seen Donald Hume play many parts and make love in a great many different ways, but he never made such a botch of it as he did then. In fact, when I realized what he was trying to do in order to carry out the little plot Miriam had hatched up, I almost had to do the proposing myself.

Men say that women always do, anyway.

Further Adventures of Bromley Barnes

By GEORGE BARTON

HERE is offered the last story in the series by Mr. Barton detailing the varied and always interesting cases of the old inspector.

No. VI—THE CASE OF THE STRANGE BOOK BUYERS

BROMLEY BARNES strolled into his bachelor apartments overlooking Washington Square one beautiful day in June, with a very broad smile on his face, a pink carnation in his buttonhole, and an air of joyousness that clung about him like a well-fitting garment. He hung up his hat, discarded his coat and laid his walking stick aside, all the while singing with the freedom of a mocking-bird. He paced the room, rubbing his shining forehead, slapping his hands together, and talking to himself like a man possessed. Presently, with a queer laugh, he took his hat and placed it on top of his walking-stick and supported them both against the table. He sunk back into a big cozy chair and began to address the unoffending tile in the following whimsical manner:

"You're Bromley Barnes, and now that I've got you where I want you, I propose to give you a bit of my mind. What's that? You don't care! Well, you'd better care. My dear fellow, whatever you do, don't make a fool of yourself. There might be some excuse for a young chap, growing his first mustache, but for a grizzled old duck like yourself—well, what's the use of talking about it?

"However, let's calmly review the situation. Two years ago Mrs. Huntley Logan asked you to trace four Oriental rubies she had lost. The rubies were once worn in the diadem of the King of Burmah and, to be historically exact, were given to the brother-in-law of Mrs. Huntley Logan by the King because of the success of the American in working the ruby mines at Kyat-Pyen, seventy miles to the west of Mandalay. Well, you solved the mystery all right and returned the gems to the lady. There wasn't anything particularly difficult about the job, but you swelled up like a frog and strutted around like a turkey buzzard. Why? Not because of your work. Certainly not. Simply because the charming and accomplished Mrs. Huntley Logan condescended to be agreeable to you.

"What now? Her husband dies six months after the ruby episode. You called to express your condolence. She appreciates the little attention. What next? A year goes by. This afternoon you call again. You find her bewitchingly attractive. You have a pleasant afternoon with the lady. So far, so good. As you leave, she puts a pink carnation in your buttonhole—does it with her own dear fingers and you come away like a lunatic, not knowing whether you're walking on your head or your heels. Now don't get silly, Barnes, old boy. She's not for the likes of you. Cut it out before it's too late. I—"

"Hello!" shouted a hearty voice in the doorway, "What you doing? talking to yourself?"

The Chief looked around in some embarrassment. Forward stood there grinning like a monkey.

"Why, no—" stammered Barnes, "I—"

"Oh, yes you were," insisted the lawyer, "I heard you and it all comes from living alone in these apartments."

"Now! now!" cried the old man, who had recovered his wits. "That will do. You want to rub it in on me. Just because Clancy and yourself have been fortunate enough to get sweet little partners for life, you want to have fun at the expense of poor me. Heigh, ho! I guess it's too late for me. I'm doomed to single-blessedness."

"Pardon me," said Forward, coming closer, and laying his hands affectionately on the old man's shoulder, "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"Oh," was the ironical response, "you can't hurt my feelings. You may use my heart for a punching bag and utilize my quivering nerves for a door mat, but you couldn't, by any possibility, hurt my feelings."

Forward joined in the laugh that followed and asked the Chief whether he had any cases on hand.

"No, and I don't want to have any. I'm positively through with the business of criminal investigation. I've had some of the greatest people in this country and Europe as my clients. They've dealt with me generously and I retire, for good and all, with a splendid competence."

"Come around and spend the evening with Mrs. Forward and myself."

"Sorry, but I've already refused a similar invitation from Clancy."

"But—"

"No buts about it. I've got an engagement at an auction sale of books tonight. There's a complete set of the first edition of Frank Stockton's works to be sold and I'm willing to spend a hundred good dollars to add 'em to my library."

"May I go with you!"

"Certainly. It will be a pleasure to have you with me."

"Count me in too."

They looked up. Clancy, bubbling over with good nature, had walked into the room.

"I don't know what it is," he said, smilingly, "but I'd hate to be left out of the game."

"Why, it's only a prosaic auction sale of old books that I'm going to attend to-night. Forward said he'd like to go along."

"So would I," was the prompt response, "nothing is prosaic to me where you're concerned."

Barnes laughed with pleasure.

"All right. You may both go along. It'll seem like old times."

At nine o'clock that evening the three men found themselves in the auction room on Park Place. The concern made a specialty of quick sales for heirs and estates, and for gentlemen who found themselves suddenly in need of ready money. On this occasion the auctioneer was about to dispose of the collection of a Wall Street broker who, through a slump in stocks, had been driven to the wall. The sale was for the benefit of his creditors.

Barnes looked over the crowd lazily, and then escorted Clancy and Forward to the rear of the room, where, in all the glory of fine binding and gilt lettering, he pointed out a complete set of the first edition of the works of the late Frank R. Stockton.

"There they are!" cried the old man, his eyes glittering with the glow of the enthusiastic book lover. "Don't you think they're beautiful?"

"Very," said Forward, dryly. "What are they worth?"

"A hundred dollars would be a fair price for the set, but I hope to get 'em for less."

"Why, are you a favored person?"

"Oh, no, but I don't believe any one in this crowd is likely to bid fancy prices."

By this time the auctioneer was on the rostrum pounding his hammer and attracting the attention of the people to the fact that this was to be one of the most remarkable sales in the history of New York City. As a similar announcement was made at the beginning of each sale, his auditors yawned and waited for the real business to begin. All the books were in sets and they sold rapid-

ly. A magnificently bound edition of Sir Walter Scott sold for $28.00; an early issue of Thackeray's works were bid in at $42.00; a specially bound set of Boswell's Life of Johnson was knocked down for $49.00. Indeed, none of the lots seemed capable of rising above fifty dollars. Finally the auctioneer reached the set of the first edition of Stockton's works. He explained the merits of the volumes at some length and asked for a bid. Barnes, warned by the low prices not to bid too high, said in a mild voice:

"I'll give thirty dollars."

"Forty!" immediately cried a voice from the other side of the room.

The Chief looked at the speaker. He was a big, red-faced man, with bristling red hair and a double chin. He received the prolonged stare of his rival bidder with the utmost unconcern. Indeed, his broad face was expressionless. The auctioneer, in the meantime, was yelling himself hoarse in the effort to get another bid. Barnes nodded:

"Fifty."

"Sixty," snapped the man with the moon face.

"Seventy," retorted Barnes, angrily.

"Eighty," said the other, calmly.

"Ninety," yelled the Chief.

"One hundred," said he of the bristling red hair.

"One hundred and ten," said Barnes, with forced calmness.

"Two hundred," responded the other in a low voice.

The attention of everybody in the room was now attracted to the two bidders. The old man was conscious of this and it made him furiously angry. The red-headed man's jump to two hundred dollars was clearly a challenge. Barnes accepted it. He called out in stentorian tones:

"Three hundred dollars."

"Four hundred," cried the other, instantly.

Forward plucked at Barnes' coat tail. The old man pretended not to notice it, but the lawyer was insistent.

"Chief," he whispered, "don't make a fool of yourself. It's four times as much as the books are worth. Let him have 'em. I don't believe he can read 'em anyhow."

The advice was ill timed. Barnes disdained to answer. He turned to the auctioneer and said in a determined voice:

"Five hundred!"

Everybody looked in the direction of the moon-faced man. He never turned an eyelid. Looking meaninglessly at the wall, he murmured:

"One thousand."

Barnes almost collapsed. He felt as if he had been slapped in the face. But he had gone his limit. The man with the little eyes, the big face, and the bristling hair secured Stockton. The crowd regarded the successful bidder as a hero, and a number of persons crowded about him and insisted upon congratulating him. He never smiled once but always preserved that expressionless countenance. The voice of the auctioneer caused him to lift his eyes the merest fraction of an inch.

"Name, please," called the personage with the gavel.

"Jonas Dillworth," answered the inscrutable one.

"Pay now or later?"

"Later."

"You must make a deposit," insisted the auctioneer, suspiciously.

"How much?"

"Two hundred dollars."

Majestically the red-faced person marched up to the desk. He pulled a roll of bills from his pocket and counted out twenty brand new, rustling, ten-dollar bills.

"His that enough?" he inquired with a lordly air.

"Hit am," answered the clerk, unconsciously mimicking his pronunciation.

Barnes, Forward, and Clancy walked home in gloomy silence. The old man did not like the idea of being beaten, even in the purchase of books. He felt depressed. Clancy, as usual, was the first to become normal.

"Chief," he said, "all you need's a horse."

"What's that?" asked the old man, sharply. "What are you talking about?"

"I was just thinking," laughed the young man, "that you looked for all the world like Napoleon on the retreat from Moscow."

Barnes smiled darkly.

"But the picture's not quite complete," continued Clancy. "It should be snowing. You should be coming up Broadway astride of a white mule, with your soft hat pulled down over your eyes, your chin sunk in your breast, one hand holding the bridle of the mule, and the other carelessly thrust in the opening of your Prince Albert coat."

Forward smiled at this, but the old man, with a weary gesture, said:

"That will do, Con. Don't waste any more of your sweetness on the desert air."

The evening passed away very monotonously in the Washington Square apartments. Barnes sucked away at his unlighted cigar in silence. Forward made several attempts to stir up conversation, but in vain. The old man was plainly brooding over his defeat. Presently he said:

"They're going to sell a Robert Louis Stevenson to-morrow night. I'd like to have it."

"Why, I thought you ran to humor," said Forward, with surprise. "Stevenson's serious."

"Oh, the old man's getting tragic now!" exclaimed Clancy, with mischief in his eyes.

"I hope you're not dense, Forward," cried Barnes, testily, turning to the lawyer. "Of course, my taste is for humor, and I think I have the best collection of the American humorists in existence, but that doesn't mean that I'm not capable of appreciating the work of our best serious writers. That narrow minded view annoys me. It's just the same when some capable comedian announces his intention of trying tragedy. Everybody laughs and takes it for a good joke. Don't you get in that class, my boy."

Forward knew that it was useless to argue with the Chief when he started in that strain so after a little while, he and Clancy departed, promising to meet Barnes at the auction house the next night.

The scene was the same, but the crowd, if anything, was larger than on the previous night. The Chief had brightened up considerably, yet he looked about the room, furtively, to see if his red-headed opponent were present. So did Forward and Clancy. All seemed relieved that Jonas Dillworth was not there. The coast was clear, and there was no reason why Barnes should not get his coveted books at a reasonable price. The set was the only one of Stevenson in the sale. It was in good condition and was worth, on a fair estimate, from eighty to a hundred dollars. The sale proceeded without any special incident. The prices, on the whole, were better than they had been at the first sale. One set after another was disposed of in a business-like way. The bidding was spirited but the prices were within reason. Eventually the Stevenson books were put under the hammer.

"Fifty," bid Barnes.

"One hundred," said a feminine voice.

It came from a rosy-faced woman, wearing an old-fashioned bonnet and a plaid shawl. Nothing could be more incongruous. She was a good-natured looking person but was flushed and embarrassed at the unusual surroundings.

"Two hundred," cried the Chief.

"Five hundred," cried the woman.

"Six hundred," shouted the Chief.

"One thousand," said the woman, nervously.

"Take them!" exclaimed Barnes, angrily.

He was tingling with rage in every nerve but felt half ashamed at his outburst of petulant passion. He sought the first favorable opportunity of slipping out of the room. Forward had never seen the old man act in this manner before and he was at a loss what to say or do. Not so Clancy. That light-headed young man rushed in where angels presumably would have feared to tread.

"I suppose you'll wash your hands of this auction joint," he ventured.

"You suppose wrong," snapped Barnes, "I wont do any such thing."

Forward looked at the speaker inquiringly. The old man turned to him half apologetically.

"You see I've got a set of Charles Reade marked up on my catalogue. All my life I've wanted to possess a good, well printed, well bound, set of Reade. Now, while I feel a bit irritated over my experiences at that place, I don't see why I should bite off my nose to spite my face, do you?"

"I certainly do not," was the cheerful response. "Besides I don't really see why you should have any feeling over the matter. You bid a certain price; someone bid higher and got 'em. It's too bad, but it's not a killing matter, and anyhow I don't think you're the sort of man to cry over spilt milk."

"But I was weak enough to show bad temper," said Barnes, contritely.

"What of it? That simply proves you're human and not an angel."

Barnes laid his hands on the young man's shoulders with a gesture of fondness.

"Forward, you're all right. You can always count on my friendship."

It was unanimously decided that the Chief should go to the sale on the third night and use every decent and honorable means to get the edition of Charles Reade. It was even agreed that he should go as high as eleven hundred dollars in the attempt.

"You've noticed," he said, shrewdly, "that my unknown rival never goes above a thousand dollars. That seems to be his limit. I'll go him one better."

"But the books are not worth half that," protested Clancy.

"My peace of mind is worth more than that," insisted the old man.

"Your peace of mind?"

"Yes, my peace of mind. You don't suppose I'm going to lay down and permit anyone to get the best of me, do you? Why, the thing's getting on my nerves. I can't sleep at night. Sometimes I feel as though I were losing my grip."

"Don't you fret," reassured Forward. "Your grip's as good as ever it was. Some shriveled-up book-worm is taking these editions from you. But I don't care who it is. I bet on you every time. I'm for the man who cleared up the Mystery of the Haunted Card Room, and who recovered the Amsterdam Antiques."

Barnes brightened up at once.

"Forward, you're better than a tonic. I'll go to-morrow night and I'll try a new system of bidding. I'll only raise twenty-five and fifty cents at a time. That may throw my opponent off his guard. I'll get you boys to join in the bidding, too; that may be distracting."

On the fateful night Barnes, Forward, and Clancy came to the auction room but soon separated so as not to excite suspicion. The set of Charles Reade was offered at once, but for a long while there was no bid.

This was according to the old man's orders because he did not wish to show an undue desire for the books.

"Well, gentlemen," said the auctioneer, "if you wont give me any bid on this splendid edition of the great English novelist, I'll have to pass them by and bring out something else for your consideration."

"Five dollars," piped Clancy.

The auctioneer laughed.

"Why, gentlemen, that wouldn't pay my commission. If that's the best you can do, we'll lay them aside."

"Five-fifty," chimed in Forward, from the other side of the room.

"Really, gentlemen," protested the salesman, "these prices are absurd."

"Six dollars," said Barnes, solemnly.

The auctioneer looked displeased. It was the third bid, though, and according to tradition, he would have to let them go, provided no one bid a higher price. He harangued the crowd for a long while without getting any response.

"I'm bid six dollars for this splendid set of books. Will you go one higher? Going, going! First, second, and last—"

"One hundred dollars," boomed a big bass voice.

The bidder was a well-dressed man with iron gray side-whiskers. He had a distinguished air and was perfectly self-possessed.

"At last—the principal himself," muttered Barnes.

But his reflections were cut short by the auctioneer, who, delighted at this big jump, was laughing and talking with the greatest animation. The Chief nodded to Clancy.

"One hundred dollars and twenty-five cents," said the young man.

"Two hundred dollars," responded the distinguished-looking personage.

"Two hundred dollars and fifty cents," bid Forward.

"Five hundred dollars!" exclaimed their opponent.

"Six hundred dollars," cried the Chief, forgetting all his pre-arranged plans.

"A thousand dollars," chirped the other.

"Eleven hundred," said Barnes, desperately.

"Two thousand," calmly rejoined the well-dressed gentleman.

There was a long pause after that—a sort of awe-stricken silence. The auctioneer, alive to his responsibilities, asked for more bids. None were forthcoming. He turned to the stranger.

"Knocked down to the gentleman over yonder for two thousand dollars. Name please?"

"Orpheus Spayd."

"Will you leave a deposit, please?"

"I'll pay the whole amount."

Suiting the action to his words, he drew a check book from his pocket, filled it out with a fountain pen and, passing it up to the auctioneer, quietly left the room.

Barnes and his two friends departed like three culprits. All felt the sting of defeat. No one spoke. Even Clancy's fountain of humor, for the nonce, was dried up. That night they held a lodge of sorrow at the Washington Square apartments. In the midst of their lamentations Forward looked up.

"Chief, why don't you run this out?"

"Run it out?"

"Yes. There's a mystery about this business. It's as strange as any case you've ever tackled. You've done wonders for others. Why not solve this for your own satisfaction?"

"You know I've retired from the detective business."

"Very true, but why not make this your last case? Make it positively your farewell as a specialist in curious cases and retire in a blaze of glory?"

"It sounds good—all but the blaze of glory. Suppose I fail? Everybody would say I had to retire because I was played out."

"But you wont fail."

"In the bright lexicon of youth," began the old man, laughingly. Then he stopped abruptly and gazed at his friend for some moments. Suddenly he burst forth:

"By George, I'll do it, but you boys must work with me; then if we fail, I can divide the mortification into three parts."

Before they parted for the night, all of the details of the work had been planned. Clancy was to seek the whereabouts and the occupation of Jonas Dillworth, who had purchased the works of Stockton; Forward was charged with an investigation into the antecedents of Emily Dripps, who had secured the set of Stevenson, while Barnes took on himself an inquiry into the personality of Orpheus Spayd.

At the end of three days they met again. Clancy and Forward came empty handed. They were compelled to admit, with deep reluctance, that they could learn nothing of the whereabouts of the Dillworth and Dripps persons. Barnes did not take their failure much to heart and he was strangely non-communicative.

"I've got a slight clue," he said, "and if you come here to-morrow night, I may be able to tell you more."

Ah, sly old fox, for the first time in his life, he was consciously deceiving his fellow-workers. He had bearded Orpheus Spayd in his den that very morning. Spayd was an attorney-at-law, and under sharp cross-questioning, admitted that he had purchased the set of Charles Reade's works, not for himself, but for an important client. The name of the client he refused to divulge. It was a professional secret, he said, which must be kept inviolate.

But Barnes had gone on the scent like a bloodhound. He had traced the books from the auction room to Spayd's office, and from there, to the residence of Mrs. Huntley Logan. This rather staggered him, but he determined to run the mystery out to the end, no matter what the consequences. He sent his two friends home with the promise that he would meet them on the following afternoon.

He arose early the next morning. After his cold bath and rub down, he dressed and started up town about ten o'clock, looking the pink of perfection. Everything about his attire was just right. The high silk hat was of the very latest fashion; the frock coat could not possibly have been improved upon, while the carnation resting in his button-hole was the pinkest and the freshest flower on Broadway. He walked up the gay white way for several blocks, humming

a catchy tune from one of the latest operas. Presently it occurred to him that he had some distance to go. He summoned a cab, and in twenty minutes was in front of the residence of Mrs. Huntley Logan. He dismissed the vehicle and, going up the broad brown stone steps, handed his card to the waiting attendant. As he walked into the vestibule, a familiar voice called out:

"Come right up to the library."

He did so. Mrs. Huntley Logan was waiting to meet him with outstretched hand. He took it cordially and if the truth must be told, held it a little longer than was absolutely necessary. He thought she was looking ravishly beautiful and hungered to say so. Age, apparently, had not left its imprints upon her face or form. Her skin was clear, her lips red, and there was witchery in her large hazel eyes. And all about her was the very, very faint odor of sweet violets. Barnes was standing in front of a finely carved book-case. He looked at it mechanically. What he saw made him start with surprise. On the top shelf stood a set of Stockton—the identical edition that he had tried to purchase. Below it were the complete works of Robert Louis Stevenson—the edition he had coveted—and after that, naturally enough, the twelve volumes of Charles Reade.

"I've been expecting you," she said, softly.

"Expecting me?" he said, his eyes still on the books.

"Yes," she said, "I know you've been on my trail and I counted on your reaching here this morning."

"But the books?" he stammered. "The Jonas Dillworth, who bought the first—"

"My coachman," she said, with a smile.

"And Emily Dripps?"

"A faithful domestic."

"But Orpheus Spayd?"

"My lawyer."

"But the prices?"

"I wanted the books and, of course, money was no object to me."

"How did you know about them?"

"The last time you were here you talked of nothing else. You left the marked catalogue on the table."

"I was so anxious for them," he sighed, looking longingly toward the book-case.

"They are at your disposal," she said, generously. Then something in her eyes caused him to drop a relatively unimportant subject.

"What's the use of talking books?" he cried. "It is you that I wish—will you be my wife?"

"Bromley!" she said.

Even in her joy she smiled at his embarrassment. She took his two hands in hers and squeezed them softly. He was dumb with delight. But he managed, somehow, to get his arm around her waist and give her a kiss that brought the blushes to her cheeks.

"Why did you defeat me with the books?" he said, reproachfully, after the first flush of his new-found happiness had passed over.

"That was a bit of feminine strategy—to defeat you and have you in my power."

"As if that were necessary—with me head over heels in love with you!"

"Yes, you goose," she laughed. "But you didn't have the courage to propose."

He left with his head in a whirl. He could still feel the velvety pressure of her soft hand, he could still hear the musical swish of her silken skirts, and all about him was the odor of violets.

He found Clancy and Forward at the Washington Square apartments—how lonely the rooms looked now, to be sure—and he lost no time in acquainting them with his good fortune.

"And boys, I'm going to break down a tradition as old as marriage itself."

"What's that?" they asked in chorus.

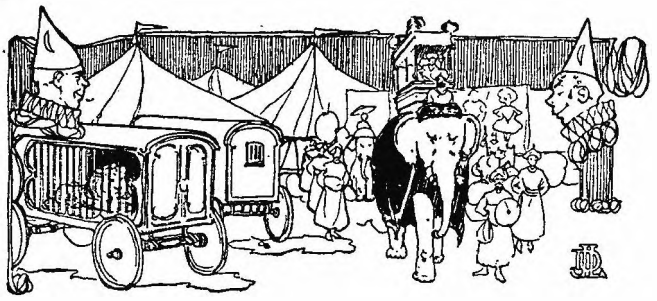
"Why, it's always been customary to have a best man—I'm going to have two best men and their names are Cornelius Clancy and John Forward."

After the old man's romance had been thoroughly talked over, the two young men, as though by a common impulse, asked:

"What about the mystery of the book-shop?"

Barnes waved his hands magnificently as though brushing the whole thing aside.

"Oh, not a bit of mystery in it. Just a good joke played on me by a very, very dear friend of mine."



The Boom in "Never-Nuf" Bread

By HUGH C. WEIR

ANDREWS scowled at the long rows of newly baked bread. Even the appetizing odor from the big ovens failed to smooth his wrinkles.

"It's no use, Murphy!" he snapped. "The Gem Bakery is a failure—a flat failure!"

The older man glanced at him sharply. "You're discouraged, Jack. Our new line of 'Never Nuf' bread is the best this old town has ever had served up to it!"

"But the old town doesn't know it! Look here, Will, it's been just three months since we opened this custard emporium. And what have we done with it? We haven't made enough to pay our rent!"

"We haven't had a flattering success, I will admit," Murphy said cautiously.

"A flattering success! I should say not. Six weeks from now we'll have to close our doors or the sheriff will close them for us."

Murphy thoughtfully tested the pan of rolls that had just come out of the oven. "You forget, Jack, that the tide may turn. Look at the Burroughs bakery. Look at—"

"Bosh! Frank Burroughs has the best business location in town. He has all of the newspaper space he can use and he doesn't have to pay for it until he gets good and ready. Why shouldn't he succeed? He's not stuck on a side street, with not enough money to pay for a want ad!"

"But he hasn't got the bread that we have, and you know it. If I do say it, there's not another baker in this part of the state that can come up to the 'Never Nuf.' We have the goods, Jack, and when the people find it out—"

"Yes, when they do, we wont be able to supply the demand! That's a nice refrain, Will, and you get it off well. It's too bad to disillusion you, but there's only one thing that will put 'Never Nuf' bread on a paying basis."

Murphy looked up eagerly from the stack of coffee cake. "What's that, Jack?"

Andrews glared out of the window as one of the Burroughs delivery wagons whirled gaily down the street. "A heavy publicity campaign, and I might as well say a miracle, my boy. There are two things that make successful advertising—money and brains. And I'm beginning to think that we haven't got either."

Murphy sighed. "If we could borrow the press agent of Bunkum's Circus—"

"Good gracious, you can't advertise bread like you would a circus, man! We *might* put out a new line of animal cookies if MacPherson over there hasn't lost his cunning. Eh—Mac?"

The bent-shouldered, wizened old man, who had just closed the heavy oven door, shuffled forward with his hand to his ear. "What's that about cookies for Bingling's animals? If you'll keep Bingling's lion-tamer away from here, I'll make you all the cookies you want!"

Andrews stared. "What in the name of creation does the lion tamer want in the bakery? Some of those prize doughnuts of yours for his pets?"

Mac Pherson thrust a dough-bedaubed hand into the pocket of his overalls. "He's after this, sir, and he's not going to get it!"

The old man held up a much-polished gold coin almost the size of a silver dollar. As the light struck it, he stood fondling it much as a diamond collector would have caressed a beautiful gem. He passed it over to Andrews with a sigh.

The latter could not repress a low exclamation as he tried to decipher its inscription. "Sixteen hundred and twenty! Do you mean to tell me this thing is nearly three hundred years old?"

Mac Pherson nodded indifferently. "That's what my grandfather said. He picked it up some place when he was a sailor, in some Dago country I think."

"But what does the lion-tamer want of it?"

"Oh, he's one of those collecting sharks. I was showing it at the restaurant and he's been nagging the life out of me for it. Said he was going to bring another man around to see it to-day."

Andrews turned away as the clerk called from the office. "Well, if you can't tend to them, send them to me," he said gloomily. He would welcome anything that would lift him out of his somber thoughts of the future!

The summons from the office was a telephone call, and an unpleasant one, for it was a demand for money from the manager of the flour mill.

"We have sent two statements of this bill, Mr. Andrews," he said, "and we don't care to send a third."

"I'm very sorry," Andrews began, "but—"

"So are we, so much so that we don't care to fill your present order until our last account is settled. Do I make myself plain?"

"You certainly do!" Andrews thought ruefully as he hung up the telephone and scanned the thin balance in the bank book. "I had given us six weeks longer, but we can't hold out four weeks at this rate. What's that about the rats leaving a sinking ship?"

But he wasn't given long for speculation.

A sudden shout shrilled up the speaking tube and was repeated. Andrews sauntered across to the corner as it rang out again, this time with a decided suggestion of impatience. He recognized Murphy's crisp tones before he picked up the receiver and returned a weary answer.

"Hello, down there; what's wanted?"

"We want you, Andy! Can you spare a few minutes?"

"I can spare you a few hours if you want them! I guess business isn't so rushing up here that I can't get away!"

With a grim smile, which he didn't trouble to hide even from the girl in the office, Andrews opened the basement door.

The scene in the cellar had changed since he had left it. The long pans of bread had disappeared in the ovens, the mixing tables had been brushed off and Mac Pherson had resumed his coat preparatory to leaving for a hasty luncheon. Evidently he had been stopped by the appearance of two visitors who stood just inside of the street door engaged in an animated discussion with him and Murphy.

Andrews gave his tie another pat as he came forward. One of the visitors was a woman, a young woman, stylishly dressed, and very pretty. Andrews could see this in the first brief glance he caught of her across the big room. As he came closer, he noticed an oddly alert, business-like suggestion in her bearing, and the glance she darted at him from her gray eyes seemed to read and measure him in an instant. At her elbow was a florid-faced, solidly built man, whose limbs showed huge rolls of muscle even through his clothes. Andrews guessed at once that he was the lion-tamer of Bingling's Circus.

"This is Miss Donnelly," said Murphy awkwardly, nodding toward the young woman as he came up. "And this is Signor Castillo!" Murphy got the name out with an obvious air of relief.

Miss Donnelly entered into the conversation with a smile. "We are with Bingling's Circus, you know. Signor Castillo is the celebrated lion-tamer. You have read about him surely. I am Dor-

othy Donnelly, the only woman press agent of an American circus!"

Andrews gazed at her curiously. He could explain her alert, business-like appearance now. "I am glad to meet you," he answered.

"I suppose you are wondering what has brought us to your bakery," Miss Donnelly continued.

"I admit that I was beginning to wonder."

"Our errand is easily explained. We came to see Mr. Mac Pherson's curious gold coin. Signor Castillo tells me it is one of the rarest relics of its kind in existence and I was very eager to examine it. Mr. Mac Pherson was just about to show it to us when you came up."

An impatient exclamation from the Scotchman interrupted her. Mac Pherson was standing at the edge of the mixing board with both hands deep in his pockets and an expression of mingled disgust and bewilderment on his face.

"What's the matter, Mac?" Andrews asked.

"Matter?" the other snapped. "I can't find it!"

"What?"

"My gold piece! It's gone."

"You don't mean you've lost it?"

"All I know is that it has disappeared! And it was in my pocket less than twenty minutes ago!"

Mac Pherson started back toward the ovens with his eyes searching the cement floor.

"Well, I'll be—" Murphy began and then checked himself abruptly.

"Do you mean to tell me that the coin is lost?" Castillo burst out, speaking with a suspiciously clear English accent. "Why, it's worth a hundred dollars, man, if it's worth a cent!"

Dorothy Donnelly stood gazing at Mac Pherson's bent figure without a word. Suddenly the Scotchman whirled around, almost colliding with Murphy, as he brought his hand down on his thigh with a resounding slap.

"I have located it!" he almost shrieked. "I know where it is now!"

Murphy caught him by the shoulder. "Where?"

Mac Pherson raised his arm until it pointed toward the row of ovens.

"In there!"

"Good gracious, Mac, you don't mean—"

"I've dropped it in the dough, and it's in one of those two thousand loaves of bread!"

Mac Pherson sank into a seat, and Murphy and Andrews stared at one another in slowly dawning comprehension. Andrews was the first to speak.

"Surely you're mistaken, Mac?"

The older man shook his head impatiently without glancing up.

"It's all plain enough now. I was in a hurry to get that last batch of bread in, and I must have shaken the money out in the dough and rolled it up without feeling it. It's no use, Mr. Andrews. I am a hundred dollars to the bad, unless I buy every loaf of bread we bake this morning, and tear them all apart! A nice job that would be!"

"Then for once there's money in 'Never Nuf' bread!" Andrews growled cynically.

Murphy frowned, and the Scotchman didn't answer.

Dorothy Donnelly walked quickly across the room until she faced the three men.

"May I make a suggestion!"

"A dozen, if you like," Andrews answered.

"How many loaves do you turn out in a day?"

"A matter of two thousand generally."

"And Mr. Mac Pherson's coin is buried in one of these?"

"That's about the size of it, I guess."

"Good!" the girl said with such emphasis that even Mac Pherson glanced up.

"Do you object to free advertising for 'Never Nuf,' Mr. Andrews?"

"Do I object?" Andrews cried in bewilderment. "Do I object? Why my dear young lady—"

Miss Donnelly smiled. "Then I think I can do more to convince Vaporia of the merits of 'Never Nuf' than you could do in ten columns of ordinary advertising, and incidentally I am convinced I can recover Mr. Mac Pherson's coin!"

"How on earth—"

Dorothy Donnelly held up her hand. "I am going to announce a reward of

one hundred dollars in behalf of Signor Castillo to the consumer of 'Never Nuf' who is fortunate enough to find the missing gold-piece in his loaf! Do you catch the point? Both the bakery and the circus will obtain a display head in the front pages of all the newspapers. You should employ a press agent, Mr. Andrews!"

"Who gets my coin?" Mac Pherson asked.

"Oh, if we find it, Signor Castillo will pay you another hundred dollars if you want to sell it, or return it to you if you don't care to. You see, the circus will pay the reward!"

"Oh!" said Mac Pherson, staring at Andrews as though he could not quite fathom it all.

Dorothy Donnelly turned to the door. "By the way, Mr. Andrews, if I may be so bold, I would suggest that you run out an extra batch of bread to-day. Unless I am very much mistaken, you are going to have a record-breaking boom in 'Never Nuf' before night!"

The girl motioned to Signor Castillo. The Signor raised his hand to his hat in a military salute to the three men, turned about as precisely as though he were a soldier on parade, and opened the door for his companion. Andrews drew a long sigh.

"Well, I've heard of the new woman in business," Murphy began, "but she is certainly ahead of anything I ever read about."

"She's got the Christy girl beaten a block for looks!" Andrews declared.

"It's been my experience," Mac Pherson said shrewdly, "that when a woman is as smooth an article as she is, she will bear a heap of watching!"

"Shut up, Mac! You don't know what you are talking about!" Andrews growled.

It was shortly after one o'clock, Andrews noticed when he ascended to the office again. The young woman, whom the Gem Bakery employed in the dual capacity of book-keeper and clerk in the retail department—and who, it must be confessed, had found neither of her duties onerous—glanced up curiously at the sight of his added vigor.

"You must have heard some good news, Mr. Andrews."

"I have!"

"Did that girl in the gray Chanticler hat have anything to do with it?"

"I don't know whether she had on a gray Chanticler or a green Merry Widow, but I wouldn't be surprised, if she proved our good angel in disguise!"

"I hate a good-looking woman who shows that she knows she has good looks!" the young lady clerk said irrelevantly as she opened her ledger with a bang.

Andrews scowled at her as Murphy's voice from the speaking tube called him to the corner.

"Do you think it safe, Andy, to turn out another run of bread this afternoon?"

"Sure!" Andrews answered instantly. "And I'd make it a big run, too!"

"You know what it will cost us, don't you—and where we stand at the mill?"

Andrews thought grimly of the morning's telephone conversation with the miller. But what was the use of telling Murphy about it? He had enough on his mind as it was.

"Are you still up there, Andy?"

"Yes! And I say, Murphy, I believe I'd risk that extra run!"

"All right! If we're going to hit the wall, we might as well strike it hard and have it over with!"

Andrews reached for his hat as a glance at the office clock reminded him that his luncheon was already more than an hour over-due. When he reached the walk, he glanced back and saw that the young woman book-keeper had left her ledger and was gazing after him with a curious smile.

"I'll wager she thinks I'm going to take Miss Donnelly with me!" he muttered. The thought vaguely irritated him as he strode off down the walk.

In front of *The Courier* Building a crowd was blocking the pavement before the big, red-lettered bulletin board. Andrews paused on the outskirts. There had been a disastrous wreck, on one of the Western railroads. The placard announced that thirty had been killed.

"I wonder if Miss Donnelly has been here yet?" Andrews asked himself. As he was turning away, he saw that the boy was posting another bulletin, and he lingered. As he read its fat-lettered lines,

he caught his breath sharply. Dorothy Donnelly emphatically *had* visited *The Courier*. There before the gaping crowd was displayed the following—

WHICH IS THE HUNDRED DOLLAR LOAF?

Valuable Gold Coin, lost in dough of Gem Bakery, is made up into "Never-Nuf" Bread. One hundred dollars will be paid for its return by lion-tamer of Bingling's circus. Romantic history of gold-piece. Dates from ancient pirate days.

WHO WILL BITE INTO THE HUNDRED DOLLAR SLICE OF BREAD?

Andrews turned toward the restaurant, with his thoughts in a whirl, but not before he had noticed that the crowd had flocked over to the new bulletin. Not even the report of the railroad disaster could compete with the hundred dollar reward and the story of the missing gold-piece!

"That girl is a wonder!" the proprietor of the Gem Bakery told himself admiringly, as he took a table by the window where he could watch the crowd. He picked up the menu card and then put it down. The bulletin board of *The Courier* was more interesting.

"Gee, but she must have a pull!" Andrews muttered.

"Beg pardon, sir, what did you say?" asked a waiter at his elbow.

"Bring me some soup," said Andrews without turning.

"Tomato or consommé?"

"'Never Nuf' with some Donnelly spice!" Andrews replied over his shoulder, and the waiter retired, undecided whether to view him as a humorist or a lunatic.

It was half-past two when Andrews returned to the bakery. On the way, he bought first edition copies of the three evening papers and stood on the corner by the news stand as he devoured the first pages. Dorothy Donnelly was true to her word. Every paper had prominently displayed the story of the lost coin and "Never Nuf" bread. In one case a two-column picture of Signor Castillo was used, showing him eating lunch in the lions' cage.

As Andrews looked up, he encountered the gaze of Frank Burroughs, the proprietor of the "Blue Ribbon" bread. Burroughs was in a bad humor and he showed it in his first words.

"Where did you strike this flim-flam dodge?" he growled, slapping the paper in his hand. Andrews noticed that it was the one which had featured Mac Pherson's coin in the largest type.

"We didn't strike it," he grinned. "It struck us!"

"Do you mean to tell me it's straight?"

"Of course it's straight!"

"Why you haven't got a hundred dollars in your whole plant!"

"Well, then, we'll come across to you for a loan, Burroughs, if we have to pay the reward!"

Andrews walked briskly off, humming a popular song with an emphasis which floated tantalizingly back to his competitor.

At the corner of the block where the bakery was located, he received a shock which brought him to an abrupt halt.

The retail store occupied a small front room, while the bakery was housed in a long basement with a convenient outlet in the alley. Before the entrance of the store, a line of over a dozen persons was stretched across the walk, while a row of others, each with a familiar brown paper parcel under his arm, was emerging from the door. Andrews rubbed his eyes as he quickened his pace. There was no doubt that his first wild surmise was correct. They were all customers—and they were buying "Never Nuf" bread!

Andrews slipped around to the alley entrance and made his way into the store by the basement steps. Murphy, the young woman clerk, and even Mac Pherson were elbowing into each other's way in the narrow confines behind the counter as they endeavored to wrap up the dwindling stock of crisp, brown loaves fast enough to meet the demands of the crowd. They looked flushed and nervous and tired. Mac Pherson mopped his face desperately with a huge red handkerchief as he worked. The telephone in the office was jangling insistently, but no one seemed to give it the slightest attention.

Murphy caught sight of Andrews with a scowl.

"Where have you been all day? Here, take my place, while I shut off that confounded telephone. I never spent such a half hour in my life! No, madam, we *don't* sell six loaves for a quarter! I don't care *what* the 'Blue Ribbon' people do. Have you ever eaten 'Never Nuf?' I thought not. You wouldn't ask that question if you had!"

Andrews slipped into Murphy's position while the latter made a belated answer to the telephone. As he wrapped up his first bundle, he thought he heard his partner repeating an order for six dozen loaves of "Never Nuf" from a certain well-known grocery. Andrews darted a hasty glance at the shelves behind him. There were not a dozen loaves left in the whole store!

The end came quickly. Mac Pherson reached for the last loaf, wrapped it up, tossed the coin into the cash register, and disappeared behind the door of the basement. Andrews faced the disappointed customers with a smile.

"I am afraid we are sold out for today!"

"You mean that you haven't any more bread at all?"

"Not another loaf!"

"Then some one has bought the hundred dollar gold-piece?"

"It looks that way!" Andrews admitted.

The questioner—an elderly woman—turned away with a sigh. "Well, I guess I haven't any such luck!"

Andrews watched the crowd leave with the feeling of a man in a dream. It was the voice of Murphy from the inner office that aroused him.

"Take a look at these, Andy!"

His partner was extending a bunch of blue order slips as he spoke. "These are all for to-morrow, old man, and over half of them are from new customers! You remember how hard McNally's grocery turned us down last week? Here is their order for three dozen daily until further notice! How's that for business?"

Andrews glanced at the slips mechanically.

"I say, Murphy, who in the name of jumping Jehosophat has got that gold-piece of Mac's?"

"Search me, old man. It has gone some place in those two thousand loaves of bread!"

The older man returned the order slips to the desk.

"Oh, Andy!"

"Yes?"

"Suppose, by any chance, that coin didn't turn up?"

Andrews groaned. "Don't, Will! I'm dreaming now. Don't wake me yet!"

At the head of the basement steps, Murphy turned.

"In my present humor, I feel positively reckless, Andy!"

"Be careful, Will. That's a dangerous remark for a man of your age!"

"I'm going to take the evening off, old chap. Do you want to go with me?"

"Not so fast! Where are you going?"

"I'm going to take in the circus! Will you share my pilgrimage?"

"Do you think I'd miss a chance of seeing that girl again?"

As it developed, they were to hear more from Dorothy Donnelly before evening. The two were locking up preparatory to leaving for an early dinner when a messenger boy handed Andrews a sealed note, on the gaily lithographed stationery of Bingling's Circus. He tore it open and read—

> My Dear Mr. Andrews—
>
> It would give me great pleasure to have you and Mr. Murphy and that quaint Mr. MacPherson be my guests at the show to-night. *Please* come! Who knows but what we may hear more from "Never Nuf" and Mr. MacPherson's pirate coin before the end of the evening?
>
> Cordially yours,
> Dorothy Donnelly.

Vaporia had jammed the show-lot until there wasn't elbow room at the entrance of the "big top" when the three men reached the circus grounds. Miss Donnelly was on the look-out for them and she came forward eagerly as she caught sight of their figures.

"I'm going to take you under my wing, if I may. I was beginning to fear you weren't coming!"

"We couldn't resist your note!" Andrews said gallantly.

"Why not tell the truth, Andy?" Murphy broke in. "We were coming anyway, Miss Donnelly—if it took the last dollar in the 'Never Nuf' treasury!"

Mac Pherson said nothing. He was

stroking his chin and studying the giraffes.

Dorothy Donnelly was a jovial guide. Even Mac Pherson brightened under her humor, and the men found themselves entering into the spirit of the circus as they had not done since they were boys. During a lull in the program, Andrews leaned over to the girl.

"I recall a line in your note that hinted we might hear something more of the lost gold-piece. What did you mean by that?"

"Don't you think it must have been found by this time?"

Andrews sighed. "I thought you were going to tell us that the reward had been claimed!"

Dorothy Donnelly shook her head. Before she could speak, Mac Pherson reached over and caught Andrews sharply by the arm as he pointed toward the raised platform in the center ring. Darwin, the "man-monkey," was performing, and if there was one subject in which the Scotchman's interest could instantly be aroused, it was that of monkeys.

Darwin's keeper stepped to the edge of the platform and raised his hand.

"Darwin is about to partake of his evening meal. There is room at the table for one guest. Is there some gentleman in the audience who will accept his invitation to join him?"

The keeper paused, and there was a movement among the seats at the right of the arena as a tall, raw-boned, red-faced young man from the country struggled awkwardly to his feet and stumbled toward the roped aisle. The keeper greeted his appearance with a bow, and the audience broke into good-natured applause. Darwin took advantage of the moment to help himself secretly to the marmalade.

The young man from the country dropped into his chair and Darwin stared at him suspiciously.

"You might pass the fruit," the keeper whispered in the ape's ear. Darwin's brown, hairy arm toyed with the plate of oranges. The next instant he caught his unsuspecting guest squarely in the forehead with one of the golden fruits. The young man bounded from his seat amid a howl of laughter from the spectators, but the keeper forced him back into the chair.

"Cut the bread, Darwin."

"I wonder if it's 'Never Nuf'?" Andrews laughed.

Darwin grasped the loaf squarely in the center and flourishd the bread knife in a circle that threatened again to put his guest to rout. With a swift, jabbing motion, the monkey brought the knife through the crust, and the loaf fell apart.

Something else happened also. For a moment the audience could not see what it was. Then they saw the keeper and the young farmer spring toward the severed loaf almost at the same instant. But Darwin was ahead of them. Seizing the half, toward which their hands were reaching, he leaped from the table to the tent pole and scurried wildly up the smooth timber. The young farmer tossed off his coat and started to ascend the pole after the chattering animal, but the keeper caught him by the collar and dragged him roughly back.

Andrews was the first among the audience to grasp the situation. Darwin had found Mac Pherson's missing coin!

Before he could communicate the fact to Murphy, the monkey dropped back from his perch and scrambled into his trainer's arms. The latter held the much-battered loaf above his head, so that the wondering audience might see it. Imbedded in its surface, the lost gold-piece was plainly visible.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Darwin claims the one hundred dollar reward for the finding of the missing coin lost in 'Never Nuf' bread!" The keeper cleared his throat. "He authorizes me to announce on his behalf that he will donate the reward to the Vaporia Orphans' Home!"

The next morning's post brought Andrews a note, directed in a writing which he recognized with a strange mingling of emotions. He read it a second time before he tossed it over to the curious Murphy.

MY DEAR MR. ANDREWS—

Now that Signor Castillo has the pirate gold piece, and Mr. MacPherson has his hundred dollars, and the reward for the recovery of the coin has been paid, I have a confession to make. I

trust that you will accept it in the spirit in which I tender it.

Would it surprise you to learn that the coin was never really lost? While Mr. MacPherson was searching for it yesterday, I found it on the floor almost under my feet. I was about to make known my discovery, when his remark that he had dropped it into the dough and it had been made up into bread gave me a sudden idea. I pocketed the gold piece and announced that the circus would pay a hundred dollars reward for its return. While Vaporia was frantically searching its bread plates, I inserted it in the loaf which I knew Darwin would cut that evening!

You will admit that the idea developed excellently. In fact I rather pride myself on the climax! Incidentally, I am confident that I have introduced 'Never Nuf' bread to Vaporia with an emphasis it could never have obtained in any other way, and remembering this, I am hopeful that you will find it in your heart to forgive me.

Penitently yours,
DOROTHY DONNELLY.

Murphy closed the letter and glanced across at his partner. "Yes, I think we *can* forgive her, eh, Andy?"

Andrews was staring out of the window, frowning at the young woman clerk as she tripped up to the door in a new summer gown. She was wearing a gray Chantecler hat like Dorothy Donnelly's.

"Say, Will," he observed, "if that girl had been here another week, I would have been clear daffy over her!"

Pinkie, the Gay Deceiver

By EARL HENNESSY

SHE was a stout woman in gingham, and in her voice there sounded the frenzied appeal of a half-spanked youngster.

"Save him! Save him! Oh my To-to, save him! Pick him up! Somebody—please! Don't let that man get him! Don't let that man get my To-to! Oh, why don't you save him! Why don't you *save* him!"

All this pertained to a little dog, a canine of the dapper black-and-tan variety, which came bounding down the park path seeking succor. It halted nervously at the next bench to mine, where sat, deep in the perusal of a morning paper, a middle-aged individual whose citizenship bordered closely on the "undesirable." Long since, from his appearance, had he been devoted to leisure rather than to toil. At the woman's frantic appeal, he looked to the little dog standing expectantly before him. Then he looked to the dog-catcher, bearing rapidly down in his direction. Then he looked to the woman, bringing up hopelessly in the rear. Whereupon, with superb disinterestedness, he turned to the columns of his paper.

Of course, in a jiffy, the dog-catcher had his wire about the little dog's neck. The animal was unmuzzled; legally no doubt the man was within his province. But the woman's wrath boded a doubtful victory for the city ordinance; hostilities of a physical character were averted only because the loss of the dog was for a moment obscured by the deliberate and amazing conduct of the erudite tramp on the bench.

"You hound! You miserable wretch!" she addressed him. "Why didn't you stoop down and pick up that animal? Why didn't you try and save him? And you—you wife-beater! You have no right to take that dog! I'll get your job for this! My brother-in-law works in the Water Department, and if you don't get bounced before to-morrow morning I don't know who will!"

Nevertheless, the dog-catcher led the little beast away. The woman, choking with anger, followed with dire threats. On the bench, the tramp had resumed his slow and deliberate perusal of *The World of Sports*. It was a swift-moving little drama while it lasted, but alas!—too short.

I waited till the woman, trailing her luckless pet, had disappeared around a thick clump of delicately blooming lilac bushes. I was interested, but conservatively so. When all was safe and quiet, I rose and made my way with modest obtrusiveness over to my enigmatical neighbor. "Why?" I inquired, sitting down.

"You speakin' to me?"

"The reason?" I repeated, with polite good nature. "I know, my friend, no sporting writer who ever nursed slang could hold a person's interest as you would make believe yours had been held these past few minutes. Something more vital and material inspired the raw deal you handed out to that little dog. Suppose we get personal?"

He looked me over with an eye of wonder and doubt and some appraisal.

"Pal," he said in a deep, steady voice, "you have touched on a sad but purchasable memory. I haven't tackled a real breakfast in three days. Now I could warm to a youthful reminiscence with zest, if you could warm, say, the ham and eggs. Is it a go?"

I put my hand in my pocket and extracted therefrom some silver.

"The ravages of hunger," said I, "are grim and inexorable. I would hold no man from the festive board to whom they are on speaking terms by reason of long acquaintance. Nevertheless, it seems to me the elements of local color make necessary a recital of the reminiscence ere any attempt is made to adjourn to other quarters. You'd better count that before you shove it in your pocket. You can never tell in these days of 'futures' what commercial value one places on the past."

He counted his toll, and talked unintermittingly for eighteen minutes:

"Sixteen years is a long time, but I can remember it as yesterday. It was in this very town, a loose-jointed, sprawled-out near-metropolis in them days, bustlin' and prosperous. I was about twenty at the time, and the neighborhood where I hung out little dreamed of since degeneratin' into a locality known as Millionaires' Row. People knew each other in them days just enough to be sociable and cause trouble. From early childhood, I had always figured on bein' one of two things—a jockey or a copper; but, growin' older, I got too big for a jockey and not big enough for a copper, and so disappointment enveloped my soul and I could never make up my mind to bein' anything else.

"I had a brother in sorrow, one 'Fox' Bates, who also had fallen a victim to the wiles of Life's glitterin' possibilities. You might almost say his mind ran in a parallel channel with mine. Ever since he was three and fell in a catch-basin, he had lived in the hope of bein' a plumber. One day, playin' checkers, he signed the pledge. Nothin' availed. A ruined and broken man, we perforce became brothers in misfortune.

"But to get started · it was one day in summer, and hot—say! 'Fox' and I, side by side like two orphans, was sittin' on a curb, delvin' in personalities, discussin' millionaires and brakemen and the inscrutable ways of Fate. Suddenly from around the corner, and comin' right up to us just as that little purp come to me, hot-footed a little tyke. He was one of those woolly little cusses, like as you can buy on wheels for a kid—ten cents, with a string attached. Honest, to look at that dog you wouldn't have thought it could run a hundred yards! It waddled, and when 'Fox,' who was blue fire on brakemen, give it a push to start it on its way, it almost collapsed amidships.

"It hadn't moved more'n five feet and stood lookin' at us sort of surprised, when from around the corner, right after it, and with all the smash of a baby elephant breakin' the speed limit, a woman comes blowin' and puffin'. Biff! Like that, the dog was off.

" 'Oh, poys, poys!' wailed the woman, bringin' up to a halt like a train of cars. 'My Binky, why should it? Always ven I go near, shoo, avay he runs! I vil gif you how much?—fifteen, dwenty-five, fifty cents you catch him!'

"'Fox' was on the job like a stop-watch.

"'Madam,' he said 'be quieted; you alarm the animal. Have no fear. At your own price, four bits, I shall secure for you your little dog. Patience!'

"Confidently he turned to the little tyke who, fifteen yards away, had halted and was takin' in everything. 'Here, Pinkie,' he called. 'Nice Pinkie—nice doggie—come!'

"But that kioodle had a few other things tucked under his bonnet besides a bark. Five seconds before it would have eaten camphor balls out of our hands! It would have crawled into our pockets and have gone to sleep! Now it looked at 'Fox,' cocked its head to one side, grew suddenly interested in the scenic development of the next block, and—off it started.

"'Oh, look—look!—look—!' cried the woman, in a Tetrazzini tremolo. 'He iss on to tricks. He sees it—ven it iss funny business. Oh, mine little doggie!' And she sank exhausted on the curb and wept like a park fountain.

"Of course we could catch her dog for her, but if we started away now, leavin' her in her present 'all in' condition, we was liable to have most anything done to us. We both stood lookin' at her sort of hesitatin', when suddenly it dawned on 'Fox' that she was the wife of the ever-soaked and obese brewery agent who had but recently moved into the neighborhood. I had known the woman by sight and should have recognized her at once, only her misguided delivery of language had sort of run me onto a sidin'.

"'Mrs. Bloomhauser,' said 'Fox' reassuringly, 'calm your tears. Be reconciled unto the inevitable and sit tight. Pinkie, your dog, shall be returned to you whole and sound. U, standing for undefeated, unequaled, unapproached, stands before my name on the records of the K. A. U. There's nothing to it. Is he rope-broke?'

"'A rope—*ach nein!* In my arms I carry him!'

"'In your arms he shall be put!'

"Calmly 'Fox' divested himself of hat, coat and cigarette. One by one, without a word he passed them to me. 'Pinkie, it would appear, seems bent on reaching yon corner. Well, watch my smoke!' Whereat, like a ten-second man in the hundred he was off.

"In the innocence of our youthful enthusiasm, we had made one egregious fatal mistake. It at once became apparent, we had sadly underestimated Pinkie's muscular development, in regard to lower extremities. That dog gave just one look at 'Fox'—and started off like a South Pacific typhoon. Dog and man reached the far corner and turned west, and the distance between pursuer and pursued as they passed from view had increased from thirty-five to sixty yards!

"'Oh, he iss lost! He iss lost!' wailed Mrs. Bloomhauser, meanin' Pinkie. 'Why should it? He iss lost!'

"I perhaps should have attempted to calm her, and allay her distressin' fears, only the conviction that she was not entirely wrong sort of put a damper on my tongue. I did suggest, however, that we repair to the next corner and there witness what was subsequently takin' place. I had a feelin' the figure of a vanquished 'Fox' would greet our cheerless gaze. But such, on reachin' the corner, proved mythical and visionary. Lookin' west, from an appreciative audience gathered on the next block, we knew the race still obtained and that the course had swerved north at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Then, for the first time since the start, my stock in 'Fox's' prize-winnin' chances took a boost. The dog on its wild career must now pass the house wherein dog-biscuit and gentle care had ever been his for the askin'. 'Fox,' as was patent, was no family plug when it came to layin' down in a race, and no doubt the paternal doorstep at this stage of the game would look uncommon invitin'. Here would come our hero's shinin' opportunity. Modestly he could present from the doorstep to the fond mistress the humble, subdued and thoroughly domesticated animal, minimizin' all credit, deprecatin' all praise, disclaimin' everything except the coin.

"'No use in my amblin' any farther,' ventured I, as my fair companion picked up the trail to the west. 'Considerin' the heat of the day, the weight of these accessories and the insecurity of my fi-

nancial concern in this affair, I think I'd better turn back.'

"No interest was shown in, or words wasted upon, my future movements and back I turned. Probably I had gotten half-way to the startin'-point and was ruminatin' on the commercial value of a combination clothes-rack and cigarette-holder, when from around the corner, dapper and unaccompanied, just as he had come less than two minutes before, dog-trots into view little Pinkie. Honest, I got dizzy with shock!

"'If that dog—' I began, and halted.

"Something whispered that I spoke in haste. Pinkie previously had been embellished with a large and luxurious silk ribbon, of a brilliant and bewitchin' pink; there was now no ribbon. Previously his long and glossy wool had glistened a spotless white in the summer sun; it now showed a dingy drab, as of alley-like association. Somehow, starch seemed to have left him; he looked different. And then from around the corner, full tilt, came 'Fox.'

"'Hey, there! Hey there, Bunk! Catch him! Grab him! Don't let that cur get past you! Tackle him around the waist!'

"Down the street, on the high speed and straight for me, came Pinkie. Hat and coat I discarded and tossed to the wind. With gritted teeth, I made ready for a flyin' tackle, one of those real leave-your-feet thrillers like as you see on a football field. Two yards in front of me Pinkie came to a quick halt, shot to one side and started around left end. Pardner, a flyin' tackle was never meant for a dog's anatomy. The only thing I tackled, as I left my feet, was the curb-stone—and I tackled that hard. When I came to, 'Fox' was pickin' me up.

"'Nice try! Nice attempt!' said he, puttin' on my hat. 'Bunk, you got him that time—almost. But holy smoke, honest, did you think that dog had that much run in him?'

"What kept you loafin' over on the next block?" I asked.

"'Bunk, I had that dog layin' down! Sure as a dago loves garlic he was all in, and we went around his house twice for a final sprint. When I got around in front for the second time, shoot me if that cur wasn't fifty yards down the street. Bunk, I'm goin' to catch that dog if I have to chase him from here to Pride Falls, Iowa.'

"'Hooray! And I'm with you!' said I. And I was, too! Blamed if the heat of battle hadn't gone to my feet!

"While we was engaged in this momentous conversation, fifty yards in front of us, takin' advantage of the time afforded, Pinkie had squatted down and lay breathin' heavily, a weather eye cocked on us. As I stood there regardin' him with appraisal and solicitation, seekin' a vulnerable vantage-point wherewith to focus an attack, the first hazy conception of a brilliant idea struggled in my thoughts. Suddenly it burst on me in the full glory of a summer sunrise. That dog was a sprinter, a dash man! Where we had erred, and erred fatally, had been in not tryin' on him the five mile run or the Marathon!

"'Fox,' said I, waxin' enthusiastic, 'we've been usin' the wrong line of knock-out drops in this little emergency. Listen to reason. This four-forty stunt is mere pastime for that animal. What we want, urgent and immediate, is something that'll kink his tail.'

"'Nothing would be nearer my heart,' said 'Fox.'

"We'll start right now, slow and methodical. No hurry, no excitement—only calm and composure. What's the matter of ten miles when you look at it cool and retrospective? All we've got to do is keep goin', and when little Dinky hits the sidewalk and rolls over with a groan, along comes the Tireless Twins and gather him to their arms. What think?'

"'Fox' pondered.

"'Did she say anything about dead or alive?'

"'Not a word.'

"'Sure?'

"'Positive.'

"'It's a go!' said 'Fox.' 'Dead or alive, there's nothing to it! Whoopee!' And off we started.

"Pardner, we chased that dog eighteen city blocks. A more smooth, even and rhythmatic stride, I never saw in all my life. At the end of seventeen blocks that dog was runnin' as if it could go seventeen miles. We wasn't machines. We gave one final sprint, then collapsed.

Fifty yards in front of us, seekin' the shade of a friendly telegraph post, Pinkie squatted down and regarded us critically, for he was a very fair animal and refused to take advantage of 'Time out!'

"'Oh, for the wings of a dove!' moaned I, sinkin' four inches into the ground from sheer exhaustion. 'Nothin' left now but to salt his tail.' That brings to my mind, with recurrent insistence, the hauntin' melody of that beautiful refrain: 'There's No Place Like Home.'

"'Because you're a quitter! Because you wanted to quit from the start! Honest, I bet you're a hoodoo!'

"'Fox,' I said earnestly, 'I never ran harder in all my life. My heart's poundin' like a trip-hammer. Think that means anything?'

"'It means you're fool enough to advocate a proposition you don't believe in. Who was it talked of ten miles, and calm composure? Who was it dwelt on the duties of so-called Tireless Twins when a certain little running-machine toppled over? Was it me? Now you want to quit at the first stop-over or way-station. Why don't you admit it?'

"'Not you?'

"'Not in a thousand! To turn back now would be cruelty to animals. We must on with the chase!'

"'Fox,' I said, 'personally, I hold no objections to your runnin' as far, or as long, or as hard, or as swift as you like. You're a runner and carry your brains in your feet. Up to now I have yielded to contamination. But right here, forthwith and forever, I quit!'

"'Raymond,' said 'Fox,' with a catch in his voice, 'you grieve me. To think, to think that you would bow in defeat to a little four by four animal, simply because he's got a pair of mechanical legs and wind like a politician. I am disconsolate!'

"'Can you beat it?'

"'Strategy—strategy. That dog would weep were we to turn back now. He'd go farther—he'd even be ready to follow us. Now I propose that we lead the way back into some hallway, or enclosed court, or walled-up enclosure, and when little Dinky comes nosin' in and swallows the bait just clamp the hooks into him. What say?'

"'Sure he'll follow?'

"'Observe,' said 'Fox.'

"We rose as one and started back. We had determined, as a lure to the guileless canine, that no backward glance should be taken until we had covered at least half a block. Then would be time to turn and observe. Half-way to the next corner we wheeled—eagerly and simultaneously. Pinkie had rolled out into the street and lay luxuriously on his back with his four feet up in the air.

"'Oh, if I only had a rope!' breathed 'Fox.' 'Look at those legs! What a perfect chance for a lasso!'

"I was desperate. 'Fox,' I said emphatic; 'You're alive and whole. Considerin' the task you've undertaken, you're a lucky man. Now let's not tempt Fate and crawl within the shadow of the psychopathic ward. Come on; it's a long ways home.'

"'No, wait!' said 'Fox.'

"Something in his voice caught me and I followed his gaze down the street to where Pinkie lay givin' an exhibition in gymnastics. But instead of the dog, it was a huge black cat, wendin' its tortuous way along the narrow edge of a high board fence, that proved the magnet of his vision. Pinkie had gotten up, too, and stood takin' in the performance. Suddenly, without warnin' the cat leaped to the ground. It never knew by what a close margin Pinkie's teeth missed it's tail. Both disappeared, in a swirl of dust, through a narrow gateway in the fence, and heedless of counsel, caution and consequence, with a wild yell of joy, 'Fox' was off down the street after them, once more in the throes of pursuit.

"He never paused till he had brought up beside the gateway through which the two had passed. Then he disappeared within, only to reappear immediately and motion for me to follow. 'At last!' he called, with a mighty gesture as of triumph. 'Captured!' And he slowly and dramatically closed the gate.

"We had captured our pet at last—that is, we had practically captured it. Our dashin' feline friend had led Pinkie a merry chase, had beguiled him within the confines of a fenced enclosure, and then deftly jumped the fence. The place was the grounds of a former rockin'-

chaired and under-capitalized tennis-club, now as deserted as the Sahara in August, and as we closed the gate, shuttin' ourselves up at last with our long-sought and elusive victim, a feelin' of love, relief and gratification, a mutual expression of our pent-up emotions caused us to fall on each other's neck and wipe our perspirin' faces on each other's shoulders for sheer joy.

"Meantime, Pinkie had taken in the situation. The outlook loomed drear. He stood lookin' at us with an air of pained astonishment not unmixed with concern.

" 'Oh, it's a shame!' groaned 'Fox' rapturously. 'Just watch me! Watch me go over and sit on that dog's neck!'

"I was pleasantly agreeable and over he started. Pinkie permitted him to come within five feet; then he darted to one corner of the enclosure, with 'Fox' hot on his trail. They went around once like chain-lightnin'; they went around twice in record-breakin' time. Then 'Fox' became aware that he was pursuin' not only the dog but wrong tactics.

" 'Bunk,' he said, droppin' in a heap beside me and talkin' on the installment plan, 'I was—mistaken. We have—as yet to—catch—that animal.'

" 'So I have observed,' said I.

" 'We must—go slow. Those were—some pretty fast laps. They taught me—a lesson. Our only hope—lies in sustained and mutual endurance.'

" 'You will have to come again on that last phrase,' said I.

" 'Listen! First I'll start off and run four laps. Then will come your turn—four laps for you, while I rest and Pinkie still travels. Then I'll pick you up for eight laps—then eight for you, while I get my wind back. Then I'll wade in for sixteen times around; then you—'

" 'Hold on!' I cried. 'Sixteen times for me around this place and I'd pass from mortality into a wooden horse on a merry-go-round!'

"'It wont last that long,' assured 'Fox'. 'Eight times around—first half—and that little bunch of wool will be seein' double. Now I'll start off and set a medium pace. You stand there and call off the laps as we come around.'

"It worked ravishin' from the very first. 'Fox' did a fair four laps, then I pitched in. The quickened pace seemed to dazzle Pinkie; we had rounded a full lap before the subtle significance of our conspiracy pierced the numbin' sluggishness of his brain. When 'Fox' picked me up and started in on his eight laps, Pinkie was plainly worried. We was playin' a superior game. The beginnin' of the end was in view.

"Up on a neighborin' porch some kids had climbed and stood watchin' the proceedin's. Remarks as to our runnin' capabilities circled free and broadcast. From the outset Pinkie had been voted a warm favorite. Cries of 'go it there. Fido!' and 'Oh, you ring-around-the-rosie!' more or less disturbed the calm fixity of our purpose. As I picked up 'Fox' on his final eighth lap, Pinkie was saggin' at the hind end. It was now but a question of laps and moments. And then, at the far end of the field, worked by some artless youngster hand, the gate swung slowly open.

"Pinkie saw it and headed in that direction. I was desperate—and comparatively fresh. Here was the final, the supreme test! We raced across the field as dog and man never ran, I scarce three yards behind!

"We went through the openin' like a lady bare-back rider through a papier-maché hoop. We shot across the street and into a butcher shop. We went through the shop and out the back door like an April squall in midsummer. Four women jumped for the counter; something soft and lumpy broke a window two feet to the left of where I exited. Still I kept on undaunted. I had gained one yard!

"We raced down an alleyway, turned a corner and emerged upon a switch-yard. Here a momentary trepidation seized me. But only fleetin' and momentary, for I was past reason and soon past fear. We went around a freight car as if it were an old maid's cottage. We dodged past a switch-engine as if it were a grade-crossin' policeman. We zig-zagged over a maze of railway tracks as if they were lover's lanes in a picnic-ground. Nothin' could stop us. I had gained two yards!

"Suddenly Pinkie shot off into a side street, unenticin' and entirely deserted. Warehouses loomed on all sides of us.

Vaguely I had been aware that 'Fox' was followin', and durin' our gambol over the railway ties had gained more or less considerable. The distance separatin' me from Pinkie was now scarce a yard. I could almost have reached down and touched him. And then suddenly lookin' up, I observed we had run into a blind alley.

"There was no outlet. Buildin's stood on all sides. It was all over but the applause. I reached down to grasp the fast-sinkin' and wabblin' Pinkie when suddenly he seemed to bound forward and made toward a round dark hole in the pavin'. It was an open man-hole, as carelessly unguarded as a prima donna's jewels, and quick as a wink, without hesitation, headlong into it plunged Pinkie. I barely missed followin'.

"In ten seconds 'Fox' was beside me. We flattened ourselves on the ground and peered down into the dark depths of the sewer. There was Pinkie, holdin' his own and seemin' to be enjoyin' of the water. We procured a rope and lowered it. A slip-noose was arranged on one end and this was to encircle the dog's neck, whereupon we would haul him to the surface. But as the rope touched the water he moved away from it. He would have nothin' to do with it. Suddenly a flash, a gleam of triumph and satisfaction came into his eyes. He swam a few strokes to a position directly beneath us. He gave us one last, long, smilin', contented look, then slowly and deliberately stuck his head under water. Friend, he was game to the end. That dog committed suicide!"

The tramp had paused in his narrative and I sat silent a few moments hoping he would continue. He did not.

"And that was the end?" I asked. "You never went back, never told the woman who owned him?"

"We went back," resumed my companion wearedly, "but not with the tale of the suicide. 'Fox' felt terrible about that, but insisted we should get something for our labors. 'We'll go back,' he said, 'and tell her how far we chased him. We'll say we followed him all the way down here, right to the switch-yard—four miles—and just as we was about to grab him, he jumped a fast freight headed for St. Louis.'

"'Fox' rehearsed the yarn and back we started. It took us an hour and a quarter to reach the place. We rang the bell and pretty soon the husband came to the door.

"'Mr. Bloomhauser,' began 'Fox' feelin'ly, 'we did our best. If it had been my own animal—'

"'Hold on!' said Bloomhauser. 'What is the answer?'

"'Your dog,' said 'Fox,' surprised. 'We've been chasing him. It's true he got away from us on a fast freight—'

"'One moment! Come inside.'

"We went in, not unaware of an air of disquietude and mystery. The man called to his wife. Then he gave a low, sharp whistle.

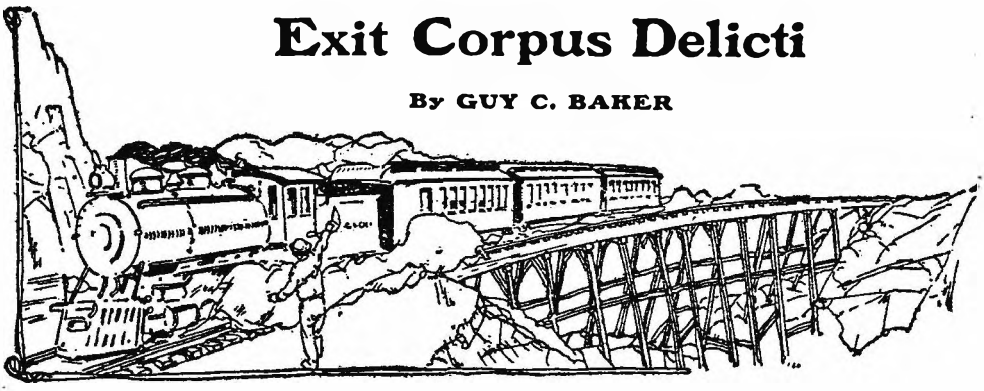
"The woman entered first. She looked at us a full five seconds before rememberin'. 'Fox' had started in to explain the nature of our mission, when suddenly there came before my eyes a whirl of red fire. My head swam and my knees shook. From out the dinin'-room, unannounced, in walked Pinkie.

"'But—but—' stammered 'Fox.' He turned to me. 'I leave it to Bunk here—'

"'Oh, der little doggie!' interrupted the woman. 'You ranned him around der house twice, und den he run up der front steps. He vass so tired! Den you ranned after anudder little dog down der street. Maybe—oh, ho-ho-ho! he-he-he!—Say, maybe you t'ought it vass Binky—vat?'"

Exit Corpus Delicti

By GUY C. BAKER



AS though cognizant of what was to come, a hush of respectful attention swept the Senate Chamber that afternoon as Senator Bore from Montana slowly arose and, receiving immediate recognition from the Vice-President, feelingly addressed his colleagues—

"Mr. President, it is my sad duty to announce to the Senate the death of my friend and colleague, Senator Korporashuns, a member of this Senate from the State of Montana. The Senator died at his hotel in this city at 8:30 this morning. This Senate has lost one of its most faithful members and his State a public servant who has honored her in this Congress. I shall not at this time trust myself to make any extended remarks, but at some future day his colleagues will ask the Senate to take such action upon his death as in its judgment is proper. I ask the adoption of the resolution which I send to the desk."

As he concluded, he stood motionless for a moment amid the silence that followed, then turning, he handed the resolution to the waiting page, who, in turn, carried it to the desk.

The Clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the United States Senate has learned with profound sorrow of the death of Senator Korporashuns, member of this Senate from the State of Montana.

Resolved, that a committee of the members of the Senate be appointed to take action concerning the funeral of the deceased.

Resolved, that as a further mark of respect to the memory of the deceased the Senate do now adjourn.

The Vice-President put the question in the stereotyped form—"The question is upon the adoption of the resolution."

The question was taken and adopted unanimously. Thereupon the Vice-President announced the names of the following Senators to attend the funeral of the late member from Montana: Senator Bore from Montana, Senator Bottle from Illinois, Senator Pew from New York, Senator Folly from Iowa, Senator Dillpickle from Vermont, Senator Staythere from Massachusetts, Senator Tubyfour from Ohio, and Senator Oily from Texas.

Thereupon, in accordance with immemorial custom and in pursuance of the resolution, at "three o'clock and five minutes P. M., the Senate adjourned until twelve o'clock to-morrow."

The following morning, with befitting Senatorial honors, the funeral cortége of the late Senator from Montana left "The Lochran," wended its imposing course to Mt. Vernon Park, and thence down Massachusetts Avenue to the new five million dollar Union Station.

At the depot the police jostled a line through the crowd of curious spectators, and, with impressive pomp and ceremony, the pageant passed out through the gates to where the special train awaited their coming. The solid bronze casket was deferentially placed in the specially fitted baggage car, the sena-

torial committee boarded the train, while the honorary escort turned back to once more take up their burden of voluminizing the Congressional Record.

In a few minutes the special train—made up of the baggage car, two ten-section double drawing-room Pullman sleepers, a dining car, a club car containing a gentlemen's buffet, reading and smoking room, and an observation car with library and commodious parlor—glided smoothly out of the train-shed, and started on its two thousand mile journey. It was a flying Elysium of luxury contrived as a two week balsamic assuagement for that bereaved, sorrowing, Senatorial escort.

The train had reached Baltimore before the Senators had fully established their personal effects in their respective state-rooms, and made themselves "at home" in the club car. From Baltimore to Harrisburg the time was quite naturally occupied with the morning papers, in the sober discussion of matters pertaining to the work of Congress, and in such sedate discourse as would be expected of dignified Senators entrusted with a commission so lugubrious.

But shortly after leaving Harrisburg, and the special had actually entered upon the grind of the long journey—the papers having been read, and conversation having simmered down to commonplaces—a feeling of restlessness began to manifest itself. The discreet and desultory visits to the buffet gradually became harmoniously informal and disregardful of all simulation.

The mellifluous properties of the renowned Congressional "mineral water" began to manifest its mellowing, sorrow-eradicating effects. Gradually the atmosphere of somberness was dispelled by a felicitous permeation of congeniality and good-fellowship.

Upon returning to the club car after the noonday lunch, the tuneful craving of each Senatorial breast seemed to spontaneously get in telepathic touch, for, with magical metamorphism, tables, cards, and chips made their mysterious appearance. Soon the smoke-laden air was filled with such profound, Senatorial utterances as—"Sugar the board," "I'll just go you ten better," "three dots and two ladies," "feed the kitty, there," and a great many more equally unintelligible and enigmatic.

The trips to the buffet discontinued—they made the porter carry the liquid refreshments to them. Thus the special hammered its way through the Alleghenies, past Pittsburg, and on into Ohio.

After dinner that evening the Senators feverishly resumed their game. State-rooms remained unoccupied. Sleepy porters continued obsequiously to minister unto their never lagging wants.

Some time during the night the train reached Cleveland, changed engines, and then rushed on toward Chicago. The Senators, however, were oblivious of the fact—they heeded neither the movement of the train nor the places at which they stopped.

Each Senator in turn went forward to the baggage car and remained for a time in attendance beside the solid bronze casket.

The next morning the first gray pressage of another day found the heavy eyed, "mineral-water" steeped, smoke-befogged Senators still "at it." The train was rapidly nearing Chicago. Suddenly Senator Bottle arose and, yawning and stretching lustily, remarked—

"I guess that it is up to me to go and relieve Senator Tubyfour—his time was up two hours ago." And with a parting yawn he shuffled away and disappeared through the forward vestibule.

Only a few minutes had elapsed when Senator Bottle precipitately reappeared. He rushed to the center of the car, and, ashen and manifestly in great agitation, stood riveted there—wide-eyed and speechless. A subtle divination of disaster instantly changed the atmosphere. The play at the tables ceased, and all eyes were directed toward the perturbed Senator from Illinois.

Moistening his lips, Senator Bottle finally recovered his power of speech. His voice was tremulous and husky. His brief announcement was electrical.

"The casket is gone!"

For a moment the players sat silent, gaping, white-faced, paralyzed.

Senator Pew was the first to find his power of articulation. "Good heavens!" he stammered, "How—where—where in thunderation is Senator Tubyfour?"

"He—he's gone too—the car is vacant, stripped of everything, empty!"

Another portentous silence. The situation was too impossible, too hideous, too appalling for the dumbfounded Senators to fully grasp on the instant. The miserable specter of disgrace and ruin blurred their vision. Their minds flew back to their imposing start, then apparitions came to them of austere committees waiting out in Montana to receive them in state!

The car resounded with a chorus of groans and forceful ejaculations. Terrified, panic-driven, the distinguished representatives of the people sprang to their feet and rushed with un-Senatorial precipitancy through the train to the baggage car.

Pushing and jostling each other, they crowded into the car. They gazed about stupidly: the Senator's unbelievable tale was only too completely confirmed. Decorations, draped flags, flowers, bronze casket, Senator Tubyfour—all were gone.

The astonished Senators realized hazily that they were now rattling over the switch-points of the wilderness of Chicago's railroad yards. Before the scattered wits of the bewildered peers could be collected sufficiently to decide upon an intelligent course of action, the magnificent special rolled smoothly into the train-shed of the Dearborn Street Station.

A certain home-like room, the "second floor front," of a modest dwelling situated on a quiet street, constituted the den, library, laboratory, study, and favorite retreat of one of Chicago's most unassuming, yet most famous citizens. Many distinguished visitors had crossed the threshold of this cozy room seeking the services of its eccentric owner. The appointments bespoke a proprietor of refined tastes and scholarly predilections.

On this particular morning a flood of sun-light softened by the window hangings, fell across the room embroidering all in its path with subdued splotches of gold. Directly in the sweep of this stream of glory, bathing in it, absorbing it, luxuriating in its delightful exhilaration, reclining in a large leather chair, his feet propped against the sill of the window, the morning paper open before him—was the man famed the world over as a genius in the unriddling of enigmas.

Never was there a more striking antithesis than that afforded by the contrasting appearance and achievements of this bizarre, whimsical man. He had thin, pale features, guileless blue eyes, a shock of rumpled straw-colored hair, drooping shoulders that accorded with his frail make-up and the gentle, engrossed air of a dreamer; yet it was to this strange man that the police officials and experienced detectives turned when confronted with puzzles too elusive for their acumen and skill.

But the enlistment of his aid was not always an easy matter; on the contrary, it was exceedingly rare that he consented at all. He disliked that sort of thing heartily. Quiet pursuit of scientific investigation was his delight. Only mysteries involving very unusual features appealed to him. It was therefore oftimes impossible even for his intimate friend, Charles Carson—head of the Packerton Detective Agency—to cajole him into undertaking a solution that perchance failed to elicit his interest.

Such was the personality of W. W. Watts, eccentric unriddler of mysteries.

So absorbed was he in his reading that he failed to note the squeak of the brake-clutch of the automobile that came to an abrupt stop at the curb down below. Nor did he heed the peremptory tinkle of the bell, and the hurried entrance of some person in the lower hall. The first intimation that he had of receiving a call was when a tall, athletic, dark-eyed man abruptly entered the room without the formality of knocking, picked up a hat that lay on the center table, quickly crossed over to the recumbent owner of the blue eyes, jammed the hat down over the shock of disheveled hair, seized the surprised Watts by the shoulders, and lifted him unceremoniously to his feet as he jerked out excitedly—

"Come along in a hurry, Watts, I've got the queerest mess on hand you ever heard of!"

Carson's excitement was not infectious in the least. Watts screwed his sallow face around and glared at his presumptuous captor belligerently. "Leggo,

Carson! Leggo, demmit all! What in thunder you think I am—a sack of wheat?"

Carson had no intention of letting him go. On the contrary, he proceeded deliberately to drag the protesting, resisting Watts towards the door.

"No time for explanations and importunities now, old man," laughed Carson apologetically, a ring of determination in his voice. "Dislike to resort to such extreme measures, but the exigencies of *this* matter demand action—and confounded quick action at that! I'll explain on the road down. Cut out your foolishness and hurry up!"

"I'll not go, I tell you!"

"You will go—let go of that balustrade or I'll pick you up and carry you!"

"Demmit—demmit—" The remainder of his expostulation was lost in his effort to stay his rapidly approaching captivity. His choleric outbursts, laughing protests, threats and entreaties alike fell on deaf ears—the march toward the motor-car continued relentlessly.

Down the stairs, out through the hall, across the sidewalk, Watts was hustled with disconcerting celerity, and thrust into the vibrating motor-car. Springing in by his side, Carson seized the steering-wheel, released the brake, thrust down a lever, and, with a lurch and a complaining rasp of the engine, the machine dashed out into the boulevard and thence down toward the city.

When several blocks had been swiftly traversed Carson discreetly glanced at his hostile companion, and then turned back to his chauffeur's duties with a satisfied smile. He had won.

Crouched far down in the seat, his arms folded submissively, one leg thrown limply over the other, his hat still jammed down ludicrously to his ears, his blue eyes a-dream with the delight of the morning, his unlighted cigar still gripped between his teeth, a boyish smile playing about his mouth, Watts sat in contented enjoyment of the ride.

At last, with a low laugh, Carson turned and said—

"It's a downright pity that in order to borrow your brains one must needs lug along such a homely human being as you are."

Slowly the blue eyes turned, and with that delightfully pleasing voice of his, Watts retorted—

"And equally regrettable it is, that in order to ride with a 'pretty' man one's company must necessarily be a nincompoop." Then abruptly straightening up, he demanded sharply— "But where are you taking me? What's in the wind *now?* Have your mighty Sherlocks bumped up against another live one? Why don't you talk, Carson? For heaven's sake, why don't you talk?"

"I was simply awaiting the propitious moment, my dear Watts," smiled Carson as he deftly turned a sharp corner without slackening speed. Then, a shadow crossing his face, he added seriously— "You probably read the newspaper accounts of the death of Senator Korporashuns of Montana?"

"Yes—the morning papers stated that the special carrying the funeral party would arrive at Chicago this morning."

"It did reach here—that is, a part of it. Somewhere between Washington and Chicago, however, the most important part of it was lost."

"Most important part lost? What do you mean?"

"The casket containing the dead Senator."

With an ejaculation of surprise, Watts turned and stared at the driver incredulously, his jaw muscles twitching nervously, his eyebrows puckered with lines of bewilderment.

And thereupon, his eyes alert upon the course of the flying machine, Carson carefully recounted the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the dead Senator.

He concluded with— "As a consequence, the humbled special stands meekly down there in the station, blinds drawn, doors hermetically closed to every one, the Senatorial escort scared to death in the privacy of their seclusion lest the crushing truth become public. Newspaper notoriety would mean ruin to them. When they learned about you they commanded that I bring you if I had to resort to chloroform and bring you in an ambulance. So you see, Watts, I was simply acting under instructions."

A few moments later they arrived at the depot, and at once briskly descended to the train shed.

Passing out through the gates, the two men went directly over to track twelve where stood the Washington special in innocuous repose. Standing beside the rear platform were the conductor and porter. No one else was in sight.

The conductor had apparently been expecting the arrival of the two men, for, as they approached, he deferentially stood aside to let them enter the only open vestibule. Watts turned before entering the train and addressed the conductor."

"If you are at leisure we would like to have you come with us."

Without encountering any one, the conductor piloted the two Chicagoans into the small library. Watts threw himself into a comfortable leather chair, gazed meditatively at the conductor for a moment, and then remarked to that person—

"This affair has been reported to the railroad officials, I suppose?"

"Certainly, they are doing all in their power to—"

At that moment a couple of Senators interrupted the conversation by their appearance in the doorway. They evidently surmised the topic of conversation, for they edged in still farther with patent curiosity.

Watts let his glance drift in their direction, eyed them coldly for a moment, and then, his voice pregnant with a meaning that could not possibly have been miscontrued, drawled—

"W-e-l-l?"

With an amusing fluster of embarrassment, the two Senators muttered an apology and retired.

Watts again turned toward the conductor.

"How often did your train stop after leaving Pittsburg?"

"Let me see—why, I think about five times. Cleveland was really the only actual stop—the others were merely waits for blocks or the passing of trains.

"Eliminating Cleveland, could this thing have occurred at one of these other stops?"

The conductor replied with conviction.

"*Including* Cleveland, I don't see how it occurred at *any* stop. The side doors and front door of the baggage car were securely locked. The only possible means of egress or ingress was by the closed vestibule that opened into the first sleeper."

"And after the affair was discovered how were the side and front doors—were they still locked?"

A startled look leaped to the conductor's face. "By George! I—"

"Forgot to look!" finished Watts in a tone of disgust. "Well, suppose you two chaps"—he stopped short, his eye had caught sight of another Senator watching them from the doorway. Fretfully he burst forth—"Demmit, conductor, is this a lunatic asylum?" Then, laughing softly as the dignified Senator turned haughtily away at the affront, he repeated—"Suppose you two chaps wait here until I return. I will be gone only a few minutes."

With that he arose and left the car. He had an idea—one of those peculiarly personal fancies to which his wonderful success was largely attributable. It was not exactly deduction, nor was it inspiration, but it was what would probably be termed a combination of critical analysis with rare intuition.

After a short time Carson and the conductor sauntered out into the club car where they were at once bombarded with a fusillade of questions.

"Why in thunder don't you trot out that man Watts you eulogized so prodigally this morning?" asked one.

"Who was that scrawny, fresh guy that ordered us around like he was the president of a hundred railroads?" demanded another.

Carson smiled as he replied. "Him? Why, that *was* W. W. Watts."

Carson continued to smile good-naturedly as he noted the exchange of incredulous glances and supercilious remarks.

"But," burst forth Senator Pew with characteristic asperity, "if your marvelous unriddler intends attempting to solve this affair why didn't he come in here and advise *us?*"

"I don't know, Senator."

Senator Oily threw aside his paper and now injected his deep, rasping voice into the confab. "Where did he go? Where is he now? Why did he leave?"

The suave smile continued to play about the detective's strong mouth. "I don't know, Senator."

The querulous Senator from Illinois was next to augment the circle of peevish law-makers. "Well, when will he be back?"

The exasperating protestation of unenlightment was patiently repeated. "I don't know, I assure you, Senator."

This was too much for the choleric Senator from Vermont. Drawing himself up belligerently, he exclaimed— "I tell you that it is simply foolishness to monkey around with that blue-eyed, dyspeptic freak—we're merely squandering time! This 'gum shoe' business is all tommyrot! Cut out this tin-badge detective stunt, raise a hue and cry, and I venture the prediction that we will—"

Watts had quietly entered, sidled up to the side of the excited Senator, and had quietly listened to the fussy tirade. His voice was pitched very low as he now interrupted the Senator, but his appearance was so unexpected that his first word was as startling as an electrical shock.

"You are right, Senator, you will, only—you wont." Slowly his guileless blue eyes drifted around the circle of disconcerted law-makers; then, in the urbane, affable way peculiar to him, he continued. "That 'hue and cry' business might prove just a trifle—er—awkward. You see, the public is so devilish obtuse and—inquisitive. It might be difficult to pound through their stupid, prying brains how it was that your sorrow was so overwhelming that you failed to note the loss of its very incitement for four hundred miles."

The sting of the sarcasm was neutralized by the hope that those last words somehow conveyed. Senator Dillpickle leaned forward eagerly as he exclaimed—

"Four hundred miles! Then you have found—but what is the matter with me! Of course that is absurd. You could not possibly have done anything in so short a time. But what do you mean by 'four hundred miles?'"

Watts nonchalantly sank into a convenient chair, stretched out comfortably, and, taking his unlighted cigar from his mouth, regarded it with the same meditative contemplation as though a blue spiral of smoke was actually floating upwards. Then, a quizzical smile feebly illumining his pale features, he circled the anxious group of men with his innocuous glance as he said—

"In order to prevent a recurrence of this embarrassing dilemma, during the remainder of your journey to Butte you had better bring your friend Korporashuns right in here with you. Besides, it would be so much more convenient."

Again the irony of the words was offset by the hint of a speedy ending of their tribulations. Watts checked the chorus of inquiries that followed, by a deprecatory wave of his hand.

"The whole affair is so ludicrously simple that I am surprised that you—and especially the railroad officials—should ever have let your imaginations weave a web of mystery about it.

"In the first place it was patent that, in view of the fact that Senator Tubyfour was in the baggage-car, the heavy bronze casket and the decorations could not have been taken from the car without provoking an outcry from the watcher. Here, then, was the basic suggestion.

"A telegram to Washington elicited the information that the number of the baggage car with which you left there was 820. The number of the baggage car hooked on out there in front *now* is *979!* So you see, your locked doors availed you naught: they stole not only your dead Senator and your live Senator, but the car itself!"

Again Watts motioned for silence.

"Inasmuch as Tubyfour did not take up his watch until just before you arrived at Cleveland—and that being the only place at which the engine was detached—the rest was easy. I caused the yard-master to check up at once everything in the Cleveland yards, and just a few minutes since ascertained that baggage car number 820 had been deliberately shunted off onto a remote siding as a 'disabled.'

"Those of you who will frankly recall the late Senator's drastic policy against labor unions will now readily perceive the motive—'twas labor's parting tribute to the memory of Senator Korporashuns.

"When the engines were changed in the middle of the night, deliberately and surreptitiously, they substituted baggage cars. They knew that the deception would be speedily discovered, but they did not care for that—their desire for retaliation would have been subserved, even though detection and dismissal were the penalty."

With a puzzled expression on his face, Senator Oily leaned forward and inquired—

"But what was Senator Tubyfour doing all this time?"

"Sleeping," laughed Watts softly. "Sleeping serenely. I imagine that his consternation was indescribable when the yard-master woke him up and told him that the rest of his party were four hundred miles away."

Senator Pew arose briskly as he said with decision—"Well, conductor, we're wasting time. We must—"

"Wait," smoothly interpolated Watts. "Merely wait. Your baggage car—with baggage animate and inanimate—is coming Chicago-ward as fast as steam can pull it. In two hours from now you can continue your journey toward Butte."

The Senatorial jubilation and relief was inordinate. They became foolishly demonstrative. The pressure of the past twelve hours had been suddenly removed. They breathed again. They were profuse in their gratitude. Senator Bore suggested that the felicitous occasion demanded "having something," and turned enthusiastically towards Watts, then stopped abruptly. Watts was gone!

During the commotion, the eccentric unriddler had quietly slipped away unnoticed. A chorus of disappointed protests filled the car. Then Carson stepped forward, and said serenely:

"It's his way. You will see no more of him, I can assure you. See, yonder he goes."

The Senators rushed to the windows of the car and looked in the direction indicated. Far down the platform they could see the frail form of their Moses shambling unconcernedly away. Silently they watched him go—watched until he was swallowed in the crowd.

Strength

By PHILIP RUTHERFORD

AFTER all, strength isn't a matter of mere muscle, but of what people call nerve; and that is simply another name for thought."

The comment came from Jack Bunny, loquacious, good-natured, blundering Jack, whom everyone liked in spite of his persistent tendency to say the wrong thing. We had been listening to a recital by Arthur Trellis of his latest feat in the gymnasium, chinning himself something like twenty or thirty times—I never can remember numbers and dates very well. Arthur was quite proud of his physical strength, and though he did it without being offensive, he was inclined to boast. Sometimes we men grudgingly admitted that the girls had some reason for admiring Arthur so extravagantly—he did have a magnificent physique.

We were four, gathered in the smoking room of Tommy Waldron's summer home, wondering if it would cool off sufficiently to make a fishing trip at all agreeable. Jack, Arthur, and little Jimmie Perkins were the other three. Our host entered while we were still in the midst of an awkward silence following Jack's unintentional rebuke to Arthur's boasting.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Tommy in his blunt way. "Haven't been rowing about who shall catch the first fish, have you, or who shall have the first dance to-night with Alice Rennels?"

Which remark did not put us at ease, inasmuch as Arthur and Jimmie were admittedly desperately in love with Alice, and Jack and I would have been had we not realized the uselessness of it. As a matter of fact we others had frequently wondered, silently or audibly, why Jimmie Perkins hadn't come to the same realization. Perhaps he did have some such idea, but he never let it interfere with his dogged persistency in wooing the beautiful Alice.

I never had quite made up my mind whether to pity Jimmie or simply set him down as a stubborn little jackass. He was pleasant enough when you got to know him well enough to overlook—or rather not to overlook—his five feet six inches and his hundred and thirty pounds, but it took a long time to do this. And Alice had only come into our little circle three weeks before. So far as we could judge from outward appearances, Alice hadn't reached the point where she did not compare Jimmie and Arthur to the disadvantage of the littler man.

"You're wrong, Tommy," replied Jack to our host. "We were just discussing the characteristics and the cause of strength."

"You were, you mean," Tommy grinned.

"Yes, I was stating my opinion."

"And it was?"

"That strength depends upon thought—nerve—and not muscle."

"All depends upon what sort of strength you are talking about," replied Tommy. "If it's moral strength why of course you are right, but if it is a simple case of physical, muscular exertion, your theory is all wrong."

Now Jack loves an argument, and he promptly took up the challenge.

"That is exactly where you are wrong, Tommy. Why, history is full of instances where men and women of small physique have performed almost miraculous physical feats. You know they didn't do it with their muscles alone, because they didn't have the physical strength needed. It was their thought, the bolstering influence of their determination, their nerve, that gave strength to their bodies."

"Oh, they are just exceptions, Jack. You can't prove your argument by pointing to exceptions. Besides, we haven't the evidence of all the surrounding conditions. I'm willing to grant that mere size doesn't mean strength, but you cannot convince me that a big man, whose muscles have been trained, isn't the physical superior of a little man whose muscles have not been trained."

"Don't want to," snapped Jack. "The very instance you cite proves my point. It's the mind that does the training, and you know it. Why, it's a generally accepted adage that even the pugilist must fight with his head if he expects to be a winner."

"Bosh, don't ring in that be-whiskered thing and call it an argument. Jack Bunny, do you mean to say that—well, that Jimmie here, who isn't renowned for his physical strength, could chin himself thirty times, as Arthur did this morning? Why Jimmie probably would have difficulty in just hanging to the bar that long, without attempting to lift himself up and let himself down thirty times."

Tommy is a splendid fellow, but he isn't the most tactful person in the world at all times. Perhaps he labors under the delusion that tact is to be used only when women are present. As his old friend, however, I felt it incumbent upon myself to come to the rescue. Jimmie was fidgeting uneasily in his chair, staring through the window, while Arthur was grinning with delight.

"All I've got to say," I remarked, getting up, "is that if you people think your chatter is satisfying anybody's thirst for knowledge, you can let somebody else get its benefit. I'm going to get refreshments of another sort. Come on Jimmie."

Jimmie followed me, but Jack and Tommy stuck to their respective arguments, with Arthur listening.

"Think there's much in what Jack said?" Jimmie asked later as we bent over our fishing tackle.

"Oh, of course there's something to it, Jimmie. Anybody knows that a person is likely to do something far beyond

his normal strength under the stress of circumstances. I suppose it's just the thought that he must do it that gives him the strength to do it, but I've never given the subject much time—it's something for the psychologists and the physiologists to figure out. I'm neither, but a plain man, trying to keep the world from boring him too greatly. Let's forget it."

By ten o'clock a few clouds began to appear in the bright sky and Tommy decided that trout might strike. Mrs. Waldron took personal charge of having a hamper packed with good things to eat, for it had been decided that we would make a day of it, driving in the big buckboard over the hills to Lake Adele—named for Mrs. Waldron—and fish up the feeding streams. The Waldrons had a summer camp on the little lake and it was an ideal spot for a day's lark, where we could have the place to ourselves, for it was located on The Dales, as Tommy's place was called, a slightly mountainous wooded estate of some fifteen hundred acres.

The women of the party were to be Adele, for the chaperon—a most excellent and mind-her-own-business chaperon she was too—Alice, Mary Brent, Katherine Chevey and Louise Weston. They were all good fisherwomen, at least they did not squeal when a trout struck and they felt it dangling or tugging on the hook. The men were to be Tommy, Jack, Jimmie, Arthur and myself, all fairly good fishermen. Jimmie was an enthusiast, Jack would have been if he hadn't been so lazy, Tommy wanted to be because he thought it his duty as host, I loved the sport, Arthur fished because others did but secretly—and sometimes openly—looked upon it as too easy to give an athlete much excitement. However when he discovered that Alice appreciated a good angler he braced up and appeared to take an interest in the sport.

Jimmie and I were near the buckboard, packing in a few of our paraphernalia when Selfton brought out the big lunch hamper. We were not ready to have it put in and had him leave it on the ground. A few minutes later Alice and Arthur approached from the garden, talking very earnestly. She looked stunning in her brown suit, soft shirtwaist, short skirt and leggings, with a rough-rider hat pinned on one side of her head. I didn't blame Jimmie for watching her admiringly out of one corner of his eye. Arthur left her near the corner of the house and she joined us.

"Oh, I do hope the trout will be striking," she exclaimed enthusiastically. "I haven't had a good fish for such a long time."

"We'll have plenty, even if they don't," I pointed to the hamper. "That is full of good things to eat."

"Oh, I didn't mean that. I want to catch some."

Jimmie stopped working and, though I tried not to, I couldn't keep from hearing them.

"Miss Rennels," he said, "if we get back in time to take part in the dancing to-night wont you—can't I—have the first with you? I'm asking now," he hurried on, "so I wont be too late."

"But you are too late." I thought she felt sorry for him. "I've just promised it to Mr. Trellis."

"Oh!" Jimmie stopped with the exclamation.

"But you can have the next one," she said quickly. "That will be just as good, wont it?"

Jimmie ordinarily is rather backward and I marveled when he looked her brazenly in the face and said without a tremor:

"Well, I'd like to have them all."

Talking about dancing while getting ready for a fishing expedition didn't seem just right to me, and besides I didn't wish to overhear any more of Jimmie's attempted lovemaking. He wasn't an artist and couldn't compare with Arthur. Besides I saw the others coming to join us.

"Hey, Jimmie Perkins!" I cried, "If you think I'm going to do all your work, while you are having a beautiful time talking beautiful talks to a beautiful lady, you are mistaken. Come on now, and get busy."

Selfton was coming from the barn with his whip and robes; I was arranging the last of the tackle on the floor of the vehicle. Jimmie, with a shout, jumped over me and grabbed the hamper to lift it in. Now that hamper wasn't

the lightest thing in the world. I hadn't tried it, but I knew from the way Selfton had sagged to one side when he was bringing it out, that it was no lightweight, and I wasn't surprised when Jimmie's first grab didn't budge it, though he was chagrined.

"Gee, but it's heavy," he gasped as he gave another tug, succeeding in lifting it a few inches, but being compelled to put it back on the ground.

"Want some help," Alice asked in a bantering tone.

"No, thank you."

Jimmie gave another unsuccessful tug, and just then the others arrived and Arthur, with an air of conscious superiority remarked,

"Let me do it for you, Jimmie."

He lifted the hamper with one hand without apparent effort and deposited it lightly in the carry-all. Jimmie flushed and turned away from Arthur's triumphant smile, and so he could not see the look of admiration Alice bestowed on his rival. I felt like punching Arthur and felt more like punching Tommy when with a guffaw he poked Jack in the ribs and said:

"What do you think of your theory, now?"

Adele hurried us to our places to cover the awkward moment. She may have previously planned to have Arthur and Alice sit together, but whether she had or had not, Arthur had helped Alice to the rear seat and climbed up beside her before Adele could say anything. It was just large enough for two, while each of the other three seats could accommodate three. She put Tommy and Mary in front with Selfton; on the second she placed Jimmie and me with herself between us. Katherine, Jack and Louise occupied the third. I was just behind Tommy and I leaned forward and whispered,

"You idiot, you've started off this party in fine style. Everybody'll have a grouch against everybody else before we get started."

Tommy didn't understand. But Adele did, and she set herself to the task of making Jimmie forget. Adele is an entertaining talker besides being a very attractive young woman, but in spite of her efforts the grouch cloud grew thicker and thicker over the entire party except Arthur and Alice; they seemed to be having a lovely time on their rear seat. When we got off the farm and entered the thickly wooded road winding around through the hills, the spell wore off slowly, and at the end of the seven mile drive we were on speaking terms with one another, but anxious to get at the fishing. Jimmie had answered Adele's many questions, bright sallies, interesting remarks, etc., with monosyllables. He didn't feel like talking and I didn't blame him. As we climbed down he murmured to me:

"Hang him, I feel like shooting him!"

"Better go and work off your grouch on the fish," I retorted, "and stop being a baby."

The fishing was good, and fishing isn't a sociable sport. When you are after trout you find the greatest success in working alone, and you've got to keep your mind on the job, or you don't land the game. This was good for Jimmie. He didn't have time to nurse his grouch after the trout began striking, and it was not long before he forgot about Arthur and Alice. We fished near the camp for an hour, then had lunch, Selfton cooking some of the catch in splendid style; as everyone had been more or less successful, the lunch party wasn't the lugubrious affair the drive over had been. And the fact that Jimmie had caught twice as many as any of the rest and three times as many as Arthur, put him in good humor.

Afterwards we donned our rubber wading boats to whip up the streams that fed the lake. That is, the men did, and Alice and Adele, the latter because one of her feminine guests had set the example and Adele thought hospitality demanded that she follow suit.

There were four little streams emptying into the lake and a larger one flowing out of it. When we started out, Tommy apportioned the outlet to Arthur and Alice—they had agreed, without words, to fish together—Adele and I were given the brook nearest it, and the other men each took one.

"Be careful Arthur," Adele warned. "About four hundred yards down, under the footbridge, there is a bar of quicksand on the left hand side."

They were off laughing, and paid scant attention to her words. Jimmie already had started work, and the others were soon busy. Adele and I had good luck for an hour, at the end of which time we had gone up the brook to the springs that started it on its career. At her suggestion, we cut across the intervening half-mile to the outlet stream, intending to work back down it, though we had little expectation of adding greatly to our already goodly supply of speckled and salmon beauties.

When we reached the stream, some three hundred yards below the footbridge, we saw Jimmie coming through the trees toward the opposide side. He was walking slowly, apparently with a basket full of trout, and with signs of weariness. A little above the bridge we saw Arthur in the middle of the stream, thrashing his line around as amateurs do, working slowly down towards the bridge. Alice, evidently satisfied with wading, was keeping pace with him along the bank. Jimmie spied them about the same time.

As we sauntered slowly towards the bridge we saw a great salmon trout strike at Arthur's fly and dart down the stream with the speed of a torpedo. Alice gave a shriek of delight. Arthur foolishly let the line run too freely, and in a jiffy the reel was all unwound and he was forced to follow the tugging, fighting, splashing trout in order to prevent the line from breaking. The water at that point was shallow and he made rapid progress.

The fish, in its frantic effort to escape the barbed hook that was tearing at his gills, had reached the bridge, and threw himself upon the sandbar just covered with water. Alice, net in hand, started towards it. Adele screamed and Jimmie let out a yell,

"Stop! That's quicksand!"

He dropped his basket and rod and dashed through the undergrowth towards the bridge. I started for the same point, but Jimmie quickly outdistanced me. Arthur, startled by our cries, perceived the situation, dropped his rod, scrambled out of the water and ran towards Alice. When he got to the bank within a few feet of her, she was holding up the big trout triumphantly.

"Isn't he a beauty?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, but for God's sake come out, quick," cried Arthur. "You're standing in quicksand."

Alice tried to obey. Her foot stuck. She tugged at it, freed it, but the effort pushed the other foot deeper down into the treacherous sand. Arthur tried to reach her, lost his head, sprang in beside her, grasped her around the waist and with one effort of his great strength pulled her free of the sand and half threw, half pushed, her to the bank. She was safe, but the effort had proved costly, for the sands had grabbed him and already he had sunk half way to his knees. He tugged and wrenched at his feet, every moment becoming more and more frantic as his efforts proved futile.

Jimmie crashed through the brush, his face and hands bleeding from a dozen scratches, his chest heaving with his rapid breathing. He took in the situation at a glance. The bushes had hidden from him Arthur's action, but he knew what it had been. Arthur was just under the edge of the bridge that was some eight feet above him—just out of reach. Between him and the shore was a stretch of six or seven feet of quicksand. There was no rope to be had, no pole near by of sufficient size to be of any use. Arthur's panic-stricken struggles made him sink very rapidly.

"Stop!" Jimmie panted. "Don't struggle. Makes it worse."

Arthur did not hear him, or if he heard, paid no attention. Alice, her face white and drawn, her mouth set, her hands clasped, stared at him. She heard Jimmie, looked at him a moment without turning her head, and groaned. I could almost read the thought that flashed through her mind that Jimmie wasn't strong enough to do anything.

Without pausing Jimmie raced up the bridge, got down on his hands and knees just above Arthur and spoke calmly, soothingly,

"Be quiet, old man, and we'll have you out soon. But you must be quiet; keep your head. You can't buck against that sand; you couldn't if you were as strong as an elephant and weighed two tons instead of two hundred pounds."

A frantic thrashing was the answer. Jimmie spoke with almost a laugh,

"Now don't be a baby, Arthur. Just as soon as you quit that foolish waste of effort I'll get you out. But you've got to help me."

The matter of fact tone in Jimmie's voice quieted the struggling athlete. He looked up with white, mutely questioning face.

"That's better," said Jimmie. "Now I'm going to hang down from the bridge and let you climb up over me. But mind you, no foolishness. It's got to be a steady pull; jerks don't go, or we'll both be down there instead of up here."

I had paused, for two reasons. I was out of breath—I'm getting too fleshy to run far or fast without stopping to rest—and I was amazed by Jimmie's calmness. When he quietly dropped down from the bridge, hanging on by his hands to the small sapling that edged the structure, his feet coming to Arthur's chest, I started towards them, determined to be in time to help save Jimmie even if I couldn't save Arthur. Arthur clutched the swinging legs with a convulsive movement.

"Easy there," Jimmie called, "or I'll kick loose."

Then Arthur began a slow, steady pull. I could almost hear the snap as Jimmie's arms were pulled out of the shoulder sockets.

"Oh Jimmie," Alice cried. "Jimmie, don't let him pull you down!"

Jimmie's fingers tightened over the sapling with a grip that seemed to dent the bark. Arthur strained and strained. Slowly he began to gain on the clutching sands. He pulled himself up an inch. I reached Jimmie and knelt down to help him. Through his clinched teeth he hissed "No! Wait! Spoil it!" Alice stood immovable on the bank for a few seconds, then joined me, seeming to walk in a daze.

I know it wasn't long, just long enough for Adele to run two hundred yards, but it seemed hours before we heard the pop as Arthur's right foot left the sand. The second followed shortly after and he paused a moment to gather strength for the final climb to the bridge.

"Easy," Jimmie hissed.

Arthur's hands crept slowly up the human rope. I braced myself and leaned over to be ready for any emergency. Alice got down on the floor of the bridge and smiled at Jimmie's hands. She bent over and touched her lips lightly to one, then looked at me defiantly. Jimmie's hands seemed to slip just as Arthur's reached his shoulder. I reached down and grabbed Arthur's wrists, swung him to one side of Jimmie, and dragged him over the edge. At the instant the strain was released, Jimmie seemed about to lose his grip, and with a cry as if in great pain, Alice grabbed his wrists:

"Jimmie, Jimmie! Come back! Come back!"

He swayed a moment, tightened his fingers on the sapling, swung under the bridge and then pulled himself up with a jerk. He might have fallen back if he had been alone, but the moment his head appeared above the edge Alice threw her arms around him and pulled and tugged with the strength of ten women. Jimmie was up almost at the same instant that I succeeded in swinging Arthur over the edge.

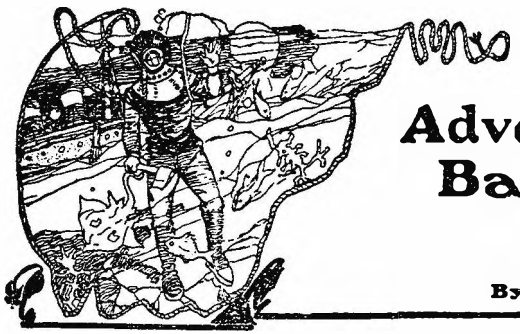
"Gee," Jimmie grinned painfully as he rubbed his shoulders and looked at his raw hands, "but that was a tug."

And the big man keeled over in a faint just as Adele arrived on the scene.

The finish? Oh, Arthur isn't a snob, or a prig. He's a man. When he came to a few moments later, he gave Jimmie his hand and in as honest and outspoken a way as anyone could wish, said:

"Jimmie, old man, I want to take off my hat to you, and tell you that never again will I judge a man's strength by his size."

He meant it too. He was the best man at the wedding in the fall when Alice became Mrs. Jimmie Perkins.



Further Adventures of Matt Bardeen—Master Diver

By FREDERIC REDDALE

HEREWITH we present the first of a new series of stories concerning the adventures of our old friend MATT BARDEEN—MASTER DIVER. *There are six stories in the series, each complete in the issue containing it, and all who read and relished the earlier stories will be glad to see old* MATT *again and hear him recount the adventures that befell him when he was one of the foremost of sea-floor walkers.*

No. I—THE TREACHEROUS MATE

SUREST thing you know," asserted my old friend, Matt Bardeen, deep-sea diver, in response to a query as to whether he had not at various times undertaken some more or less thrilling free-lance assignments apart from his services with the famous Salvage Syndicate of San Francisco.

"Why, there was that queer mix-up in the Sargasso Sea"—and here he chuckled reminiscently. "That was where I met up with the Missus. Never told you that yarn, did I? Well, it's a good 'un. Then I call to mind a real dirty job in Thames mud that sent me to saying my prayers. After that—no—yes, after that came a mighty rotten experience over that dam job—I aint swearin'.

"Next I was jumped clear across the Atlantic again to the coast o' Spain—after treasure that'd been sunk for nigh a couple o' centuries. An' then—yes, you'd better put this one down—" (my pencil was poised over a convenient scratch-pad). "I had to get mixed up with a pirate yarn down Gulf o' Mexico way. An' if you like shark stories—real man-eaters—there's a bully yarn about that breakwater in Samoa.

"Oh, yes, I've had my share o' queer adventures, east an' west, north an' south, some of 'em on my own hook."

I laughed as Matt started to fill and light his everlasting pipe—which Mrs. Matt claimed he kept under his pillow.

"Why this beats Banagher!" I quoted, seeing a fine grist of story material ahead.

"Never met the man," grunted Matt, between puffs. "But speakin' of beatin' reminds me of that Spanish treasure business, where a companion o' mine certainly did get all what was comin' to him. An' I had a heavy hand those days."

As I have elsewhere written in these reminiscences of brave old Matt Bardeen, my cue was always to play the part of a Boswell to his Johnson, merely dropping a word here and there whenever he stopped to "light up," so as to keep him going. For this reason I merely uttered the commonplace "How was that?" and Matt resumed:

"'Twas in Vigo Bay in ninety-two, a pretty big harbor on th' western coast o' Spain an' quite a port in its way. A London firm sent for me right after that Thames job I mentioned a while

back. Seems that in 1702—th' date was October 23—the combined Dutch an' English fleets attacked an' sunk the Spanish plate fleet of more than twenty sail—lumping big galleons every one of them—loaded deep with gold an' silver in bars an' ingots to the value of thirty million dollars, our money.

"Well, sir, them Spaniards was always bad sailors, I guess, an' I never quite made out how they managed t' cross the Atlantic as often as they did without gettin' wrecked. P'raps the breed has changed some for the worse. However, the galleons all went down—riddled full o' shot holes, an' the treasure with 'em. There it lay for nigh on two hundred years. 'Course there was attempts made t' recover the specie, but none very successful, an' there's a lot of it there yet.

"But about the time I'm tellin' of, a group of London speculators fitted out an expedition to make another desperate effort. They spared no expense, having secured a concession from the Spanish government, an' they had the best of divers an' diving gear. I'd heard something about the case while I was in London, naturally bein' interested.

"Fust thing you know there was a story in the papers that two divers had lost their lives—which wasn't surprisin' under the rotten conditions. Then they cabled me t' come over—name my own terms, an' all that. Well, I went, bein' still some venturesome, saw my parties in London, caught a dirty tramp steamer bound for Vigo, and joined the outfit less'n three weeks after leavin' little old New York.

"I found the Englishmen meant business. They'd got a couple o' big wrecking-boats on the spot an' the fishin' ground all located. What bothered all hands was the fierce tides an' the rough surface water, for the galleons had gone down nigh the wide sea mouth of the bay. Then, of course, the galleons had scattered some an' the sunken fleet covered a pretty wide area. But worst of all was the depth—not a foot less than fifteen fathom.

"However, they'd located one of the galleons—or rather th' spot where she lay, for in the two hundred years the fleet had been under water every ship had bedded herself deep in the sand. This ship, named *Espiritu Santo,* was supposed to have been the admiral's flagship an' correspondingly big an' rich.

"By means of sand pumps an' dredges they'd cleared her fore an' aft so that it was possible t' walk all 'round an' blow up her decks so's they could get into the lazzareet where the gold bars were stored. This was as far as they'd got when I reported for duty, an' mighty glad they was to see me. There was only one diver left, a dago named Manuel Guppo, an' although we gripped hands when we was introduced an' he called me 'Señor Bardeen,' I didn't like the fellow from fust sight. However, he was on the job an' I was the new chum, so I grins like a chessy-cat, while it was up to him to show me th' ropes seein' as he'd been down lots of times, but refused to work alone, bein' some scared, I guess.

"Well, I shifted an' went over th' side of a big pontoon they'd anchored right over the poor old *Espiritu Santo*—which means 'Holy Ghost.' Why, the very name was enough t' sink a ship, let alone one manned by a lot of lubberly Spaniards. I had my own crew with me as per usual, 'cause you can bet I don't tackle no deep-sea job like that 'less I know who's at the pump an' the lifeline.

"So down we goes, Manuel Guppo an' your humble servant. 'Course you know I've gone deeper'n ninety feet many a time, but this Vigo Bay trick was just a leetle the worst of anything I'd seen in that line. It seemed that the tides rushin' in an' out from the wide Atlantic made a lot of cross currents that kept the sand an' mud in a constant swirl. When we touched bottom it was in black water, an' the sand cut so that the helmet windows got all scratched after a while like ground-glass.

"We landed on her deck, and a lumpin' big boat she was, high-sided like a church, for they'd scooped out an' washed away the sand around her so that she was clean to her keel. As I said, they'd already blown off her main deck, exposin' the lazzareet. What Guppo an' me had to do was to crawl into th' state cabin which was 'way aft in the high castle-stern of her, get down 'tween decks, where the bars were, an' hand

'em out a couple at a time, pitchin' 'em into an iron bucket so's they could be hauled on deck. Each gold-brick weighed four pounds, I should say, worth on an average about two thousand dollars—dull yellow beauties, almost as bright as when they came from the mines of Peru. So you see it didn't take many of 'em t' make a tidy little fortune.

"As I said, Manuel Guppo knew the ropes, havin' been down before, so we made on an average three or four short descents a day, sendin' up a bucket of gold each trip. But twenty minutes was the limit for stayin' under at that depth an' in such mean water for workin'.

"All hands was quartered on one of the wreckin' steamers, Manuel's berth bein' next to mine. He was real chummy from the very first, an' seein' that he spoke some English an' that I'd picked up a little Spanish on the Coast we made out t' get along, although as I said I didn't cotton t' the cuss worth a cent. However, he'd sit in my room nights, smokin' cigarettes as fast as he could roll 'em, an' professin' great admiration for us *Americanos,* as he called us. He was a good man under water—none better, that I couldn't deny—an' anyway you can't be huffy with the mate you're workin' with every day at the end of a packthread an' a length o' rubber tubing.

"Come one night, Mister Manuel lets the cat out o' the bag. Seems he'd been doin' a lot o' graft on his private account before I'd joined. He managed to hide about a bucket full o' those gold bricks under the galleon's bilge, an' he not only wanted me t' help him get them ashore, but actually had the gall t' hint that he'd do as much for me!

"My first hunch was to hand him one for darin' t' propose such a game t' me—Matt Bardeen, who'd never yet betrayed my employers, not even when I'd handled pearls worth thousands, a handful of which'd never have been missed! Then I thought I'd listen an' see just what the greasy beggar'd got under his hat, an' give him a chance t' get it out of his system. So this was the scheme: Me an' him was t' each fill a bucket with gold bars, get 'em over the galleon's side onto the sand with a stout line t' the handles. At the end of each line we'd moor a small buoy; then at night some shore friends of his'd come off in row-boats, find the mooring buoys, hoist the buckets on board, make for the shore, an' hide the loot till it was safe for us t' dispose of th' same. Pretty slick trick, wasn't it? Likewise there was little danger o' gettin' caught; in other words a rich haul an' no risk.

"Well, I listened while I smoked so hard that the air in that cabin was like a Banks fog for thickness. I didn't ask Mister Manuel what guarantee he could give that my share would be kept O. K. for me once he and his shore friends got hold of it, but I did tell him in the choicest an' purest New York talk that I'd see him darned and double-darned before I'd join in any such skulduggery. Then I said it all over again in Spanish so's he'd understand, an' I can assure you that th' Spanish lingo contains some very choice swear-words.

"Manuel seemed real hurt at my refusal; he patted me on the shoulder an' called me his *amigo;* protested that there was no harm in what he had proposed, and vowed that he was my brother still. I didn't tell him how much or how little I believed, but I did let him know that I didn't want any more friendship of that sort, and if I caught him up to any monkey tricks with the gold I'd have him sent ashore to see the inside of a Spanish jail.

"It was after I had been asleep that night that I woke in my bunk an' a queer thought came to me. Two divers had already lost their lives while working on the *Espiritu Santo,* an' while the engineers in charge attributed their deaths to pure accident and ordinary diving hazards, yet it suddenly came over me that perhaps my *amigo* Manuel Guppo might know something about their taking off—especially if they'd rejected his proposition same as I'd done. So as I turned over for my second sleep I made a mental note that my diving mate 'd bear watchin'. As things turned out that was one of the wisest things I ever did.

"Nothin' more was said by Manuel about his little game o' loot, an' for three or four days we worked below on that old galleon's lazzareet, sendin' up a

bucket of ingots whenever it was fit to go down. One night after supper I called Manuel into my cabin an' asked him what he'd done with the gold he'd secreted under the bilge? He said it was there yet, moored by a hand line to the ship's rail. I told him he must send it to the surface next day as part of our regular salvage.

"At this he just went up in the air; told me it was none of my business; begged me not to interfere; said I was *loco* not to line my own pocket on the side, and ended by declaiming that the gold really belonged to Spain and the Spanish, and not to England, whereby he was amply justified in taking some of it for himself. 'Course that was all buncombe, an' I cut him short, tellin' him that if he didn't send up th' loot next day I would.

"He went out growling in his pointed beard an' no doubt cursing in Spanish quite as fluently as I could have done in English. Next day we went down together as usual, taking turns at workin' in the cramped quarters of the lazzareet. Another week, I judged, would see the place cleaned out. We took our regular spells on deck, had our light dinner, and then went down again for what I expected would be the last time that day, for there was a heavy swell settin' in from the Atlantic. As things turned out that trip came near being my last anywhere.

"So far I'd made no reference to our talk of the night before, nor had Manuel shown any move to send his bucket of gold on deck. We'd filled one from the lazzareet, workin' under great difficulties, for the swirling sand made the water thicker than ever, an' I'd climbed on the galleon's deck ready to give the signal t' be hauled up, when I suddenly thought of Manuel's private cache. I rapped on his helmet to get his attention an' pointed over the galleon's side, knowin' very well he'd comprehend my meanin' after what I'd said overnight.

"But th' scaramouch was too quick an' too treacherous for me. Before I sensed what he was about he made a side-swipe at my air-hose with a murderous machete he suddenly produced. Luckily he missed. In that instant I realized how Barton and Carmack, my predecessors, had perished!

"Well, I made as quick a jump for the skunk as was possible in my diving gear, gripping him round the middle, an' feelin' around for his hose so as to shut off his air, he doin' likewise by me. He was the lighter by forty pounds, but wiry an' strong as a catamount. There we was, reelin' and stumblin' around that splintered an' slippery old hulk, each fightin' for life—a regular duel ninety feet under water!

"At last he tripped an' fell, me on top, an' there we were as helpless as two stuffed mummies! Luckily our hose didn't bust, but we were all tangled up in our life-lines like a couple of snarled cod-trawls. The fellows on the pontoon sensed that something was wrong an' after a few minutes decided t' haul us up. So up we went just as we were, in a regular Greco-Roman clinch, an' that's the way they found us.

"I've often laughed since at the thought of what a sight we must have been—two divers locked in each other's arms an' all twisted up t' beat th' band.

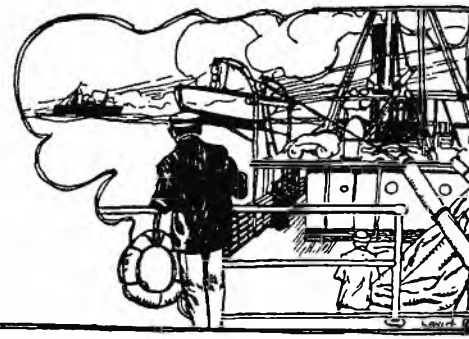
"'Course when they'd pried us apart an' got us on our feet with our headpieces off, the whole story came out. My mates were for pitching Brother Manuel back into Vigo Bay just as he was, only the chief wouldn't have it."

"But what did finally become of him?" I inquired for I wanted the end of the story.

"Oh, they just naturally fired him after they heard about his little scheme t' beat the game. He went ashore that night in one of the very boats that came nosing about for his loot."

On Bill

By LEO CRANE



WHEN Bill tole me that he was a sailor by trade, I couldn't believe it. It was hard to understand."

Benson made these few remarks and then waited for me to deliver myself into his hands. I knew that a single question would accomplish it, and ordinarily would have hastened away without replying; but on this night (it was raining and the cabin looked cozy enough, with its swinging lamp shedding a mellow glow over the table and the decanter and the glasses) I decided to suffer him. Therefore, I asked him why. Benson seized his cue, and plunged into the tragic history of Bill's troubles.

"Yeh see, Bill was a strange feller. He claimed to be a sailor, but he had none of the earmarks. Said he had sailed for twenty odd year, and yet he didn't have a single anchor, nor crossed arrers, nor even a bleedin' heart tattooed on him nowheres. Most folk of his callin' look like a birch tree that lovers has been hangin' 'round armed wit' old Barlow knives. But when Bill came to work for Simms Foraker, at the Sixteenth Street Dime Mooseum, his arms were as white as milk, an' he could go low-necked any time without havin' a ship in full sail bustin through his bosom. I used to wonder what had kep' him from the stencil habit, so one day, anxiety gettin' the best of my polite judgment, I sez to him, sez I:

" 'Bill, wouldn't it take on you?'

" 'What?' he asks me, lookin' up.

" 'Why, tattooin'?'

"Whereupon he goes black in the face an' I thought he'd choke. He certainly seemed to be ill some'eres, at first, an' I thought so; but when I found out that he was sore, I remarks:

" 'Look'ee, Bill—along wit' this show we don't stand for the High an' Mighty. When the on'y man in captivity wit' crab feet has to be polite to me, why that's your lesson.'

"Bill moped around the rest of the day, surly an' sour looking. But that night, after the show, when the snake-charmer had finished puttin' the stuffed snakes back into their cage, Bill comes to me as humble as a turtle-dove.

" 'Say,' he sez, glancing 'round to see if he could be overheerd. 'Yeh didn't mean that the Boss wanted me for a tattooed man, did yeh?'

"I looks him over pitiful.

" 'Bill,' sez I, tryin' to be tall wit' dignity, 'The Boss aint lost any sleep worritin' about tattooed men in a long time—nor about you neither,' I adds, thinking it would comfort him. At that he sits down on a chest an' becomes communicative of his past troubles.

" 'I was tattooed onct,' he sez, with a sigh.

" 'What!' I exclaims.

" 'Sure! Onct, but never again.'

" 'How'n blazes did you get it to come off?' I insists, 'cause to the eye, Bill was as bare of ornament as politics is of saints.

" 'It's still on—deep,' he sez mournful. 'I've tried everythin' from scaldin' water to proosic acid; also a curry-comb, but it wasn't no use.'

" 'Prove it to me,' sez I disdainful.

"He arises from that chest deliberate,

pulls off his shirt an' grabs for a plaster that is pasted hard down between his shoulder-blades. 'It's there all right,' he sez, shovin' into the conversation a wicked word he had picked up in some foreign port. I could see that Bill had feelings about whatever was under that plaster.

"'You're ashamed of it,' I sez.

"'I am!' he agrees, forceful, 'Wouldn't you be anxious if you was a walkin' sign-board?'

"'Bill!' I gasps out, 'You didn't go for to make one of them sandwiches of yourself—Soap, or tooth-brushes! or somethin' shameful to the public?'

"'No,' he responds, snappy. 'I'm a testament.'

"When he says this to me, my jaw drops limp.

"'Sure thing,' he continues, 'The last will an' testament of one Silas Meggs, made by him in the China seas when he thought he was dyin' of internal injuries. I've had no end of trouble concernin' it, an' so, when I gets to broodin' over them times, I can't help actin' sour.'

"'It happened this way. Me'n Silas Meggs was boys together—that is, he was a big boy when I was on'y a little shaver, but he always seemed to like me considerable—as a boy, mind yeh. When we got to be shipmates in the same hooker, we was pretty thick. Silas was a-gettin' along in age then, an' he was a trifle cranky, not to say crabbed, an' it got to be that I was the on'y one of the crew that could do anythin' with him. He had the repytation of bein' well fixed in the bank, which helped me to be kind to him. I calculates that some day he might want to die peaceful, knowin' that his friends were grateful to him. Sure enough, one day he gets moody, when he sez to me:

"'Bill,' he sez, 'you're the right sort o' friend for an old man. Better'n any of my true-blood relatives,' he sez. 'Blast em! 'Blast 'em. Double dot an' double-dash 'em! The wicious leeches! A-waitin' for a poor old man like me to die, so's they can buy fine feathers wit' my hard earned savin's.'

"'And he took on at a great rate, wit' tears in his eyes, an' words in his mouth that I dassn't repeat, they was so descriptive. Final he winds up with:

"'Bill, I'm a-goin' to spite 'em all, the wretches. I'm a-goin to leave you all my money.'

"'Well, that was comforting to me, an' I promised that I would be grateful. It hadn't been no easy job to stay on good terms wit' Silas, he was that crabbed.

"'When we get to port,' he sez serious, 'we'll get a feller to make out a will, an' we'll have it braced so's them relatives will wish they'd been decent to a broken-down old man,' he sez.

"'An' so he gets cheerful wit' the idear, an' every time he thought of it, he laffed. I also got to thinkin' considerable about the proposition meantime, an' thinks I, som'thin' might happen to Silas 'fore we made port, which would be a fearful consequence to me. So I gets after him to write it down.

"'After a long persuasion, he consents, if we can get one of the boys to write decent. He had an idear that the law wouldn't take no queer hand-write. But neither me nor Silas could find anybody on that ship suitable. There was on'y one feller that could write an' he was on'y able to write print, 'cause he had learned it in tattooin,' an' when I hears that, the idear come to me that if I could hev' Silas's will writ on me imperishable, I would be sure to have it always handy. A sailor is careless, usual, an' he's sure to lose most of his valuable truck at some time or other. But if I had that will tatooed, it couldn't be stolen or washt overboard, else I was sudden skinned alive. Wherever I'd be, there that will'd be, ready to make me a rich man. I thought I had hit on a right shrewd arrangement.

"'But Silas wouldn't hear to it at first. After a long palaver he comes round to my way of thinkin', on'y he makes me promise to be sure that he is dead 'fore I use the rights of it. They traces out the words in fine print, an' Jones sets to work. I regretted it immediate, 'cause he said it would be a long job, and it hurts like the eternal end of man. But every time that I'd be just ready to quit, I'd think of all that money I was to reap for it, an' a man can stand most anything when the solid cash is in sight for his ol' age. Nowadays, when I think of the things people do for money,

it makes me sad; also it makes me crazy mad wit' myself for one of them people. On'y I've reformed. I wont do it again.

"'Well, they had got along right smart wit' transferring me into a legal dockyment. Jones would read it out to me every onct in a while, an' he said he was down to all but the name.

"'*I, Silas Meggs, leave all my belongings to—*' That was the readin' of it, accordin' to Jones. When he had got that much gouged in wit' black ink, som'thin' happened which brought me'n Silas to bitter words.

"'He was a pecooliar cuss, an' the saintliest man that ever drew breat' couldn't have lived peaceful wit' him continuous. First he got mournful 'cause I might have designs on his life, an' then he goes about whinin' that he hadn't no decent relative, which made his money go to a mortal stranger like me. Final, he said that I couldn't understand money, nohow, 'cause my parents had been paupers, an' this got me set right up wit' answers. Then we had them words. He rushes at me with wit' his fists doubled an' strict hammer business in his eye. I didn't want to hurt him, bein' he was such an ol' man, so I runs away from him. Then he wailed that he had to leave all his money to a coward, which brings down wrath to me unbearable. An' we had more words, bitter if not worse than the first string, an' Silas stood up wit' his right hand raised, swearin' to high Heaving that he wouldn't leave me a cent. Me! That had half his will punched into my hide in letters that wouldn't never come off.

"'The men tried to make it up 'tween us, 'cause they knew what I'd suffered, but it didn't seem any use to attempt mollification. Silas was as obstinate as a mule wit' wet feet, an' every time he sees me he gets pale wit' a spiteful rage that near convulses him.

"'But the wicked suffers, an' one night Silas comes down from the yard like a ton of coal dropped sudden. He hits a rope on his way down or there wouldn't be anythink to this story—also he gets the inside injury I spoke of. We was all sure he'd die, an' I can't recall that anybody cared much about it, neither, seein' he had been such a demoralization to us. But he takes one of his queer fits, groanin', an' he wants to finish that will.

"'It's a hard case that'll refuse a dyin' man anythink, so when he sends for me an' the needle-man, I relents.

"'Bill,' sez he, moanin' that he would die immediate, 'I've been mean, but yeh must fergive me. Let Jones finish that dockyment. You'll be a message from the dead," he groans.

"'We gets to work, Jones pushin' the needle feverish, an' me biting hard down on a clay pipe wit' pain. Well, final it was accomplished. I puts on my shirt an' feels as easy as the stitchin' would let me. An' then—it's crool to say it, but then I waits for Silas to die. He lasted over into the next day, groanin' all the time. He was a tough old pippin an' he just wouldn't die right off. He lingered. He lingered along into the next week, one day into another, an' me inquirin' about his health so often that the men begins to speak real mean things against me. I suppose I had been too earnest over it. Anyway, Silas kept right on the job, lingerin,' until we makes port, an' when they takes him to a hosspital, he gets well. Would yeh believe a man could do a thing like that, after what I'd suffered? He did it. An' then he tells me that he's out to live just as long as he can for spite. He made a precious good start by gettin' transferred to a new ship, 'cause I would have been his death swift, after what I learned subsequent.

"Yeh see, I trusted to his presumable dyin' word, an' I made two v'yages in a calm frame of mind. I knew that some day he'd have to go off the hooks, an' that I'd be well cared for ever after, which is the easiest way for a human to feel, if you've ever experienct it. I had no more fear of old age, an' so I didn't save no money at all. Just blew everythink like a royal Princt of Whales. What was the sense of saving? A man don't want all the money in the world. 'Have a good time 'till Silas dies,' was my motto, an' then rest like a duke wit' his fortune for expenses.

"But one time, after a tearin' spree ashore, when I am mournful in the recovering stage, a solemn religious chap named Sam Skinner undertook to lecture me on my wild ways, which was

a-takin' me, he sed, to the long lane that shoots down sudden toward brimstone an' burning sulphur. He laid it on heavy, like a parson wit' my soul burdenin' his hands.

"'It'll cost yeh all your money, an' then your health,' he sez. 'What then? Asylum, or almshouse, or maybe beggin' wit' a wooden leg.'

"'Don't worry about me,' I tells him, 'cause I'll be a rich man when you're buildin' fires in the poor-house furnace.'

"'You will!' he sneers.

"'Yes, I will! An' I've got the writin' to show for it.'

"'You've got to prove it to me wit' eyesight,' he disdains.

"Whereupon I begins to drag off my shirt. He thought I was going to hit him, an' he makes a swift leap for his protection. But I coaxes him to come around behind me, which he does still doubtful, an' he reads aloud that will imprinted on me imperishable:

> I, Silas Meggs, leave all my belongings to Mary Jane Martin, niece.

"'What!' I screams. An' I near breaks a nerve tryin' to read it for myself over my shoulder. I couldn't turn myself into a contortion act, so dives below for a mirror. George Thompson has a little one in his chest, into which I sights suspicious. I wouldn't believe it then—but when every man in the fo'castle that was book-learnt reads it out to me 'Mary Jane Martin' instead of 'William Smith,' why, I has to believe it.

"An' there I was, goin' about supreme unconscious all that time, a living will for somebody else to profit out of. I raged 'till I got sick an' had to take to my bunk. It was the most pitifulest thing that could have happened to anybody. Then's when I tried the proosic acid rub, an' most everythink else that would have cleaned anythink else. But the writin' wouldn't come out. It must have eat right through to my spine.

"But there was a feller on that ship that had spent most of his off time readin'. He comes to me wit' a grin, an' he sez:

"'You've still got a fine chanct,' he sez, amused at my misery.

"Now, I felt like a horse that has gone against a barbed wire fenct.

"'Chanct!' sez I, irritable. 'Chanct for wot! Paradin' myself as a curious langwidge in a circus? Not for me—I'm respectable if I am branded wit' ill-luck by an' ol' serpent that's too cussed mean to die accordin' to the doctors' advice.'

"'But that feller on'y laffs at me, an' sez:

"'When yeh want to, yeh can get lost.'

"'Lost!' I shrieks, maddened by the humor of him. 'What do I want to lose myself for? This aint my home address that's marked on me.'

"'No, no,' he goes on, calm. 'All wills get lost sometime or other. That's what makes 'em valuable. The folks goes huntin' around, an' when a feller finds one, he gets a reward—that is, if he finds the kind of will you are. A good will is a welcome thing to a bunch of poor relatives. But if he digs up a will that leaves all to an orphant asylum, why he on'y gets the grouch of the whole fambly. However, you bein' a livin' will, you can get lost an' find yourself whenever you're a mind to. Frinstance—when this chap dies—'

"I shakes my head disconsolate.

"'But he's got to die, sometime. Then you hike back home an' search out this Mary Jane Martin, who, maybe, is a servant in a nifty fambly, wot is ill-treated wit' scrubbin' an' the like. You sez to her that you know where a will is, but that you aint awful certain. You think you can find one, perhaps. Then she promises to yield half the money for expenses, an' yeh discover your back to the lawyers. She gets the money, an' she pays you handsome.'

"It sounded so good to me that I got cheerful immediate. The on'y thing that worried me was his mentionin' lawyers. Now, if he had said ship-owners, or captains, or even ware-'ousemen, it would have been different, an' some comfort, but I've always been warned of lawyers. They don't seem to have no conscience.

"'Oh!' sez that book-learnt feller, scornful, 'You aint got no reasonin' powers at all,' he sez. 'Lawyers are the on'y people that knows wot to do wit' wills. It's a secret.'

"An I believed that, 'cause the way I heard of lawyers gettin' away wit' wills, it sounded reasonable.

"Sure enough, after that v'yage, I hears that Silas has been washt overboard off the Borneo Coast. He was either gone to Davy Jones or had been made over into a wildman, an' he was certain the former, 'cause he couldn't swim. I goes searchin' for that Mary Jane Martin, which I finds to be no bad lookin' woman. I frames it up to her pleasant that maybe I knows of Silas's last will an' testament, which would give her all his property, on'y the will was lost an' I was the chap to find it. The property had been come into by a youngish chap named Smiggs, he havin' a will made by Silas onct when home on a spree, Smiggs havin' kept the spreein' materials very much supplied. Smiggs wasn't anythink of a saving sort, an' the sooner she got the money, the more it was for her. Mary Jane Martin consults a lawyer, an' when I discovers myself to that man, his eyes projecks as if the miracle days had come round again. He leaps up, says it'll be a hard fight, but that she'll sure get the money. I was overjoyed at this, for she declared she'd repay me a hundredfold, like bread upon the water. An' I needed repaying, for not to speak of the pain suffered in that gougin' operation, I had to drop the chanct of a good v'yage on account of these complicated legal proceedings, me bein' the will, yeh see, an' wills havin' to remain handy thereabouts for inspecting.

"This feller Smiggs couldn't believe that he was in a fair way to lose his fortune; but when he had seen the back of me, an' had been told the rights of it, he begins to lay awake nights scheming trouble in large doses. He forced 'em to do so much examinin' of me, that I stood around most of my time wit'out any shirt, an' so to boot, I ketches a bad cold on the lungs. Final, he springs it on them desperate, askin' why the will hadn't been filed in court. But they sez they can't well file me.

"'He's a will,' yells the outrageous Smiggs. 'An' he aint legal unless he's been proper filed an' docketed.'

"Now, the on'y kind of file that I could remember was a long speary lookin' thing that the captains stuck papers onto, an' as wills was usually papers, I wonders if they means to grid me like a roach over a hatpin. No, sir, I determines that the will'd be lost again soon. But I afterward learns that he on'y wanted me put in a pigeon-hole top of a desk, like a lot of old gas receipts, also he wanted me to be embossed wit' a big seal, a thing that looked like a capstan' an' made pictures on a feller. I protests wild an' stern. That would have beat out the tattooin'; but the lawyers saved me.

"I had got enough of being a will by now. I begins to wonder if I'd ever secure my end of the purse. At last they decides that I was a good will, an' things begun to look partic'lar bright for Mary Jane. Then I begins to have doubts an' suspicions. It's always been a habit wit' me. Suspicions aint nothin' but trouble to a feller; they turns back like boomerangs, an' whangs him on the nut.

"I got suspicions on this Mary Jane. She looked like she might be a close one, an' I had earned most a thousand dollars for the pain an' labor of discovering myself. What if she wouldn't stick to her original word? That thought haunted me o' nights. Onct she got the money safe, how could I persuade her to be honest?

"So I considers that the best an' surest way was to nab it all, like a stock-exchange broker. I would make love to Mary Jane, an' marry her. Then I'd have fortune an' a wife to boot, though this last didn't appeal anywhere near like the first. But I reckoned that I could stand it, spendin' most of the time visitin' old shipmates; an' she wasn't a bad lookin' little woman, only she did have such snappy eyes. She had taken quite a shine to me, thinkin' that I was a downright perseverin' sort. Also, I hadn't had any time for sailor nonsense since becomin' a discovered will, an' she had no idear of my true character. Wit' it all, though, I never could make out why she was so easy to court, except maybe she wanted to have the will about the house as dockymentary proof.

"Well, we gets spliced all right, an' settles down to enjoy Silas's money, which he had been too mean to leave to me, but which I had by shrewd circumventin' secured the hold of anyway. I told Mary Jane that I'd wait to see the money matters all runnin' fine before I

went to sea again—but wit' the stuff actually in sight, I figured that I might be took with one of these incurable diseases, like a 'orrible cough all the time, which would easy prevent me from ever doin' hard labor again. Them lawyers took a good while figurin' out what Smiggs had done with the money, but four thousand cold it happened to prove up. Smiggs started to hunt work. He was a discouraged man. I wasn't sorry for him, 'cause he had showed such nastiness toward me as a will.

"Three mont's passed by—the steadiest time I ever had in my life—an' then came the fiercest thing that ever happened to mankind. Late one night there is a mild tap at the kitchen door. I opens it. An' almost immediate I lets out a yell that could be heerd at the end of town. Why?—I had seen a ghost! It was Silas! He had looked a little older, an' meaner, wit' white whiskers; but he had been grinnin' just like he grinned when he lingered in that hospital swearin' that he'd get well to spite me. Mary Jane shrieks out, drags me inside an' shuts the door. It took a heap of raw stuff to get me back into shape, I was that trembly.

"But I was mistook. The next day I see Silas again, in broad sunlight, as he was goin' about sight-seeing an' visiting, an' I had sense enough to know that a ghost couldn't act that scandalous. Later, when he is sober, he comes up to the house. Mary Jane is diplomatic to him. She invites him inside, an' hints to me that it is my chanct to be nice to the dear ol' man.

"'Fine thing for you to marry my Mary Jane,' sez he to me, after he had been stoppin' with us a week. The very sight of him drove me to foamin' inward, but I had to smile casual. 'She's a good girl,' he sez, 'an' this'll be a home for me in my ol' age,' he goes on, as cheerful as a magpie. 'Aint you sailin' no more, Bill?' he asks.

"I tells him of that weak heart I had developed, an' gets off a cough or two, whereupon he groans wit' sympathy. He lays one hand on my shoulder to express hisself.

"'I know you can't stand idleness,' he sez anxious. 'It's wearin' you down to skin an' bone, Bill. I can see it plain. You're not the same man you were when we was shipmates. Open air will fix that poor heart. A man of your build ought to be up an' doing constant,' he sez, as if he was doctorin' me. 'I think I'll have to look you up a comfortable ship, Bill,' he concludes.

"'Then I hit him. I just couldn't help it, 'cause I was clear past all restraint. I didn't hit him as hard as I oughter, for he was old, but he went down swift all the same, an' his head connected wit' the stove. A lump begins to swell out there, like a tea-cup, an' Silas didn't move. It's murder, I thinks silent, growin' cold wit' chills.

"'An' just then, in comes Mary Jane. She sees the wreck, an' she wails out, callin' me a villain an' a deceivin' wretch, an' lots more. She swears that she'll go witness agin me. Also, down she flops, to sob over that wicious ol' man. I couldn't stand it, an' I rushes out, intendin' to take the night train if I could circumvent the polis. Sudden I meets with that other rascal, Smiggs, who hears of it, an' he gets busy as a bee helpin' me off. He lends me a suit of his clothes an' some money. I was too excited to understand what had come over him, 'cause ordinary he was as mean as a ship's rat. Well, to make short work of it, I rides out on the bunkers, an' ships to sea again safe.

"'For a time I thought that I was the luckiest man alive; but subsequent I meets a mate from them parts, an' he tells me that Silas didn't die after all. He said that Mary Jane was takin' care of him like a baby, an' that he was gettin' fat.

"'But—this is where I come in yet,' sez Bill, solemn. 'He'll sure die some day, an' they'll have to come to me for a decent will then. I hope he dies hard. Although—Say! don't yeh know anythink that'll take out the marks? I'd do it to spite the fambly—but I've tried everythink most, from proosic acid down.'

"'No,' sez I to him, 'I'm afraid it's on you, Bill,' I sez.

"'Yes,' he replies sorrowful, draggin' on his shirt, 'It's on me, an' imperishable, to my shame.' he sez."

I agreed with Benson that it was tough.

Wilbur's Christmas Lady

By WILLIAM CAREY

I'M dead sure of one thing—Christmas aint Christmas at all when a chap's lonely. And I was that—well, maybe! While I had been promising myself for weeks what a good time I would have in little old New York on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, my word, I never felt so downright blue in all my life as I did the day before Christmas. And I was standing in front of the Knickerbocker, too, smoking a three-for-a-dollar Havana.

All around me was hustle-bustle, people laughing, talking, buying, people hurrying home—ah, there you are, *home!* And I stood as forlorn as a wet kitten, my own roof-tree three thousand miles away, and not knowing a soul in the whole blamed city. On every side holly and mistletoe and evergreen—Christmas in the air so thick you could cut it with a knife, and little me without a glad hand anywhere in the bunch.

You see there had been a crackerjack season for fruit—all the country went mad for Oregon apples—and when it was over, and I had pocketed my little profits, I promised myself a treat, and started, big as life, for New York. Gosh, what I wasn't going to do to Broadway with my roll! I was planning all the way across the continent. It seemed to me I ought to make Miss Manhattan sit up and blink her eyes. But, gee, the first night after I struck the town I swallowed batter-cakes and coffee and baked beans at Childs', and saw the same films three times running at a moving-picture theatre.

I hope I'm not a piker and I believe the boys back home will tell you I am not, but believe me, a week later the Casino was still at Thirty-ninth Street, and Sherry's was still doing business at the old stand. When I had tried to see the show at the former I was told there was nothing to be had for three weeks ahead, and one evening after watching the taxicab princesses enter the latter, my nerve failed me and I caught myself wondering if I really did know the difference between an oyster fork and an asparagus rake.

Of course I could have met many persons if I had cared for their cut. But, somehow, after aiming so high, I couldn't fall for the black-lashed, red-lipped ladies of Forty-second Street, nor cotton to the loud-voiced, diamond-studded gentlemen of the hotel-lobbies. So that was why, on the day before Christmas, I stood in front of the Knickerbocker, just hungry for a friend.

For a long time I stood there and watched. Trolleys and motors and carriages out in the street, thick as thieves in Frisco, people, white, black, brown and yellow, crowding the pavements to the curbstones. A Greek with a basket of plaster Christs which nobody stopped to buy, a red-haired woman all in black whom men stared at, a silent-moving John Chinaman with a pair of ducks on his arm, a pretty, excited school-girl whose packages seemed as endless as the streams of people flocking to and fro. And yet I knew no one in all that restless bunch of humanity.

The thing had almost got on my nerves when presently, all of a sudden, I saw my Christmas Lady. She was sitting eagerly forward in a slow-mov-

ing hansom, and her eyes, bright, blue, all-seeing, watched the changing panorama with a kind o' hungry light in them. Pretty? Yes, no—well, what do you call pretty, anyway? To me she seemed very like that Princess o' Dreams that comes to every mother's son of us when he is twenty. She had gold-brown hair, and her eyes were dark blue, she was neither short and stout nor tall and thin, but just right—just as you've always known She would be, when at last you found her.

Right in front of the hotel her cab stopped with a jerk, caught in one of those blocks which even the magnificent New York police seem powerless to cope with. At first she didn't seem to mind a bit, but kept on with that fascinating game of watching Broadway, all unaware of the fact that a number of fellows in the grill were eyeing her like a dealer does a piece of horseflesh. Ten minutes passed. Then she began to find herself, and a soft pink that crept to her checks said plainer than words that she was conscious of the men's glances. She swept the crowd with a scornful little frown, and somehow her eyes met mine, and she started—involuntarily. Then, without a second thought, I hurried forward, and stood, with my hat in my hand, at her cab-door. The look she gave me sent the blood madly to my head, and I felt my cheeks burning like a blooming idiot's.

"Well, well, well, this is good!" I cried. I pushed out my hand, and she gave me hers, in a shabby, mended glove. "What luck! I hadn't an idea you were in New York! I'm as glad as anything to see you again, Kate!"

For a second, an eternity, she hesitated, then:

"I'm glad to see you, Dan," she returned, with a smile. "Yes, I've been in New York for a month now. I'm looking for newspaper work, you know."

"What, in a cab?" I gasped.

She flushed to the roots of her hair and answered an indignant "no!"

"I am going shopping," she explained. "That is what Christmas is for, in New York. I always take a cab so I can bring my purchases home in it—it is better during the holidays, I think."

"Oh, sure," I nodded; "much better!"

All around us policemen shouted, trolley-bells clanged, and motor-horns bellowed hideously. The block was still there, all right.

"Do you know," I said suddenly, the idea occurring to me full-born, "I think it would be a good time for me to do *my* shopping? What do you say—would it be too much if I were to ask you to let me go along with you? Together we ought to pick something handsome for the boys."

"I don't think it would do," she answered slowly. "You see, I have a slight headache this morning, don't feel overly good, and I'm afraid I couldn't do justice to—the boys. I appreciate your invitation though, just the same, Dan."

"I am disappointed," I said, truthfully enough. "Can't I induce you to reconsider your decision? I'll promise to be good as gold, and not give a bit of trouble. And after all any old thing is good enough for the boys."

"Then surely you don't need me," she cried, smiling faintly.

"But I do. I haven't the ghost of an idea what to get them," I insisted.

She looked straight ahead of her, and a tiny fold gathered beween her eyes.

"How many boys are there?" she asked, following a pause.

"Six," I nodded.

"Six?" she repeated, rather nonplussed, I take it.

"Yes, Pete and Nick and Joe and Bill and Swede Oscar and Frenchy—that's six, aint it?"

She counted them over on her fingers, and bobbed her head for "Right-O."

"Why not give them—say, drums for two of the smallest, ice-skates for the older ones, and—are they fond of reading?"

It was right on the tip of my tongue then and there to tell her something that would have pulled down all my hopes like a house of cards. Perhaps I ought to have explained about the boys, back in Clitheroe, but I didn't. I just let the drum and skates slip by naturallike, hurrying over them. But she was on ticklish ground, I tell you—well rather!

"Say, after that you've just got to go with me, Kate!" I told her stoutly. "Why, suppose I'd get mixed up and send them some blamed useless thing—

Pete a toothbrush-holder or Frenchy a bathrobe! Never hear the end of it! They'd have the laugh on me for the rest of my life! You wouldn't want to put me in wrong, would you?"

"No, no; of course I wouldn't," she cried, but still my case hung in the balance. She wasn't sure, nor quite decided yet.

"I'm a selfish brute, I know," I went on quickly; "but for a friend, a chum of your kid days—I'm such an old, old playfellow— Why, I'd do as much for you! Let me go with *you* and help choose the girl's presents!"

"There aren't any girls," she said slowly. Then, with a little shake of her head— "nor boys. Just a few, unimportant friends. My boarding-house lady's crippled daughter—"

"I know a dozen bully things that would do for her!" I broke in eagerly.

"Do you?—What are they?" she said.

I thought until my face got crimson. Then I blurted out "A doll!"

"Way off," she declared. "Mamie has finished with dolls and now wants books—"

"'Alice In Wonderland,'" I cried.

"No—she read that before she put away her dolls. She wants Don Quixote for one—"

Just then a policeman called sharply to her cabby, and looking up, we saw that the block had been straightened out and traffic was becoming normal again —if that is possible on Broadway.

"Move on! keep a-moving!" shouted the red-faced, blue-eyed Irishman in uniform.

I looked at her, she looked at me and —nodded. In a jiffy I was beside her in the cab, and we were moving slowly down Broadway. For the first time that day I felt Christmas, and I could have thrown up my hat and shouted like a ten-year-old. Why, I was as proud and happy as the story-writers tell us nowadays kings ought to be, and aint. I thought of the fat rolls of gold-notes in my pocket and wanted to buy up everything. If she had said so I would have bargained then and there for the blamed little island itself!

"Where shall I tell him to go first?" I asked her when we reached the next corner.

"You want toys, don't you?" she said, with a little start, as if she had been dreaming.

"Well, I want something for the boys," I answered.

"Then tell him Bond's, in Sixth Avenue. I think we can find what you want there," she nodded.

Ten minutes later I was piloting her through the storm-doors of Bond's. Gee, it's a city in itself, that shop. You can buy everything there from a flying-machine to a clothes-pin, or from a Marie Antoinette bed to a can of soup.

"Toys, please," Kate told the floor-walker. He smiled and said, "entire fifth floor, ma'am, take elevator," and bowed us away, with a lordly sweep of his hand. He was a nice little thing, but I couldn't help wishing that the boys were there to see him.

We reveled in toys. And Kate, who had been a little stiff and distant at first, in spite of the kid-hood stunt, now grew flushed and chummy, and waxed enthusiastic over the merits of a certain hobby-horse for Nick.

"I think it would be the very thing for him," she cried. "Of course a large boy wouldn't want it, I guess, but for Nick—You said he was the smallest of them?"

"Yes, he is," I nodded, truthfully enough.

"Well, it's a lovely toy, but expensive, you know," she said, her shabbily gloved hand stroking the thing's wooden neck. Gosh, talk about your sweetness wasted on the desert air! "Will it wear well, do you know?" she asked, turning to the saleswoman.

The saleswoman replied that it would "be there for the little one's grandchildren," and Kate brightened at the very idea. I hate to think what Nick would have done could he have heard the conversation.

"We'll take it," I said. "Have it put in our hansom, at the door, will you?"

"But really—" began Kate, when I silenced her by reminding her how she had said it was best so, and that she always took her things home in her cab.

"Now is there anything else I can show you?" asked the saleswoman. "Something nice for a little girl, or an older boy, or a baby, perhaps?"

"No, nothing," Kate answered, with a frown.

"But there's still Joe and French and Pete and Bill and Oscar," I reminded her.

Whereupon the saleswoman, a slim person with a big pompadour and little eyes, giggled nervously.

"Gracious me!" she declared.

"What do you want for—for Billy?" Kate asked, and the ice began to form all around us. Gee, and I had been patting myself on the back because of the thaw but a minute before.

"Suppose we get a—a something nice for him," I suggested.

"How old is he, may I ask?" inquired the saleswoman politely.

I coughed behind my hand, and Kate stooped to examine a Noah's Ark.

"I—I'm not quite sure," I gasped.

"Oh-h, Billy is older than Nick," explained Kate airily, still dotty over the Ark. "Older but small for his age. Perhaps he'd like a sled?"

"How about a mechanical autymobeel?" ventured the saleswoman, eager to please.

We compromised on a velocipede—and Bill's weight is three hundred pounds! But Frenchy got the sled, and the Noah's Ark was decided upon as "something cute" for Joe. The cutest thing Joe had ever been handed before this was a bullet in his back by Mexican Juan—Savvy?

We had bought something now for everybody but Oscar and Pete, and we had been kind of rushing it, too, I thought. Why at the rate we had been going, our shopping expedition would be over in an hour's time, and I had counted on an entire afternoon with the Lady! For Pete's gift, then, I determined to take an hour at least, but she killed this directly by pouncing upon a pair of ice-skates as "the very thing!" They wouldn't have gone on Pete Jeffrey's ears!

"And now Oscar," she said, once more rosy and smiling. "Let's see—what would you suggest?"

"Oscar's terrible hard to please," I ventured. "We'll have to exert our gray matter here. The cost is no object, but it must be carefully chosen—carefully and wisely."

"I have it! The very thing!" she cried triumphantly.

"What?"

"A Shetland pony. You sell them here, don't you?" she asked the woman.

"Oh, yes; in the basement," came the ready answer.

"But we couldn't take a Shetland pony home in a hansom," I objected.

"You might tie him on behind?" suggested the saleswoman, unwilling to lose the sale.

"Why of course!" smiled Kate, clapping her hands. "Anything goes at Christmas-time!"

Honest, some women would find a way to smuggle Lucifer into Paradise. But when I have made up my mind, wild horses can't make me change it, and Kate is far from being a wild horse, although I can't say so much for the be-pompadoured party.

"We wont take the Shetland pony," I said quietly. I folded my arms, leaned up against a tow-haired doll, and over she goes—the damage is mine!

"I think you had better taken the pony, Dan," Kate said, as the pieces were laid aside to be sent to the hansom with our other purchases.

But still I shook my head. Then she leaned over and whispered so that the woman might not hear:

"What an idiot I am, but I hadn't thought of the cost! I didn't think how much money you were really spending."

"Oh, that's all right," I said, thinking of them Oregon apples. Of course they were worth the price we asked, but I would never have given it.

"It really doesn't matter?" she cried; "honest?"

"Not an iota! Spend all you want!"

She clasped her hands with a little sigh which made me wonder if it were overly hard to get newspaper work to do in New York. I hadn't thought of that before.

"Oh, I just love to buy things!" she cried. "All my life long I have wanted to buy and buy, just right and left, without ever having to stop to ask if I could afford it. That's not branding me a spendthrift, Dan, but a woman. And I don't want the things for myself, but for others— Well, what about Oscar, eh?"

"I guess we'll take the pony," I answered. "Only I think we'd better break our iron-clad rule and have him delivered. Even with the Oregon mud still clinging to my shoes, I tremble to think of driving up Broadway with a bit of live-stock tied to our cab."

And so Oscar was settled, and the boys' Christmas gifts were bought. May I say here, in a sort of parenthesis, that none of those blooming presents ever saw Oregon? But they did, too, or at least the Noah's Ark did. Kate kind of cottoned to that thing from the first, you know.

It was getting late in the afternoon now, and as we came out of Bond's, Sixth Avenue was one blaze of arc-lights. And the side street which we drove through was lined with booths, gay with tinsel and paper favors and penny postcards. The pavements were still thronged—are the New York streets ever anything else? At the corner stood a colored man with a barrel of Virginia mistletoe; around him, knee-deep, were holly boughs, red with berries.

"Oh!" cried Kate, and then again, "Oh, how lovely!"

I called to the cabby to stop and the old man came running to us with his choicest bits. We piled the floor at our feet high with the red-berried holly, and Kate's arms folded around ten dollars' worth of "real Virginia misletoe, suh." At least the old man carried away a ten dollar gold-certificate and Kate and I drove on with the evergreens.

"You must be a fairy godmother!" she cried, as we turned into Broadway.

"Say, that's an awful thing to call a fellow," I returned.

She laughed as gaily—and far more sweetly—than any lark ever sang in an Oregon apple orchard. And we've got some larks, too—eh, what? Quit your kidding—that aint intended for a pun at all!

Then as we approached the Knickerbocker—where the same men are always holding up the same corner, it seems—I said, half hesitating like, for I didn't know how she'd take it:

"Now to make a fine day finer still, we want to go to supper together and then do a show. Are you with me?"

Her arms held tighter to the Virginy mistletoe, but she shook her head and all the gay, happy light died out of her pretty eyes.

"Now don't say that!" I begged.

"I—must," she returned earnestly.

"You'll spoil my day—and heaven knows I've got little enough to look forward to to-morrow," I cried. "Why we've had a bully afternoon, haven't we? I've enjoyed every minute of it—and there weren't many minutes. To-morrow's Christmas and you're the only soul in all New York I know. Say, don't throw me down like this. Come along like a real pal."

"I can't," she said, shaking her head slowly.

"Why?" I blurted out like the idiot I am.

She flashed me one look, and my face went brick-red directly.

"You know why," she said. "Oh, you've been wonderfully kind, and I've had the loveliest day I've known for months, but—I—I can't go with you to supper and the theatre."

"You can, you sure can," I emphasized stoutly. "I wouldn't ask you if I thought you couldn't."

Then she leaned towards me and whispered:

"I haven't anything to wear—only what I've got on, Dan. I—I'd disgrace you!"

"Just show me the fellow who says so!" I said.

"That's an awful confession for a girl to make, I know, but—this is my best and only," she half-smiled.

"Well, what's the matter with that?" I fairly shouted. "Don't you look like a queen as you are?"

We went. And while I had been counting all along on writing home about how I was ushered into some gilded lobster-palace with Miss Flossie La Floss on my arm, here I found myself entering Childs' with a girl who hadn't a second frock to her name.

We ordered together—it was safer for me. But, Kate wasn't any more for highfalutin' dishes than I am, and we turned down fried chicken because it had *"à la"* tacked to it.

But I do love batter-cakes. As we sat there together I couldn't help wondering if she knew how to make 'em—

funny idea, wasn't it? And potatoes in their jackets and broiled oysters and tapioca pudding are all pretty good and appetizing. Kate ordered olives and celery and lettuce, too, but I don't eat grass. Still she explained that they are mighty healthful and says she "loves them," so I guess I could get accustomed to them in time.

We sat there at the table for fully an hour, sandwiching the supper with plenty of conversation. People came and went, women with packages, all sizes, shapes and colors, men with more of 'em, mostly coming out of their papers. Once a man and woman came in together and they had a Christmas-tree. The scent of the pine made me fairly homesick and I turned to Kate, all upset in a moment.

"Don't you ever get a longing for home?" I asked, solemn as an owl.

"New York is my home," she answered simply.

But, shucks, New York aint anybody's home; a lot of people live there, in flats and on benches, but show me one in four million who don't think of some green spot, miles away, as "home!"

Then Kate laid down her knife and fork, I slipped the thin-faced, bright-eyed waitress a silver dollar, and we were ready for the theatre.

"But where are we going eh?" I asked, as we turned up Broadway. "You know more about it than I do—pick your choice."

It was half past seven, and Christmas eve. Snow had begun to fall, too, and the asphalt was carpeted with spotless white. The air was cold and crisp and a pretty good substitute for the bracing Oregon weather, while the noise of the town came to us almost subdued and musical as it always is when there's snow a-whirling.

"Let's walk?" suggested Kate.

"Where?" I asked, but quite ready and eager to go anywhere—with her.

"Why, just let's walk along and look and listen and talk as the fancy strikes us," she laughed. "It's a wonderful old street, this Broadway, you know. And we'll read the theatre signs and when we see one we like, we'll go in there. How's that?"

"Bully!" I emphasized.

Well, sir, we started down near Joe Weber's and walked clean to the Circle. Then we took a taxi and drove three blocks to the Century. On the electric sign that hung in front of that house we had read:

THE GIRL WHO WENT WEST

Somehow both Kate and I wanted to know the ins and outs of her journey. "It's—not a musical play, you know," she told me, before I got the seats.

I wonder if she's a mind-reader and had a hunch that at one time I thought all New York centered at Broadway and Thirty-ninth Street?

"I like a good drama," I nodded.

"This is a comedy," Kate smiled.

"Well, I'm clean crazy about them!" I returned, not getting cornered anyway she put it.

Bless me if the blooming "comedy" wasn't all about Oregon and apples! To be sure the scene-painter didn't seem to know much about one nor the author about the other, but the play had the greatest ending you ever saw. Just before the last curtain fell the *Girl Who Went West* said to the *Man Who Lived There*—"Yes." For the life of me I couldn't understand why she hadn't said this in the first act, but Kate explained that if she had there wouldn't have been any "comedy." Anyway it was a Jim-dandy show.

When we came out I asked Kate how she had liked it all, and what she thought of Oregon and apples.

"It was all lovely—just splendid," she said.

And take it from me, if she liked the stage brand, what in the world would she do if she ever saw the genuine articles?

It was still snowing outside and Broadway was as thick with people as Frenchy's conversation is with blue lightning. I think, perhaps Kate was tired, because when I called a cab she offered no resistance but let me help her into it without a word. Indeed we rode for a dozen blocks in stony silence, but I don't think either one of us was very busy watching the sights. I know I was doing some pretty tall thinking myself and it seemed that she was pretty thoughtful too.

Then suddenly I remembered and said to her:

"Where shall I tell the man to drive us?"

And, do you know, it seemed mighty funny *not* to know her address? Why it seemed as if I had known her forever and ever, and not just ten hours by the clock. But when you come to think of it, time aint measured by the clock when you are learning to know a person. It's only you two that really count.

She told me her street and I repeated it to the cabby, but I didn't know until we stopped at the door of her boarding house what a cheap, wretched little hole it was. Why you couldn't have got a good-sized Oregon apple-tree in the street to save your life! How the sun ever finds its way there has got me guessing.

"Kate," I cried, as she ran up the steps. "not here!"

"Yes," she said, with a proud little nod of her head. "Why not?"

"Nothing—or rather, it aint like you. It's—pretty mean and cheap and common," I told her boldly.

"Then it *is* like me," she declared. "Honor bright, what do you think of me?"

"Do you remember what that chap said to the girl, to-night at the theatre?" I asked, and my voice got all choked up and husky. "He said—well, our language aint the same, maybe, but the sentiment is. From the moment I saw you to-day I knew you were meant for me. I can't spout poetry, and do the balcony stunt, maybe, but if you could only feel this feeling, here, deep inside o' me—Why, you're the only girl I've ever seen I'd close my house to the boys for!"

She shook her head, and a sigh that seemed to come from her very heart struck me between the eyes like an unexpected blow.

"Why, you don't even know who I am—I don't know your name!" she said, a trifle unsteadily. "When you spoke to me at the Knickerbocker—"

"I was lonely, so blamed homesick for a kind word and a friend's hand that I was desperate," I tried to explain. "Then I saw you. You knocked me out with a single glance and I would have given my right hand to know you. There seemed no other way but the one I took. If I did wrong, then I humbly ask your forgiveness, and of course I'll say good-by."

"I was lonely, too," she faltered.

"It wasn't so wrong, was it?" I cried, but she drew her hand away when I tried to take it.

"Yes, it was," she returned. "But that can't undo what has been done. I could start now and continue until morning telling you why I went with you to-day. I have said I was lonely. And I had spent my last penny for cab-hire when I met you. I hadn't an idea where my next meal was coming from—"

"Kate—for God's sake, you can't mean that!" I cried.

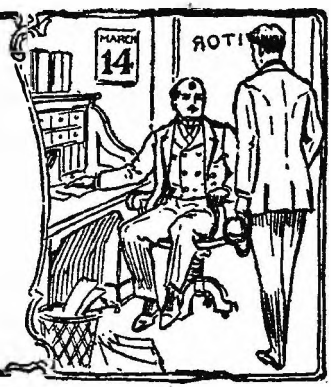
"But I do," she smiled wanly. "And my name's not Kate at all. It's—a terrible name, listen—" and she whispered the name that had been my mother's—"Ann," without the fashionable "e."

Then we talked for a little there on the doorstep, with the snow falling all around and the roar of Broadway in our ears. Presently, above the din, we heard the bells in a near-by church ring out for midnight—and Christmas! But we'll never stand there in the snow again and listen to the chimes, for next year, surest thing you know, we'll have Christmas together out in Oregon with the apples!

Only, do you know she never guessed until she saw 'em that the "boys" are my ranch hands, and that the youngest of 'em is thirty-odd? And neither was she wise until the next day that she had promised to marry a man whose name she didn't know.

The Telautograph

By
NEWTON A. FUESSLE



THE telautograph had had a strange fascination for John Danforth ever since he had gone to work as a newspaper reporter in New York and had been assigned to police headquarters. The ingenious instrument's handless pen followed automatically the motion of the lieutenant's pen in a distant room of the great building as he scribbled bulletins of arrests, fires, altercations, motor and street car collisions, drunken rows, murders and kindred events. Bulletin after bulletin the weird instrument scrawled, hundreds every day, wheezing and droning as it worked, resting neither night nor day, a mercilessly driven slave of modern science, transcribing the continuous, endless history of the crime and tragedy of Greater New York.

The electrical instrument had become almost human, somehow, to Danforth as he watched it night after night, scanning its long roll of paper for events of importance. It had sent him forth innumerable times with half a score of other men on the "dog watch," eager for excitement, snorting for sensation, hurrying through the night to the scene of an occurrence which held forth the promise of a big story. Sometimes the telautograph snarled as it wrote, as though in tired resentment of the incessant toil exacted by its subtle, dominant currents of electricity.

Boys employed by the various newspapers swarmed about the high desk in front of the singular contrivance, copying into their big books the successive bulletins for the perusal from time to time of the reporters who made their headquarters in the dingy brick building across the street, connected by private wires with the editorial hives of their newspapers. In this moth-eaten, old-fashioned building the reporters played many a game of "craps," poker, and pinochle as the hours dragged by. Occasionally, one of them, puffing at pipe or cigaret, his face hardened by rough experience in this difficult game of life, who in his time perhaps had been a war correspondent, entered the room in which the telautograph was mutely telling its story. He would grin patronizingly at the rough jest of one of the youngsters, growl cynically at the fact that nothing had "broken," and stroll down to the corner for a drink at the "gin mill" where one "Henaree," called thus in the thick German accents of his father, drew beer from the coils and mixed irreproachable high-balls.

Danforth, unlike the older men on the police assignment, spent a good deal of time scanning the written words of the telautograph. The thing to him was uncanny. The instrument, forever writing its tale of poverty, mishap, vice, and crime, made him feel and understand something of the vastness of the city. Sensitive, imaginative, quick to absorb impressions, he caught vivid flashes of the big city's underworld as he stood by the queer machine and watched and waited.

"What's the good word?" asked Slate, a middle-aged reporter, as he entered the room.

"Not a t'ing," replied one of the youngsters. "No woik fer youse fellers yet," he added in his Bowery accent.

"Hello Danforth," continued Slate, perceiving the young reporter. "What are you sticking around here for? We'll get all the dope across the street if anything breaks. Walk over to the Dutchman's with me and I'll buy you a drink."

"How's everything?" asked Danforth, as they started for the saloon.

"Rotten," said Slate. "Lord, how I hate this confounded town. Believe me, if I could only get my hands on a bunch of coin, I'd certainly blow this burg quick. I'd go back to where I came from and *live*. I'm from the west—from God's country. They live like white men back there, take it from me, son!"

"The west is all right," replied Danforth. "I'm from there myself. But I don't see that it's necessarily impossible to live like a white man here."

"Isn't it? *Isn't it!*" said the older man with the hint of a sneer. "You don't know anything about New York—yet."

"I know that New York is the place for opportunity, for the big chances, for the things in life worth while—more so by far than the west."

"*Is* it?" interrupted Slate. "I thought so myself—once. At first New York gets into the blood like a drug. Your head swims. You can't see things in their right values. Everything is distorted. You think the place is *it*. But all that wears off after a while, and you find that New York is the same as any other city—only worse and more of it."

"How do you mean? demanded Danforth, quick to defend the city which had for so long been the city of his dreams, his longings, his yearnings.

"I mean," rejoined the other, "just that. What's the value to me, for instance, of the electric blaze on Broadway, the enormous theatre district, the procession of bubbles, the cafés, everything that drags people here like bugs to an electric light? What do I get of it? A little flat up in Harlem, a crowd of wild maniacs twice a day on the subway, one devil of a time paying the landlord and the grocer, and a wife and a couple of kiddies who are sick half of the time for the want of decent air and space to move around in."

The youth was silent. He had no ready words for this hopeless, bitter indictment of the city which had drawn him irresistibly to itself. He could not tell this discouraged, disappointed man of middle age that he, Danforth, with his youth, inordinate ambition to succeed, hope, and capacity for tireless work, proposed to wring from the city the fulfillment of his ambitions.

"Beer—two times," said Slate to the man behind the bar. "Luck," he said, beginning to drink. "There's nothing to it, I tell you," he continued. "I feel badly every time I see a young fellow like you break in here. They all wake up—after it's too late. Unless you've got genius or an enormous drag, you'll be like the rest of us one of these days—down and out."

"I'm not a genius and I haven't got a drag," replied Danforth. "But at that," he added resolutely. "I'm going to take a chance."

"Well, God help you," said the other. "When you're my age, you'll remember what I've told you."

They left the saloon and strolled back to headquarters.

"Did I tell you," continued Slate, "that the little wife has got pneumonia?"

"Is that a fact? I'm sorry," said Danforth.

"Yes she's in a pretty bad shape, I'm afraid. That's one of the things I meant a little while ago," he continued soberly. "Up where we live, sickness stalks the year around. And I'm down at rock bottom all the time financially. I can never get ahead of the game, somehow, nor even with it. You'll see, after you get married, if you ever do."

Slate paused. After a moment he continued in a different tone. "I don't mean to whine, son. But what I've gone through in the last few days has pretty nearly taken away my nerve."

"I'm sorry," said Danforth simply, but with deep feeling. His whole heart went out to this man in trouble. And suddenly a thought occurred to him, and he continued: "Do you need any money? I've got a few dollars here that aren't working and I wish you'd let me lend them to you if you need them."

"It's mighty decent of you, old man, but I couldn't think of letting you do that," said Slate quickly.

"Why not? Take it," commanded Danforth.

"All right then. But I hate to let you do this: I'll get it back to you as soon as I possibly can," said Slate, accepting the proferred greenbacks.

Slate's eyes were moist as he hurried into the dingy building. Danforth crossed the street to headquarters. He was in no mood to listen to the poker and dice conversation of the gamesters to-night or to join the play. He wanted to think. He was glad he had performed his act of generosity. The hopelessness of the other's view-point, the bleakness of his picture of home—these had sunk deeply into the younger man's soul.

Home! As the word went weaving through Danforth's mind, a mental picture sprang into place before him, a memory, a discarded hope. Back over two years' time, back over leagues of travel, his thoughts sped. He saw a little town, its most imposing house, and a girl. He saw himself seated with her in the great house. The luxury of its furnishings contrasted strangely with his own cramped and uninviting abode at the present time in New York. Vividly he recalled the swinging divan, nothing like which had ever been seen in the little town before James Humphrey had imported it. Also, back into the reporters' memory came trooping vivid recollections of Persian hangings, Oriental rugs, costly paintings, heavy oak chairs and tables.

And now he recalled a memorable evening, two years ago. He was seated in the exquisite parlor with Orrel Humphrey, the only daughter of the man of wealth and importance, the girl who had promised to marry him. Often had he gone over the conversation of that evening in memory. To-night, as he paused and stood alone on the dingy little East Side Street in front of the police headquarters, he could see Orrel Humphrey's eyes challenging him to combat. He was sitting near her, deep in his chair, his eyes scowling moodily into vacancy from beneath their tangled brows.

In strangely vivid detail he recalled Orrel's face as she had appeared to him that night—her arched eyebrows slightly elevated at their inner corners, the narrow, cleanly cut nose, the eyes dark with a smoldering magnetism, her mouth a scarlet bow. He had sat studying her face, searching for something to criticize. He remembered how he had felt inclined that night to cavil because her beauty had no faults, but rather the flawless surface of a highland tarn with never a cloud to give it more striking definition or finer character.

Once more Orrel Humphrey's words that night recurred to him. "In that case," she had said quietly. "I'm afraid our engagement will have to be broken off."

He had felt a bitter resentment against the even, unperturbed tones of her statement.

"Very well, then," he had replied quietly, "as you will. It is impossible for me to make such complete and sweeping changes in my plans. Can't you understand, Orrel? I must live my life as I believe I ought to. Your father has no right to dictate what I shall and what I shall not do. Nor has he any right to dictate to you."

"My father insists that what he asks you to do will be for your own good—and for mine. I agree with him, John. Doesn't he offer to do everything for you—if you will only stay here and not go to New York?"

"Everything!" Danforth had replied with scorn he could not repress. "My choice of a job on a small town daily or a job in a small town bank! What sort of a career would either offer a man with red blood, ambition, ability—if I do say it—and the determination to break into the big game?"

"Doesn't father offer you everything he himself has?" demanded Orrel with spirit. "And hasn't he everything a man could want? Hasn't he power, money, friends, everything? Is it likely that he would have had these things had he gone to New York. Would New York have sent him to Congress? Can you blame him for wanting me to stay here where I can be near him? Could he do more than to promise that all these things will be yours—and mine?"

"To love and to respect one's parents," exclaimed Danforth impatiently, "is all right. But this attitude of yours, dear, is worship! It's no use, Orrel. I've

got to make my own way. I don't want the things that your father offers me. If I gave up going to New York, and gave up my ambition to go through the grind of the best newspaper training on earth, and my ambition to write, things I have been dreaming of and planning all along, I'd hate myself all the rest of my life. And in the end you would hate me too, Orrel. What do I care for money, politics? I want to live, to work, to fight, to struggle, to play the great big newspaper game in that great big, vital, throbbing city, New York. Oh, I wish I could make you see it."

Orrel had made no reply.

"I'm going to New York," continued Danforth. "But I'm going to keep on loving you just the same—even though our engagement is broken and your father says we cannot write to each other. I'm going to prove to you that I'm right, that I can succeed in my own way, alone, unhelped. Then I'm coming back here and get you."

Into New York Danforth had plunged, afire with enthusiasm, hot with ambition, energized with hope and faith; and, braced by the tonic quality of these, he had faced the enormous city of his hopes and dreams. Reinforcing his determination to succeed, was his tender devotion to Orrel Humphrey.

Difficulties had assailed him from the start. His college training in writing themes, pursued under the guidance and encouragement of kindly professors, had stood him in little stead in his ambition to execute fiction for the magazines. Rejections and rebuffs overwhelmed him, and his typewriter, clicking far into the night, as many a resolute youth's typewriter has clicked before, failed to weave into marketable form the vague, inadequate fancies which were born in his brain.

At the newspaper offices of Park Row and elsewhere he had failed also either to sell his offered articles or to secure employment as a reporter. The applicants for reportorial jobs, he discovered, were as the sands on the seashore. He had neither experience nor influence, and men with both frequently found it difficult to secure work.

His small patrimony, in the meantime, had melted away, and he found work at length in a department store. He was put back of the book counter, and consequently into a fortunate atmosphere for the spark which still glowed within him. One day a fortuitous occurrence brought him a new acquaintance. It was the night city editor of one of the great New York newspapers; and a month later he gave Danforth a job as cub reporter on his staff. And so, once more the city, which to him had grown bleak and hopeless, began to laugh, whispered that he might hope anew.

For over a year, Danforth had borne the rebuffs of the city, his ambition had lagged, his hope had slowly been diminishing. During this period, Orrel Humphrey had receded from the object of his former strong devotion into only a memory. Despairing of ever being able to prove to her that his conduct, in defiance of both her and her father, had been that of wisdom, and with the hope that he should ever be able to marry her ground out of him by adversity, Danforth had striven sternly to banish even the memory of her.

But sometimes, as to-night, there in front of police headquarters, the memory of Orrel, amid her exquisite luxuries of life, had darted mockingly back into his brain. Unconsciously, at such times, he found himself comparing his present uninviting hall bedroom abode, where despair, vague regrets and longings dwelt with him, with the things which would have been his had he obeyed the command of James Humphrey and the request of Orrel. Yet, at such moments, it was not the luxury of the Humphrey mansion with its ease and comforts that appealed to him in and for themselves. These were rather the setting for the most perfectly beautiful girl he had ever known. Sometimes he would laugh bitterly at the boyish ambitions which had made him relinquish her love, a love which he had won amid strong competition. Sometimes, like a sweet fire, the memory of Orrel would leap into his heart and flow through all the veins and fibres of his being.

Again, on the contrary, a vague something told him with steady voice that abiding happiness could not have been vouchsafed him through marrying Orrel. The very perfection of her beauty, its

flawless contour, he argued, lacked a depth. It was only a deceptive surface. No clouds had crossed her life to define her being with sturdiness of character. At such times he believed that his departure had been an inspiration. To have remained and married her would have been only to make the inevitable discovery in the end that she was only a piece of beautiful bric-a-brac, lacking that depth which is soul, and purchased at too enormous a price.

To-night, as he stood in the shadows gazing at the silent street, occasionally catching the muffled voices of the crap-shooters in the adjacent building, it was this latter picture of Orrel Humphrey which hung before him. After a while he turned abruptly, re-entered the big stone building, and made his way back to the telautograph room.

The instrument was droning softly to itself, muttering and murmuring as it wrote. Back and forth over the big city leaped the precinct numbers, indicating where the night's drama of crime and mishap was unfolding itself. "Drunk and disorderly," "destitute," "altercation," "fire," "knife wound"—thus ran the story of the night's dull police events. There was nothing to capture the attention, nothing to draw a reporter into the chase for news, only the unimportant little episodes, the inconsequent little tragedies of life weaving their drab fabric into the persistent tale of the telautograph.

Suddenly, as he watched it, Danforth caught his breath. The room around him seemed to whirl, the buzz of the instrument seemed to grow into a mighty clamor, the written words before him seemed to be leaping forth at him and lacerating the tissues of his brain. For a minute he stood motionless. Then he crowded brusquely out past the swarm of bulletin boys, who stared as he went, and forth into the cool night. He swung into a mechanical trot in the direction of the subway station. He could not think connectedly. He kept repeating, dully, bewilderedly, the words of the telautograph's last bulletin.

Fifteen minutes later he emerged from the roaring subway and hurried in the direction of Bellevue Hospital. The night clerk at the desk knew the reporter, consulted a book of record and answered Danforth's rapid questions.

"Yes. Bad fire at the Manhattan Settlement. Fourteen of the injured are here. Yes, she's here. Hands and arms scorched. Nothing serious, though. Friend of yours? Sure thing. I'll send you right up."

Into one of the wards a nurse led John Danforth. At one of the iron beds she paused. Against the pillow the reporter beheld a face, modelled in singular beauty, very pale, and strangely flawless. But there was a certain maturity about it, a womanliness, unmistakable signs of character, indications that clouds had drifted across her life. Their record was written upon her face. The young woman opened her eyes.

"John!" she said in a low tone.

"Orrel!" exclaimed the youth.

At the sound of his voice, the girl started. It was as though she had expected no reply to the name which had crossed her lips—

When John Danforth left the hospital, he had completely forgotten that he was working on a newspaper. It was daylight when he reached his room. Hardly had he entered than the telephone bell in the adjacent hallway rang. The familiar sound, connotative of numerous calls from his newspaper office, brought him to himself with a start.

"That you, Danforth? This is Slate. Where the devil have you been? Drunk?"

"Yes," answered Danforth.

"Well, never mind," answered Slate. "Turn in and get some sleep. I just wanted to tell you that I protected you on that settlement fire story. I told your office that you were sick and gave them the dope. Wondered what the devil had become of you. And say, old man, I've just come home and wanted to tell you that the little wife is much better. Good-by."

Unlike others who are drunk, Danforth found it difficult to go to sleep, for his drunkenness was the drunkenness of a great happiness.

Later in the morning he proceeded again to the hospital, reading the morning papers as he went. The important story of the day was that of the fire at

the settlement. And the big feature, leading a score of lesser features, was the heroic work of one young woman, who, amid extreme risks, had borne several little children down the ladder to safety. The young woman was Orrel Humphrey. For nearly a year she had been one of the leading workers at the settlement. Thus ran the stories.

Danforth choked as he read the printed page. In his heart he had accused Orrel Humphrey of being entirely materialistic, of lacking character, soul!

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"And all this time," said Danforth, "you were in New York—and I never knew."

"I didn't want you to know," said Orrel. "I didn't want you to see me again—until I had partially made up, by useful labor, for the selfish demand, the impossible demand, I made of you back there at home."

"Orrel!"

"It was horrible of me," she continued, "to want you to do as father asked. It was horrible of me to join him in asking you to do it. When you were gone I began to see, to understand. And then I wanted to write you and ask you to forgive me if you could. But I could not even bring myself to do that—not until I had done something—something a little worth while. And so I came here to New York. What a wonderful place this is! What chances it offers one to do something that counts a little! What a good, wonderful place!"

"Yes," said Danforth, "what a wonderful place it is! We are going to stay here—together."

"Yes—together," murmured Orrel.

That night Danforth went to police headquarters as usual. Standing in front of the telautograph, he gazed wistfully at the strangely fascinating instrument as it droned and wheezed at its task. Someone entered. It was Slate.

"Hello Slate," exclaimed Danforth. "I want to thank you, Slate, for protecting me on that story last night. It was mighty fine of you."

"Don't mention it," replied the older man.

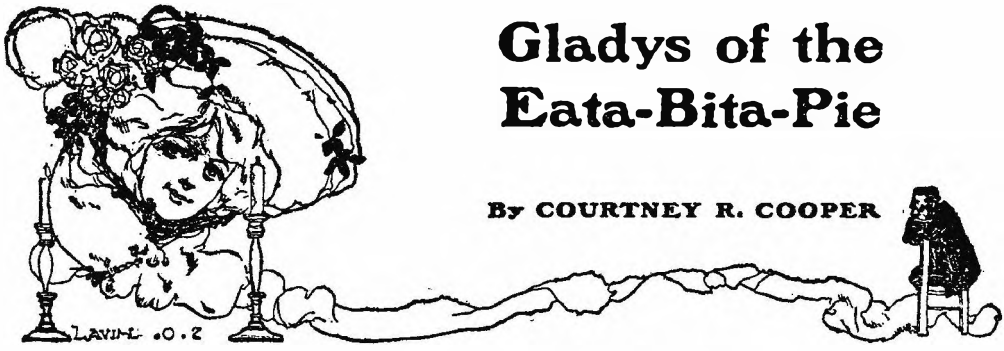
"How is Mrs. Slate?"

"Much better, thanks. The doctor says she's completely out of danger. There was a quick change for the better late last night."

"I'm awfully glad."

"By the way, son," said Slate, with a little hesitation, "I want to apologize to you for the way I was knocking New York last night. I was down in the mouth, sore, ready to cavil at anything. I want to say to you now, my boy, that New York is the greatest place in the world. Somehow, I haven't managed to make good. But that's no criterion whatever, because it's been my own fault pretty much. It was rotten of me to discourage you the way I did last night, and I've been disgusted with myself all day. I want you to buckle in and win. You can do it. And I'm going to help you in every way I can. The man who can break into New York and make good is a big man, and there are big things here for him, believe me. New York demands the biggest and best there is in a man. If he's strong and worth while it makes him. If he's weak, it crushes him and tosses him aside. You can succeed, son. Go to it."

And there beside the mute recorder of the tragedies and failures of life, that weird instrument which nevertheless had brought into John Danforth's life the vital force of a great love, the two men gripped each other's hands in silence.



Gladys of the Eata-Bita-Pie

By COURTNEY R. COOPER

THE only way I happened to get mixed up in this thing was in sitting in the bleachers, as it were. Captain Whitby and I were together in the Philippines and so when he went into the police department, I just tagged along too. He got to be a captain and I was a turnkey, but he didn't seem to notice the difference in station. So after he got the tip on what was going to happen, he called me in to tell me about it.

"It's the big chair for me," he said—I remember now that it was just about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. "I've got it straight. I'm slated for the chief-ship—well, what the devil is that?"

Something had happened outside and just then the wagon man walked into the captain's office, trailing the prettiest bit of fluffiness I ever saw in my life. One of these fresh, right-off-the-tree kind, you know, and just about sixteen years old, as far as I could judge. She didn't look like anything we were used to handling down there at headquarters and I could see the Cap' straightening up right away and sort of burnishing his gold star with his sleeve, rather unconcerned like. We usually got 'em down there all rags and dirt, but this one looked like she'd just been to the cleaner's, the dressmaker's, the shoe shiner's and the beauty parlor.

I couldn't see much of her hair because she had one of these hats on that came down over her ears with a great big don't-you-dare-touch-me pink veil tied over it and under her chin. It seemed to me she must have a lot of clothes on because her automobile coat looked sort of fluffed out and balloony like. And she was mad, plumb doggoned mad about something. Every second or so she'd stamp a foot and stick out her lips and then a couple of tears would chase themselves down her cheeks without ruining her complexion a bit. I was strong for her right from the start. So was the Cap'.

The wagon man didn't act like he was doing such a beautiful job of police work either.

"Shopliftin'," he blurted and ducked out the door.

"'Tisn't so," she said real fretful, and bing! went that foot again. The Cap' swung around in his chair and looked her over.

"Now Big Blue Eyes," he began, "better not take it so hard. Come on and sit down and tell the captain all about it. Somebody been abusing you? What's your name?"

"Gladys."

"Gladys what?"

"Gladys Perry. But it's none of your old business what my name is. I want to go home. I'm just not going to stay here, so there!"

I never saw a woman so acrobatic with her feet. She must have had cork soles or was used to it, one of the two. I'd have hated to had the job of trying to wake her up in a park by the hotfoot route. Then she started to cry again.

Well, some way, the Cap' and I couldn't get used to all that bunch of clothes under the automobile coat. It looked kind of funny.

"Aint it hot with that coat on?" the

Cap' asked. "Better take it off, hadn't you?"

"No, I wont."

"Now Big Blue Eyes, come on. Be a nice little girl and take off your coat."

No sir, she wouldn't do it. The Cap talked nice to her and acted like a real gentleman, but it didn't do any good. Then he got nettled. Of course, he was gentle about it, but off came that coat and then both of us almost dropped through the floor.

That kid was a human department store. If there was anything she'd missed, the Cap' and I couldn't find it. She had fish hooks sewed to her shoulders and she had fish hooks sewed to her waist and her sleeves and her skirt and —well, she could have caught a whale if she'd wanted to. And on every one of these fish hooks there was something with the price mark still sticking to it. No, she wasn't a shop lifter. She was a whole flock of 'em.

It took about a minute for the Cap and I to get our breath. Then he kind of sank down in his chair and folded his hands while Gladys stood in the middle of the floor and bunched up her lips in a tantalizing way.

"Well there," she pouted. "Now I suppose I'm going to jail. That's just like you mean old men. You just look at people and because they don't seem just right you send them to the penitentiary and do everything else that's horrid. Oh, I've heard all about you. But just wait until papa knows what you've done!"

The Cap' looked at me and grinned.

"Oh dash it," he said, smoothing out his hair, waitress fashion. "Just wait 'till papa hears? Well, Blue Eyes, what will papa do to the mean old captain?"

It didn't feaze her.

"Well," she came right back and the icebergs in the air were as thick as molasses. "Well, he's gotten more than one policeman his job, and I suppose if he can get jobs, he can take them away too."

"Huh," chuckled the Cap', "where does he tend bar?"

Gladys was up in a minute and that foot was working again.

"That's an insult," she retorted. "My father never tended bar in his life. He's the Congressman from this district, if you please, and—oh, you just wait!"

Right then I pulled up my chair a bit closer and the Cap got interested. Maybe something was wrong, and yet here was this blooming department store on fish hooks staring us in the face. Gladys was busy with a lace handkerchief about the size of a peanut and then in a minute or two she starts again.

"Oh, you needn't look at me that way, like I was a murderer or something else just as bad. I'm a perfectly good, respectable girl, I'd have you know, and I'm a whole lot better than you ever were and—and—and—" Then her words got all twisted up with her tears and all I could make out was something about high school and Eata-Bita-Pie and "the girls" or something of the kind. The Cap' seemed sort of fussed too, so we waited for her to cool off. The heavy cloud passed after a bit and then there was just a drizzle of tears, so we began on her again.

"Well, I guess I've got to tell you," she said finally, "but don't you dare let it get into the papers. You wont, will you? You see, this is my last year in high school and so all the girls rushed me for the Beta Beta Pi sorority. Well, I went in and to-day, they initiated me. All the girls sewed fish hooks on me and then they started me out and I couldn't come back and be a member until I had filled up every one of those hooks from out of the store. I know it was just awful but we weren't going to keep the things. We were going to give them back just as soon as all the hooks were filled. And, oh, I was having just lots of fun and nearly the whole bunch of hooks had something on them when those horrid men up there in Mandorf's came along and arrested me. Yes sir, they arrested me right in the store and then they took me outside and made me—ride—down here—in a—patrol wagon. I never felt so disgraced in my life. I just wish I'd never seen the Beta Beta Pi's. And honest, if you'll just let me go, I'll never do anything like this again as long as I live. Honestly I wont, Captain. I'll never go near the old Beta chapter again. Oh, Captain, please, please, please let me go home."

Ever hear a pretty girl say "please"

the settlement. And the big feature, leading a score of lesser features, was the heroic work of one young woman, who, amid extreme risks, had borne several little children down the ladder to safety. The young woman was Orrel Humphrey. For nearly a year she had been one of the leading workers at the settlement. Thus ran the stories.

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Stageland

By CHARLES DARNTON
WITH CARICATURE ILLUSTRATIONS BY GORDON ROSS

THIS month Mr. Darnton writes of "The Blue Bird," "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," "The Concert," "The Little Damozel," "The Scandal," "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," and five musical comedies.

"THE BLUE BIRD" for happiness! That's what Maurice Maeterlinck tries to capture for young and old alike, and The New Theatre is doing its best to make his elusive idea visible and tangible through all the elaborate machinery of pantomime and spectacle. Since the first of October this poetic fairy play has been filling the opulent playhouse in Central Park West with thousands of grown folk eager to forget for a little while the pressure of material things and thousands of youngsters exclaiming with delight as they follow the strange adventures of *Tyltyl* and *Mytyl* in search of the *Blue Bird.*

Tyltyl and *Mytyl,* his little sister, are the children of a poor woodchopper, who, like many older and wiser people, learn that happiness often lies at home unnoticed while they range the world over in search of it. They wake up on Christmas eve to watch the children of the rich people across the way with their tree and toys and good things to eat, and while the two poor children are chattering and rejoicing in the good luck of these others, the fairy *Berylune* (looking very much like their old neighbor *Berlingot* next door) appears and asks them for "the grass that sings and the bird that is blue." The bird she positively must have for her little girl that's very ill. When the boy *Tyltyl* asks, "What's the matter with her?" the fairy answers, "We don't quite know;

JACOB WENDELL, JR., AS *Tylo,* THE DOG; GLADYS HULETTE AS *Tyltyl,* IRENE BROWN AS *Mytyl,* AND CECIL YAPP AS *Tylette,* THE CAT, IN "THE BLUE BIRD"

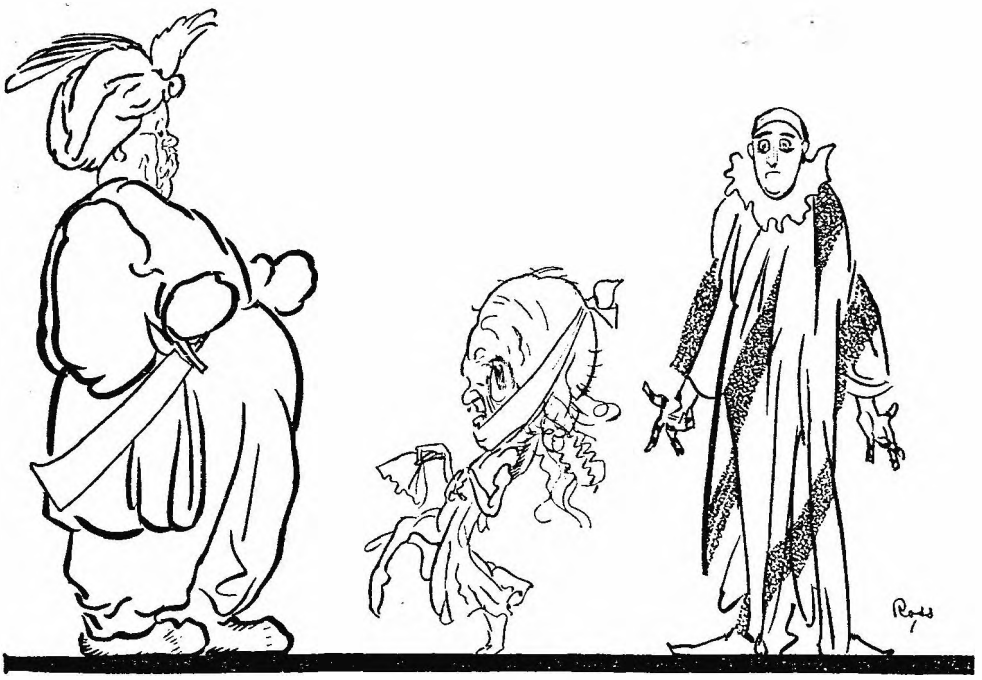
she wants to be happy." And there you have Maeterlinck's text in "The Blue Bird." He knows the disease of the twentieth century!

When the fairy has looked at *Tyltyl's* turtle dove, she decides—"It's not blue enough. You will have to go and find me the one I want." So, like all good fairies, she proceeds to fit them out with what they need on their quest. She gives *Tyltyl* a little green hat with a big diamond in the cockade. It's the diamond that makes people see the soul of things if they turn it the right way—and *Tyltyl* and *Mytyl* now see for the first time the soul dwelling in all the creatures and all the seemingly commonplace things of life. The *Hours* dance out of the clock as bewitching, laughing maidens; *Fire,* leaping and writhing, chases the little quartern-loaves of *Bread* and fights with *Water,* a limpid, streaming, weeping figure. *Milk* rises from the broken jug, a white, shy creature, while *Sugar* smiles persistently with sanctimonious politeness. The *Dog* and the *Cat* appear in their true form, the *Dog* a noisy, affectionate, clumsy, devoted creature, the *Cat,* smooth, ceremonious, hypocritical, and treacherous. *Light* appears last of all, a radiant maiden with glowing, ecstatic smile and a serene demeanor, for *Light*, of course, stands for the light of intelligence. While the children stand entranced, just as the saucepans and the linen are about to reveal their souls, a knock is heard at the door. It must be daddy and mummy! *Tyltyl* turns his diamond and all the things and creatures try to scamper back into their places. The fairy now tells them that all that accompany the children in their search for the *Blue Bird* will die at the end of the journey, but *Light* and the *Dog* choose none the less to go with the children. The others, when they find that it is indeed too late to get back into their proper places, are forced to go along; but under the *Cat's* leadership they conspire to prevent the children from finding the *Blue Bird,* since the end of the search will mean the end of their lives.

PEDRO DE CORDOBA AS *Fire,* AND GWENDOLEN VALENTINE AS *Water* IN "THE BLUE BIRD"

In the next scene in the fairy's palace the *Cat* constitutes himself the villain of the play by proving to the others that, even at the expense of the children's lives, they must keep them from capturing the *Blue Bird.* Only the *Dog* objects violently, but the conspiracy is interrupted by the entrance of the fairy *Berylune* who appoints *Light* the leader of the children. *Bread* cuts two slices out of his stomach to feed them, *Sugar* breaks off the five fingers of his left hand to furnish them with sweets, and off they start for the Land of Memory to see whether they may perhaps find the *Blue Bird* there.

In the Land of Memory where their *Grandfather,* and *Granny Tyl,* and all their little dead brothers and sisters dwell, they learn that every time we think of the dead, they awaken from their long sleep and see us again. They find too that *Granny's* blackbird has turned quite blue and when *Tyltyl* begs her for it she gives it to him gladly, though she adds rather doubtfully: "You know I don't warrant him, and if he's not the right color—" And, in fact, as they walk out into the gray fog that envelopes the Land of Memory, the bird has turned black again in *Tyltyl's* hand.



ROBERT E. HOMANS AS *Bread;* BERTA DONN AS *Cold-in-the-Head;* GEORGIO MAJERONI AS *Sugar* IN "THE BLUE BIRD"

They next reach the Palace of Night, a wonderful hall of austere splendor containing many doors that lead to various caverns. The *Cat* has forewarned *Night* of the coming of the children under the leadership of *Light,* and *Night* tries to fill the heart of *Tyltyl* with fear by telling him of her greatest terrors. But the undaunted little lad bravely faces the *Ghosts,* the *Sicknesses,* the *Wars,* the *Shades* and *Terrors,* the *Mysteries,* and all the other powers of darkness. Then the unemployed *Stars* escape from their prison and dance in their luminous draperies; the *Fireflies* and *Will-o'-the-Wisps* flit about and the Song of the *Nightingale* is heard, but still they do not find the *Blue Bird.* The great middle doors have not yet been opened, but *Night* warns *Tyltyl* to pause here where all the worst terrors of *Night* are lurking. Still the lad insists and as the lofty portals glide apart, a wonderful and unreal Dream-garden is revealed bathed in moonlight, where thousands of blue birds are hovering perpetually to the very limits of the horizon. The two children and their faithful *Dog* catch all they can, but as the curtain falls the *Cat* tells *Night* that they did not catch the one true *Blue Bird.* "They could not reach him, he kept too high" says the *Cat,* and you realize the author's meaning—that the one wonderful dream of happiness that is true among the many false ones is not meant for children.

Light next leads *Tyltyl* and *Mytyl* to the churchyard where the children look for the *Blue Bird* among the dead, only to learn that there are no dead, for when midnight strikes, the souls of the dead appear to them as beautiful flowers that spring up while the tombs disappear.

In the Kingdom of the Future, a really beautiful and wholly original idea is developed by Maeterlinck. The souls of the *Unborn Children* are shown awaiting the hour of their birth, while some are seen to set forth on their journey to the earth in a white and gold galley under the direction of *Father Time.* Here *Light* thinks she has found the *Blue Bird* for the children, but it escapes their grasp and they begin to feel with *Light* that—"It seems likely that the *Blue Bird* does not exist, or that he changes color when he is caged."

EDITH TALIAFERRO AS *Rebecca Rowena Randall,* AND MARIE L. DAY AS *Aunt Miranda Sawyer* IN "REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM"

As *Light* and the others say farewell to the children, the scene changes once again to the wood-chopper's cottage. You see *Tyltyl* and *Mytyl* asleep in their little beds, and when their mother bustles in to wake them on the morning of Christmas Day, they are amazed to find all things the same, for they are sure they have been gone a year. When old *Goody Berlingot* comes in, they greet her as the *Fairy Berylune.* She explains that her little sick girl has a sick child's notion for *Tyltyl's* turtle-dove and *Tyltyl* goes to fetch it from the cage. Then he finds that his bird is the *Blue Bird* they were looking for! "We went so far and he was here all the time! Oh, but it's wonderful!" cries the boy, and he sends his bird ("not *quite* blue yet, but that will come") to the little girl. Under the spell of her gift, she recovers but when *Tyltyl* tries to show her how to fed the bird, it escapes. Little *Tyltyl* turns to the audience with the words: "If any of you should find him, would you be so very kind as to give him back to us? We need him for our happiness, later on."

You will see from the story that "The Blue Bird" in one sense isn't a drama at all. The one really dramatic scene, the onslaught of the *Trees* and the animals on the children in the forest, has been omitted, probably because of its technical difficulties. What is left is just a rare fantasy, a series of scenes embodying a poet's dream of the quest for happiness. Maeterlinck has expressed anew the old idea that there's a soul in the meanest thing that lives, though with less humor than one might have wished. Humor, however, is not Maeterlinck's *forte,* and his lovely allegory has more pathos and poignant tenderness for humanity than laughter. Only once or twice, especially in the Land of the Future where the *Unborn Children* are at play at their destinies do the smiles banish the tears.

Mr. Cecil Yapp as the *Cat* bears off first honors by his remarkable, almost uncannily feline impersonation, while Miss Eleanor Moretti is a superb and glorious *Night* that delights one no less by her dark splendor than by her beautiful voice and delivery. Mr. Jacob Wendell, Jr., as the *Dog,* Miss Margaret Wycherly as *Light,* and Miss Eleanor Carey as *Granny Tyl* deserve mention also among the adult actors, while Miss Gwendolen Valentine compels admiration when she dances with liquid grace as *Water.*

Among the children, Miss Gladys Hulette makes *Tyltyl* a manly, unaffected little chap while Irene Brown is amusing as *Mytyl,* even though she does pose more than an old-fashioned leading lady. Little Berta Donn is so funny as *Cold-in-the-Head* that she's not to be sneezed at—she does it too well herself.

"Peter Pan" showed us how "popular" a children's play may become, and "The Blue Bird" bids fair to continue the good work of making more of us see life simply. Those who insist on being profound always may find added pleasure in picking out "symbols" and in "explaining" the allegory of the Belgian mystic to their heart's content.

Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm

ANOTHER delight, full of the spirit of youth and childhood, came in a dramatization of that classic for the young, "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," which Mrs. Kate Douglas Wiggin has now put on the stage with the aid of Miss Char-

lotte Thompson. Those of us who learned to know the delightful, whimsical little girl from Temperance, Maine, who suffered so many trials under *Aunt Miranda* for the education that was to help lift the mortgage from the farm, may have doubted the wisdom of putting this most original of heroines behind the footlights. But Mrs. Wiggin knew better and *Rebecca* on the stage lives and talks and recites her "poems" with all the captivating enthusiasm of the child in the book.

The play is of course absolutely unconventional from the point of view of technical construction. There is no "clash of wills," save when *Aunt Miranda's* vinegary temper clashes with *Rebecca's* fervid spirit. There is no plot save the little thread of plot that is spun between *"Mr. Aladdin"* and *Rebecca.* There is no dramatic climax, unless it be when *Rebecca* induces *Mr. Simpson* to give his "wife" the wedding-ring she has so long yearned for. You merely see little *Rebecca* driving up in the stage coach to the Red Brick House under *Jeremiah Cobb's* protection. You hear her when she tells *Jerry* her tale of woe after she has run away in the rainstorm and is tactfully induced to return. You watch her selling the famous soap to *Adam Ladd* and tumbling off the porch with surprise when he gives his magnificent order for three hundred and fifty cakes. You hear her win over the happy-go-lucky *Simpson* to a sense of his duty towards the wretched girl that isn't his wife, and you feel with her when, in her graduation gown and in all the flower of her seventeen years, she shyly begs *"Mr. Aladdin"* to wait. "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" may not be a great play, but it's a sunny, tender bit of life, full of humor and radiating love.

Miss Edith Taliaferro is so genuine, winsome, and sympathetic in the rôle of the impulsive *Rebecca* that half the success of the play must be laid to her. Never, surely, was so much of a play dependent on a seventeen year old girl, and she rises to her opportunity like a true artist.

Archie Boyd as the Yankee stage-driver *Jerry Cobb* is a genuine "Down East" type, while Sam Coit as the shiftless *Simpson* is another. Marie L. Day as the acidulous *Aunt Miranda,* Lorraine Frost as the faithful *Emma Jane Perkins,* and Ralph Kellard as *"Mr. Aladdin"* help to make the play a rare delight. In short, play, acting, and production are in complete harmony here—a consummation so uncommon as to deserve notice.

The Concert

DAVID BELASCO'S first dramatic offering of the year, "The Concert," offers this happy combination of excellence in play, acting, and staging. Herman Bahr is the German author of this witty satire on the musical temperament and Mr. Leo Ditrichstein is its adapter as well as its star. In transferring the scene from the old continent to New York City and the Catskills, Mr. Ditrichstein has very cleverly availed himself of the universal traits satirized in the original; and the follies of the women that adore "the Master," as

LEO DITRICHSTEIN AS *Gabor Arany* AND JANET BEECHER AS *Helen Arany* IN "THE CONCERT"

they call the irresistible Hungarian pianist *Gabor Arany,* seem as characteristic of New York as of Berlin or Vienna.

There is no doubt that Herman Bahr knows his ground and the great *Arany,* musical genius and lion among ladies, is said to be a composite portrait of several European musical celebrities still living. *Arany* has the hair of Paderewski, the fatal charm of Liszt who is no more, and other traits that are thought to suggest Richard Strauss. In his home in Central Park West *Arany* gives lessons at $10.00 an hour to admiring young women who pursue him with flowers and other attentions and feed full his vanity and love of excitement. His sensible and charming wife, an admirable example of the woman of mind, heart, and experience, accepts the situation philosophically, humors the eccentricities of genius, and plays chess with her spoiled baby of a husband to calm his nerves when his enthusiastic adorers have gone home.

KYRLE BELLEW AS *Maurice Ferioul* IN "THE SCANDAL"

Gabor has the pleasant habit of retiring to his bungalow in the Catskills at times with a favored pupil or admirer while ostensibly off to give a concert. On the day that he starts off once again to give one of those unexpected "concerts," a jealous pupil, *Eva Wharton,* suspecting that "the Master" is enjoying the company of her rival, *Mrs. Flora Dallas,* writes *Dr. Dallas* an anonymous note announcing that his wife has gone off with *Arany* on the noon train for the Catskills, and then informs *Mrs. Arany* of what she has done.

Dr. Dallas proves a husband of an unusual sort for he calls on *Arany* with the note and finding that he is out, shows it to the wife. *Helen Arany's* perfervid denial of her husband's guilt only leads the doctor to say philosophically that he means to let his wife be happy with *Arany,* if he finds that they are really serious in their love for each other. To find this out the doctor and *Mrs. Arany* start on the next train for the Catskills—and here the fun begins.

The first act has merely been a prelude to the brilliant comedy scene that follows in which you see the process of disenchantment taking place first in *Mrs. Dallas* and then in *Arany. Mrs. Dallas,* a romantic, silly little creature whose egotism has been fed by the devotion of her husband, learns with horror that she is not the first to be honored by "the Master's" attention. These "concerts" have been going on for twenty years, and "Flossie" dissolves in tears at the words. But *Arany* knows the game of hearts and when he feelingly plays *"Warum?"* on the piano, *Flossie* creeps back to forgive him. Their reconciliation is cut short, however, by the appearance of the caretaker who announces the coming of *Mrs. Arany* and the doctor. While *Arany* lies to his wife with might and main and denies that *Mrs. Dallas* is at the bungalow, *Flossie* leaps out of the window in the adjoin-

ing room—straight into her husband's arms! When *Dr. Dallas* carries her in, kicking and screaming, *Arany* naturally expects a scene. But his wife calmly informs him that she and *Dr. Dallas* have long loved each other and tried in vain to crush their feeling from a sense of duty. Now that *Arany* and *Mrs. Dallas* have taken matters into their own hands, she and *"Fred"* will profit by their action and feel free to marry as soon as a divorce can be secured.

This little bluff works admirably and brings *Arany,* at least, to his senses with a jerk. He really loves his wife though he must needs play at "being in love" with other women, and he is furious when *Mrs. Dallas* obstinately replies to her husband that she means to marry *Arany.*

The scene at the breakfast table the next morning keeps the fun going, for here the comedy virtually turns into farce. *Helen* begins by giving *Flossie* some elaborate motherly advice on how to be happy, though married to a genius, and the self-centered little *Mrs. Dallas* is horrified to learn that her rôle in the future must be to fill in the background and smooth the way for *Arany's* triumphs. That spoiled genius, on the other hand, disgustedly calls poor *Flossie* a "gourmet" because she has tried to eat her breakfast before he appears. The silly wife is thoroughly disillusionized and in the end she drags off her *Fred* to the train for New York—"to save him from that awful woman," *Mrs. Arany,* while *Arany* contentedly remains behind with his wife. His argument that his artistic career depends on the adoration of admiring women hardly sounds convincing—but he shows that he at least means to reform when he tells his wife, while she is "touching up" the wonderful hair, that he intends to sell the bungalow and give up "concerts" of one sort forever.

Original in idea and treatment "The Concert" is also sparkling in dialogue and abounding in humor as well as humorous touches. As the eccentric genius, Mr. Ditrichstein is capital in his own manner, so reminiscent of Mansfield's. Mr. Ditrichstein may not be so handsome nor so fascinating as *Arany* should be, but his finished delivery of comedy lines, his easy manner, and unusually clever by-play combine to give his impersonation a stamp of its own.

MAY BUCKLEY AS *Julie Alardy* AND HENRY VOGEL AS *Papa Bartholdy* IN "THE LITTLE DAMOZEL"

Miss Janet Beecher is gracious, ingenuous, and dignified as the wife, while Miss Jane Grey and Mr. William Morris are very good as *Mrs.* and *Dr. Dallas.* John W. Cope makes the Caretaker *McGinnis,* the best sort of stage Irishman, and everyone else in the cast is adequate.

"The Concert" is an intellectual treat, an artistic success, and capital fun.

The Little Damozel

A NEW playwright from Dublin, Mr. Monckton Hoffe, offers "The Little Damozel," an odd little play that reminds one in some respects of "Trilby." The heroine, *Julie Alardy,* a harpist in the band of a dingy Bohemian restaurant in Soho, London, is adored, like

Trilby, by the complete masculine staff of the Café Angelique—proprietor, bandmaster, waiters and all. One of the guests, too, *Captain Partington,* has wandered so far on the path of dalliance with *Julie* that when he wishes to break off his "engagement" with her to marry *Sybil Craven* of a more respectable social set, *Julie* waves a bundle of incriminating love-letters at him and asks him what his fiancée will say when she sees them.

Partington, realizing that even a harpist scorned may become dangerous, buys over *Recklaw Poole* to marry *Julie* with £15,000. *"Recky,"* who is a "wastер," still carries in his heart the image of the very *Sybil Craven, Partington's* fiancée, who had thrown him over when he was disgraced seven years before. But *"Recky"* likes *Julie* and he isn't squeamish about the despicable arrangement which is duly consummated.

After *Julie* is happily married to *Poole,* the truth comes out when *Partington* appears to get his letters and then brings in *Sybil* to take tea with *Julie. "Recky's"* indignation on realizing why *Partington* had been so eager to marry him off to *Julie* does not seem particularly righteous, but at any rate he redeems himself by giving back the ill-gotten £15,000 and telling *Julie* that he loves her, and not *Sybil,* now. But *Julie* leaves him in wrath and sorrow to go back to the Café, and everything is very, very sad until Christmas-time, when *Julie* learns that *Recky* has insured his life in her favor in several companies that have no suicide clause and that he is about to start for the far East. She discovers that she loves him after all, in spite of his caddish behavior in the past, and the two hearts are united as the curtain falls.

There is a good deal of delicate charm in this sentimental trifle, and the unmoral atmosphere and easy friendship of these bohemians is capitally rendered. The acting of the men is particularly good.

The Scandal

AN UNSUCCESSFUL production of a Parisian success is offered in "The Scandal," in which Charles Frohman presents Kyrle Bellew. M. Henri Bataille may be a very successful playwright in Paris, but to Americans "The Scandal" seems merely a clumsy and uninteresting variation of the eternal triangle theme. The only novelty lies in the author's plea that a husband should forgive his wife a temporary infatuation for another man, just as good French wives must forgive their husbands.

The midsummer madness that leads a married woman with two children to fall desperately in love with an adventurer at a Spa is almost as unattractive as the adventurer's trafficking in her name for money, and the husband's caddishness in discussing her guilt with the town clerk. Not one character is sympathetic, and the plot is not interesting enough to atone for this sad defect. While some of the situations are unusual, the language is invariably so artificial and threadbare that the play seems merely theatric.

Mr. Bellew as the husband has only one dramatic opportunity, and one's sympathy goes out to this good actor for being wasted on a weak play. Mr. Vincent Serrano makes the lover very human and by his quiet, effective acting scores in the most original scene in the play. Miss Gladys Hanson is conventionally and unattractively emotional as the wife.

Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford.

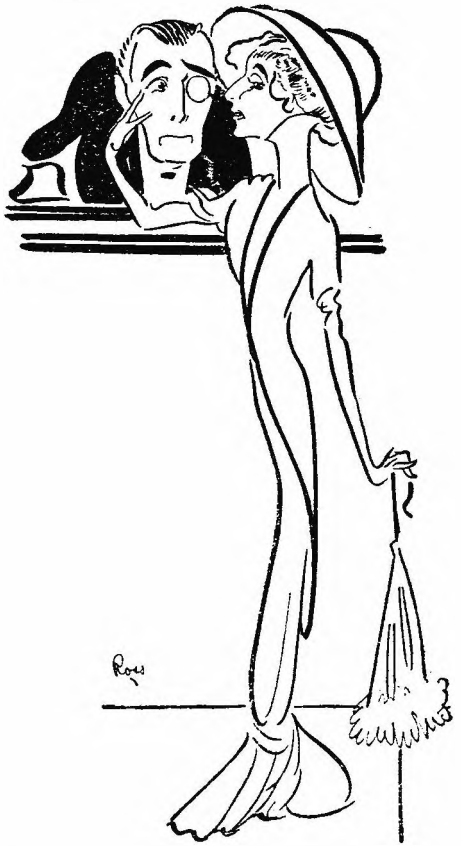
"CHEAP AT THE PRICE" is one's comment on "Get-Rick-Quick Wallingford." By this, I mean that if you can get 75 cents for a dollar in these days of high theatrical living and if you can get one hundred laughs for one dollar—well, keep the change!

The joyous surprise about this three-shell variety of the theatrical game is that you may go to see "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" with an idea of being buncoed, only to find that you quit more than even. To begin with, George Randolph Chester dealt a good hand when he put his stories on literary record, and George M. Cohan has cut the cards squarely in the middle in shifting the game to the stage.

You've no doubt grown rich in imagination in following Chester's tales, but to realize all the active fun there

is in them you must see Cohen's dramatization of these stories. One is pulled bodily into the hotel that is the heart and center of Battlesburg. There the carpet-tack king, *J. Rufus Wallingford,* arrives in all his glory, and from that time forward he has only to reach out for the easy money of enterprising citizens. I haven't the heart to tell you how easy this money is. In comparison, finding it would be a physical hardship. *J. Rufus Wallingford* has only to propose the formation of a covered carpet-tack corporation to find that the real estate boom he has started means millions to him. At the smallest estimate he can sell a street railway franchise for $1,000,000 and to the utter astonishment of this master of finance and his confederate, *"Blackie" Daw,* they find themselves not only rich, but honest. In a word, they are a thoroughly respectable pair of crooks. To complete their rehabilitation, *Wallingford* marries the village stenographer and *"Blackie"* attaches himself to another of Battlesburg's fair daughters.

The play is breezy and refreshing and is capitally acted. A number of village types are cleverly portrayed. One of the best is the hotel clerk of Grant Mitchell, who literally goes down on his knees and begs *Wallingford* to take his money and invest it in the carpet-tack company.



CLAUDE GILLINGWATER AS THE *Judge*, AND JUNE GREY AS THE *Actress* IN "THE GIRL IN THE TRAIN"

Five Musical Comedies

THE musical comedies of the month range from glad to sad. Miss Marie Cahill has scored a big success in "Judy Forgot," the book of which is by Avery Hopwood and the bright and blithesome airs by Silvio Hein. *Judy* forgets who her husband is because of

a jolt she gets in a railway accident while on her honeymoon, but Miss Cahill remembers how to be funny, especially when she burlesques a talkative woman in an opera box, and then caricatures a know-it-all matinée girl who furnishes full misinformation about various well known stage people. Other novelties are a society circus number and a song that brings out the funny side of life in a typical dramatic school.

JOHN MC CLOSKEY AS *Pierre* AND KITTY GORDON AS *Alma*, IN "ALMA, WHERE DO YOU LIVE?"

Everything is coming Sam Bernard's way in "He Came from Milwaukee." As a brewer who goes abroad and becomes a "dook" to oblige a friend, the German comedian gets "all twisted" in more than his tongue and does all the things that he does best. This time he has no "serious moments," so the result is in all respects an happy one.

That English beauty and beautiful singer, Miss Kitty Gordon, is the chief attraction of "Alma, Where Do You Live?" *Alma* isn't nearly so naughty as she was in the German version, but the tuneful music has lost none of its original charm. Charles A. Bigelow is ridiculously funny as the gay old rounder who is interested in *Alma's* address, and John McCloskey sings and acts well as the simple country youth who is encouraged by *Alma* to take a broader view of life.

The pretty music in the Viennese operetta, "The Girl in the Train," went for little or nothing at all because there was no one to sing it as it should be sung. Miss Vera Michelena was not up to the score and Miss June Grey was hopelessly below it vocally. But radical changes are being made before "The Girl in the Train" goes to Chicago, the most important of which will be the substitution of Frank Daniels for Claude Gillingwater as the *Judge*—who has the best scene in the piece.

"Madame Troubadour" is another Viennese musical play that suffers for lack of singers. Most of the pretty music has to be taken for granted. Miss Grace LaRue makes crude work of the leading rôle, and the book is so dull that the performance leaves one with a sense of weariness. (The stories of "Judy Forgot," "The Girl in the Train" and "Mme. Troubadour" will be found illustrated in the "Stageland" section of this issue.)

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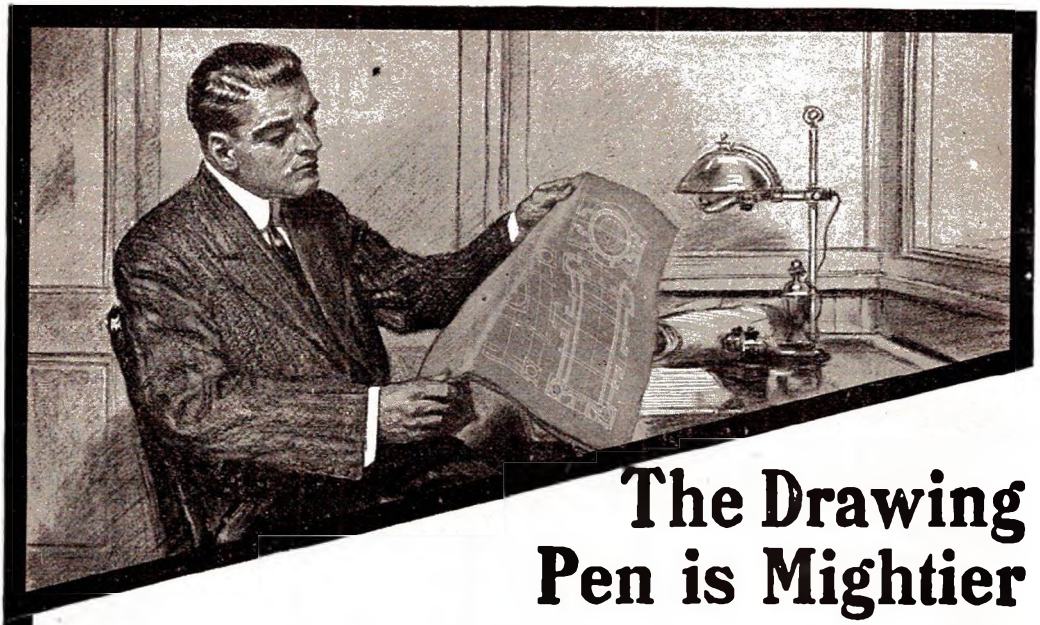

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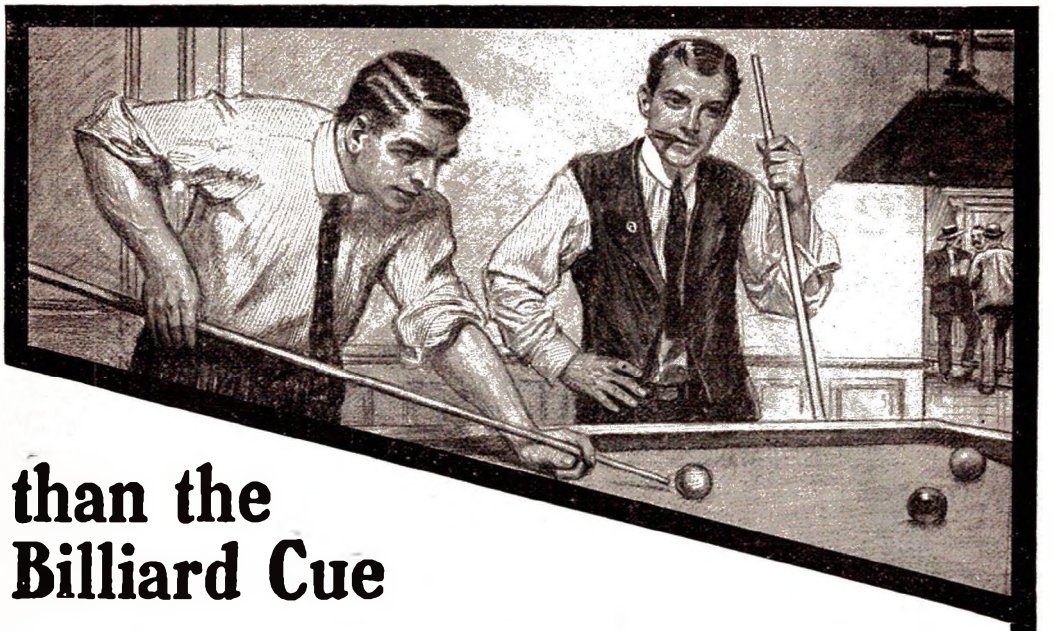

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RATE:—75 cents per line—cash with order. No advertisement of less than 4 or more than 12 lines accepted.
The February issue will appear on January 31st. Forms close in Chicago on December 15th, by which time order, copy and remittance must be in our hands.
THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION. 153-164 State Street, Chicago, Ill.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

WE START YOU IN A PERMANENT BUSINESS WITH US AND FURNISH EVERYTHING! We have new easy-selling plans and seasonable leaders in the Mail Order line to keep our factories busy. No canvassing. Small capital. You pay us out of the business. Large profits. Spare time only required. Personal assistance. Write today for plans, positive proof and sworn statements.
J. M. PEASE MFG. CO.
1047 Pease Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y.

FREE OIL MAP, showing California's greatest high gravity field, the Sulphur Mountain District, Ventura County. High gravity oil brings from $1 to $2 at the well. Address Sagar-Loomis Co., 913 Phelan Bldg., San Francisco, Calif.

$2,000.00 WE WILL LEND YOU $2,000 under certain reasonable conditions, and agree that you may repay the loan from the dividends on an investment which we will suggest.
CONTINENTAL COMMERCIAL CO., St. Louis, Mo.

FLORIDA LANDS

Too much Florida land has been sold to people who have never seen it. Write Brooksville Board of Trade for book of facts, describing different kinds of Florida soil. We have no land to sell but want settlers and investors to develop richest district in Florida, according to State Dept. of Agriculture; not pine land, not sand, but high and rolling with rich dark top soil and clay subsoil. No fertilizer, irrigation or drainage necessary. Raises 80 bu. corn per acre. Best for citrus fruits, truck and staple crops. An industrious man, with $50.00 to $1000 capital, can be independent here. 300 ft. above sea; no swamps or marshes. Ideal climate, schools, churches, towns, good roads, all conveniences. Homeseekers and investors please investigate. We need you and will help you. Board of Trade, Brooksville, Fla.

HELP WANTED

$100 MONTHLY and expenses to trustworthy men and women to travel and distribute samples: big manufacturer. Steady work. S. SCHEFFER, Treasurer, ML177, Chicago.

$80 PER MONTH paid Railway Mail Clerks. Customs and Internal Revenue Employees. Thousands of appointments coming. Common education sufficient. Examinations announced everywhere, January 15th. Coaching free to first 25 applicants. Write immediately for schedule. Franklin Institute, Dep't D49, Rochester, N. Y.

WIDOWS, Ladies, Men. NEW. Interesting, profitable, easy work. Spare time or permanent. Sell our useful specialities. Our ORIGINAL selling plan will double your sales. Particulars and $2 premium offer FREE. Fair Mfg. Co. FM1, Racine, Wis.

$25 WEEKLY and expenses to men and women to collect names, distribute samples and advertise. Steady work. C. H. Emery, MF47 Chicago, Ill.

FREE ILLUSTRATED BOOK tells about over 36,000 protected positions in U. S. Service. More than 40,000 vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Easy to get. Just ask for booklet 43. No obligation. EARL HOPKINS, Washington, D. C.

LIVE AGENTS WANTED.—Hustlers to handle our attractive 1911 combination packages of soap and toilet articles with valuable premiums. One Michigan agent made $65 in 47 hrs., another $21 in 8 hrs., another $22.50 in 10 hrs. Write today. E. M. DAVIS SOAP CO., 43 Union Park Court Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS. Male or female, can easily make from $10 to $15 daily selling my Ostrich Feathers and Willow Plumes. I sell 40 per cent cheaper than anyone else. Write for further information. J. Gluck, Dept. B, 621 B'way, N. Y.

AGENTS make $103.50 per month selling self-sharpening scissors and cutlery. V. C. Giebner sold 23 pairs in 3 hours, made $13; you can do it. We show you how. Free outfit. Thomas Mfg. Co., 313 Third St., Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—Portraits 35c, Frames 15c. Sheet Pictures 1c. Stereoscopes 25c. Views 1c. 30 Days' Credit. Samples and Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait, Dept. 1178. 1027 W. Adams St., Chicago.

MISCELLANEOUS

LEARN TO DANCE AT HOME. All steps explained and illustrated on Maxwell's Original Dance Charts. Children learn in two to four hours. Recommended by everybody as easiest, best method for perfect dancing. All popular dances One Dollar each. Prof. R. I. Maxwell, Lock Box 364, Sta. C., Los Angeles, Cal.

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$1 for Your Choice of these Beautiful Jeweled Scarf Pins

This most remarkable offer is made just to introduce to you our Scarf Pin novelties which are unsurpassed by anything, in their line, anywhere. Write today for our handsomely illustrated brochure which enables you to compare quality, prices and designs and make your selection with the same safety with the same complete satisfaction and the same certainty, that you are really securing the greatest Scarf Pin bargains you ever saw, as though you were able to visit our establishment personally.

Here are two of our remarkable Pin Values:

No. 1800—A beautiful gold filled pin, same size as illustrated, guaranteed 20 years, with handsome pearl grape setting. Ordinarily sold at retail for $3.00—our introductory Price only $1.

No. 2604—A unique and beautiful Cloisonne enamel gold filled Shirt Waist Set, illustration two-thirds actual size, guaranteed 20 years. Usually sold at retail for $2.75—our "get acquainted" price, only $1.00.

Sent to any address, prepaid, upon receipt of price

Wear it 30 days—then if either you or your friends do not declare it the greatest bargain in reliable jewelry you have ever seen, return it

Your Money Will Be Cheerfully Refunded.

Established 1866. We are one of the oldest and the largest diamond, watch and jewelry house between New York and Chicago.

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Reference—Any bank in Pittsburgh.

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and we want to show you how we can save you money and give you perfect satisfaction, when you want to buy **Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry.**

W. E. RENICH CO., 126 State St., Dept. 1090, Chicago, Ill.

NO MORE FAT FOLKS

Double Chins Quickly Removed

If the advice of Mae Edna Wilder is followed there will be no more fat folks in a short time. She took off thirty pounds of superfluous flesh in less than six weeks, and removed her double chin in two weeks, by a treatment of her own discovery, and she generously offers to tell anyone about it who is sufficiently interested to write her. By her method there is nothing to take internally, no face straps or body bandages to be worn, no exercise or dieting, just a simple harmless home treatment that you can use in your own room without the knowledge of your most intimate friends, and as if by magic your fat rapidly disappears without inconvenience to you of any kind. She has written a book intensely interesting to fleshy people, and she will give away ten thousand copies absolutely free. The book tells all about her wonderful treatment, and she sends with it sworn affidavits to back up her claims. It costs you nothing to find out about this treatment, and if you have a large bust, large hips, large abdomen, a double chin or superfluous flesh on any part of the body and wish to get rid of it quickly, write her at once for a copy of the free book before the present edition is exhausted and you will be agreeably surprised and pleased with what she sends you. Her address is Mae Edna Wilder, Suite 8M, Rochester, N. Y.

THE WOMAN BEAUTIFUL

The loss of the beauty every woman craves is due to internal, systemic causes—chiefly impoverished blood, resulting from errors in diet, social excesses, etc.

Dr James P. Campbell's Safe Arsenic Complexion Wafers

restore complexions to baby smoothness and bloom by their tonic action on the system. They clarify and enrich the blood, tone up the nerves and increase the activity of the under skin. The benefits are soon apparent, not only in a permanently improved complexion, but also the superior nerve control that lends poise and animation to the entire physique.

Special Offer: The regular price of Dr. Campbell's Wafers is $1.00 per large box, but to introduce them in thousands of new homes, we will mail (in plain cover) two large boxes for $1.00 to all who answer this advertisement.

RICHARD FINK CO., Dept. 57, 415 Broadway, N. Y.

If You Don't Want Gray Hair Write For This FREE BOOK

The "Book of the Hair," 32 pages, illustrated, containing valuable hints on the care and dressing of the hair, and full information about the

IDEAL HAIR DYEING COMB

The only practical device for restoring gray, faded or streaked hair to its natural color or to any desired shade. Not sold in stores. Write today.

H. D. COMB CO., Dept. K, 118 E. 28th St., New York

Developing Bust and Chest

Deep breathing helps greatly in developing. Every morning upon arising and at night before retiring take in at least 50 deep breaths, holding each while you count ten. Afterwards massage using Melorose Cream, and three times a day take Willard White Co.'s Vaucaire tablets. The Vaucaire treatment is said not only to enlarge the bust but also to fill out the other portions of the body which are undeveloped. It is really necessary to continue taking the tablets for at least six weeks before any decided change is noted, although exceptional cases have been recorded where one or two weeks have caused a wonderful transformation in the way of adding flesh. One thing must be borne in mind, that Dr. Vaucaire advises drinking quantities of water between meals while the galega is being used. It is essential that the genuine imported galega be used. Such as Willard White Co.'s Vaucaire Tablets contain.—Mlle. Merlyn, America's greatest authority on Health and Beauty Culture.

Thin, Nervous Women

We Recommend to You

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Vaucaire

Galega Tablets

Bust Developer

Flesh Builder

and

Tonic

The remedy that all the best known authorities on Beauty Culture highly endorse and thousands of women who have used them. The preparation that contains the genuine imported Galega. If you are undeveloped, THIN, careworn, nervous or run down, take a box of Vaucaire Galega Tablets and note their wonderful effects. Fills out sunken, hollow parts, makes the bust firm. Contains no injurious drugs. $1 per box (three weeks' treatment); six boxes, $5.00. Sent by mail if desired. One box of tablets equals two bottles of the $1 size liquid, and very superior.

CAUTION—Imitations and worthless nostrums are being offered. The original, genuine is distributed by Willard White Co., Chicago, Ill. Beware of substitutes.

JONESBORO, ARK., March 6, 1908.

WILLARD WHITE CO., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sirs: Am in receipt of your letter asking to use my letter as testimonial. Indeed I have no objection for I really think Vaucaire Tablets are almost magical. I can't say too much in praise of them. I have improved wonderfully in every way, especially my female health and my nervous system. The two dollars I have spent for the Vaucaire Galega Tablets have done me more good than hundreds I have spent in the past with physicians who did me very little good, if any. I feel so well now and enjoy every moment of my life. My daily duties are a pleasure instead of a task. I will gladly and conscientiously recommend your Vaucaire Galega Tablets. Am enclosing money order for another box of them. Please send them at once, as I am almost out.

Very sincerely, MRS. J. M. PUGH.

Free Send 2c stamp for sample of Melorose Cream, Melorose Face Powder; also booklet. Mail orders filled. Mention if you would like a Free copy of The Catchy "Melorose Two Step March." Write to

WILLARD WHITE CO.

1045 WILSON AVE. :: :: Chicago, Ill.

GET $1,200

OF THIS $500,000.00 NEXT MONTH

$500,000.00 to change hands

One cent starts you. Any honest, industrious man or woman can enter.

HURRY! HURRY! HURRY!

Thousands of dollars already distributed—going on daily. LISTEN!

10 people receive over $40,000.00

$2,212 in two weeks went to Korstard (a farmer).

$1,200 one month **$1,100** another, to Stoneman (an artist).

$13,245 in 110 days, credited to Zimmerman (a farmer).

$3,000 in 30 days to Wilson (a Banker).

$1,685 in 73 days received by Rasp (an agent).

$800 in 11 days and **$4,000** to date, received by Oviatt (a minister).

$2,800 to Rogers (a surveyor).

$6,800 to Juell (a clerk),

$2,200 to Hoard (a doctor). **$5,000** to Hart (a farmer).

WINNERS

Rev. C. Miller

M. Juell

R. V. Zimmerman

M. Stoneman

These are just a few—hundreds sharing similar prosperity. Reads like fiction, yet it's the gospel truth. **Proven by sworn statements—investigation—any proof you want.**

Don't envy these people—join hands—Win a fortune.

Do as they are doing. Let us give you the same high grade opportunity, supplying 8 out of 10 homes with **Allen's Wonderful Bath Apparatus.**

Something New, Different, Grand. Wonderful but true—**gives every home a bath room for only $6.50**; excels others costing $200. Think of it! So energizes water—one gallon ample; cleanses almost automatically; **no plumbing—no water works**—self heating. Could anything be more popular? Agents, it's simply irresistible. **Used by the U. S. Government.**—Think of millions who want bath-rooms. No wonder.

Beem writes: I averaged **$164.25 WEEKLY FOR 3 MONTHS.**

Wilson sold **102 in 14 days**; Hart **16 in 3 hours**; Langley **$115 worth the first day**; Reese solicited **60 people—sold 56.**

No wonder Cashman says: "Men who couldn't sell your goods, couldn't sell bread in a famine," and Lodewick "Lucky I answered ad; it's great; **money coming fast, 17 orders today.**"

Sectional View

$500,000.00

worth will be sold easily this season. 75 per cent. profit to you. **Experience unnecessary.**

Free sample and credit to active agents. Be first—get exclusive rights—own a rip roaring business. Investigate for your own use anyhow.

Make $8,000 this year.

Spare time means $15 daily. **One cent starts you—a mere postal,** containing your name and address, that's all. Send today for amazing offer—**it's free.**

ALLEN MFG. CO. 3105 Allen Bldg. Toledo, Ohio.

Fine-Form

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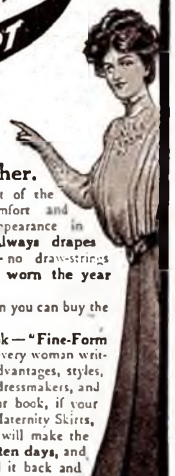
Registered in U.S. Pat. Office



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Every Prospective Mother.

Something new—only scientific garment of the kind ever invented. Combines solid comfort and ease with "fine form" and elegant appearance in the home, on the street, and in society.—**Always drapes evenly in front and back**—no bulkiness—no draw-strings—no lacing—no ripping or basting.—**Can be worn the year round.**

Made in several styles, and at prices lower than you can buy the material and have them made at home.

FREE Send for our Fine Illustrated Book—"**Fine-Form Maternity Skirt**"—It's FREE to every woman writing for it. Tells all about these skirts, their advantages, styles, material, and cost. Gives opinions of physicians, dressmakers, and users. **10 Days Free Trial.** When you get our book, if your dealer has not yet been supplied with Fine-Form Maternity Skirts, make your selection of material and style, and we will make the garment to your order. When you get it, **wear it ten days,** and **if you don't find it exactly as represented,** send it back and we will cheerfully **refund every cent** paid. Other Skirts—If not in need of a maternity skirt, remember our famous B & W dress and walking skirts will positively please you—**same guarantee**—Illustrated book free. Which book shall we send? Write to-day to

Beyer & Williams Co., Dept. 95 Buffalo, N. Y.

WARNING

To protect you against disappointment we caution you that the *Fine-Form Maternity Skirt* is the only "Maternity Skirt" on the market, as it is the only skirt which can always be made to drape evenly, front and back—all substitutes offered will rise in front during development—a fault so repulsive to every woman of refined tastes. No pattern can be purchased anywhere for this garment. Its special features are protected by patents.

IGNORANCE of the laws of self and sex will not excuse infraction of Nature's decree. The knowledge vital to

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"Chantecler" unmistakably eclipses everything in the game line and means a pronounced sensation in your community. Anybody can play it—successfully played at progressive parties as well as individual tables.

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The Standard Playing Card Co.
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B.B.
Jan. 11

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Enclosed find 50c for which send to me by return mail, post paid, one package of "Chantecler" cards with full playing instructions.

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