

Stageland

PRICE 15 CENTS

JANUARY 1914

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE



208 pages of
interesting Fiction
leading off with
"Detective Despair"
an unusual mystery story
by Frank R. Blighton

HENRY - HUTT

A New Year's Resolve
To Take Care of His Skin

A Good-Looking Man

To be really good-looking a man must have a good skin—a skin that is clear, sound and healthy. Such a skin is bound to be accompanied by a fine Complexion, which is a leading essential of good looks in either man or woman. But it is impossible to have a fine skin unless care is bestowed upon it—especially in the case of men, who are subjected to more exposure than women.

The WISE MAN therefore will look to this if he has not already done so, and will start the NEW YEAR by resolving henceforth to wash DAILY with

Pears

acknowledged by the most famous Skin-specialists, and by the greatest Beauties of the last Hundred and Twenty-Four Years to be

*Matchless for
the Complexion*



"All rights secured"

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEAR'S' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST

A Splendid Chance to Make Money

Handsome Earnings of Oliver Typewriter Local Agents on Liberal Profit-Sharing Plan

The Oliver Typewriter Company is conspicuous among the great manufacturing concerns of America for its liberality in dividing profits with its force of Local Agents. This broad-gauge policy has drawn to the company a sales organization, not only great in *numbers*, but great in *achievement*, great in *resourcefulness*, great in *influence*—a dynamic, aggressive, invincible sales force whose record has never been excelled.

Honest competition, unswerving loyalty to the company and abiding faith in its product are blazoned on its banners. The Oliver Typewriter is represented by a selling agency in thousands of cities, towns and villages. There is room for many more and appointments are being made every day.

There is but one machine made that will PRINTYPE, and that machine is

The OLIVER Typewriter

The Standard Visible Writer

Printype is but one of the great typewriter improvements introduced by the Oliver.

We own and control Printype. Yet we permit Oliver Local Agents to sell machines equipped with this beautiful, exclusive type without charging a dollar extra.

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It often occurs that the first demonstration lands an order for a full equipment of Oliver Typewriters. Many have been known to ask for an agency only because of the opportunity to acquire the sample outfit, only to find that the sample itself created such interest that a *series* of sales were made with practically no effort whatever.

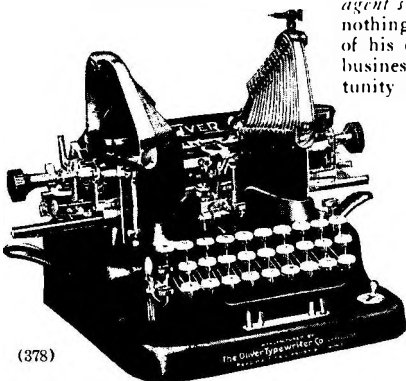
The money-making opportunities of the Local Agency have literally *forced themselves upon the agent's attention*. Thus even the man who expected to do little or nothing has awakened to find himself in control of the typewriter trade of his community, and in possession of a splendid income. Wherever business is transacted, there's a chance for money-making—an opportunity to cash in on even *spare-time* work.

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We are interested only in receiving local agency applications from those who mean business. We permit local agents to secure their own sample outfits on the 17-Cents-a-Day Plan—and to sell on the same easy terms.

Oliver Agents are protected in exclusive selling rights in the territories given them. When filing your application, be sure to give us your ideas as to the typewriter sales possibilities in your town, village or city.

Full details of our liberal Agency Proposition, a specimen of Printype and other interesting information will be forwarded on receipt of your application.



(378)

The Oliver Typewriter Co., 1050 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago

Reproduction of the Cover Portrait of the February Issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE



This is the Girl who waits at the end of the trail for
the man who risked his life

“For the Allinson Honor”

in the splendid novel of hardship and
adventure of that name

By HAROLD BINDLOSS

Who wrote “A Delilah of the Snows,” “Winston
of the Prairie,” and a dozen more of the popular
love stories of the last ten years.

“FOR THE ALLINSON HONOR” begins in the February BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE. From first to last it is one of the most satisfying stories of the generation.

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR JANUARY, 1914

NEXT MONTH

A RARE collection of really remarkable stories has been assembled for the February BLUE BOOK. A new novel by Harold Bindloss heads the list—a splendid narrative of love and adventure in the Canadian wilds. "Innocence," that sensational yet true-to-life story of New York's Bohemia, will come to one of its most tensely exciting crises; and "The Blue Lizard," that wonderful tale by James Francis Dwyer, will reach its thrilling dénouement. There will also be a fascinating novelette by Stanley Shaw, wherein a new sort of detective, one of the most attractive characters in modern fiction, finds the answer to a delightfully perplexing mystery. New exploits of Blue Funk Carson; Magnum, the scientific consultant; Matt Bardeen, the deep-sea diver; and other familiar BLUE BOOK characters will also be described. There'll be a lot of other interesting short stories too, but there isn't space here to tell you about them. We're always proud of the BLUE BOOK, but this February issue is one which we take especial pleasure in offering to you. You'll find it on sale everywhere, on New Year's Day.

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COVER DESIGN: Painted by Henry Hutt

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She ruled the camp—until her master came.

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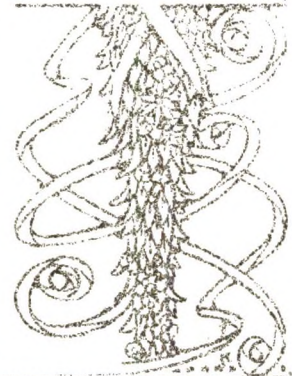
"The Auctioneer"

By Lee Arthur and Charles Klein

The auctioneer is SIMON LEVI, an East Side Jewish "climber," who has begun his career as a peddler and who is now rapidly building up a fortune with his auction store. SIMON is a man of really lovable character—at once crafty and kind, irascible and yet impulsively generous, staunch and loyal in his family affections, possessed of a droll, sly humor and characterized by a pathetically uncomplaining courage in the face of adversity. SIMON and MRS. LEVI have no children save for an adopted daughter—HELGA. An attractive young Irishman, DICK EAGEN, comes to woo HELGA; in due course, he wins her, and the young people are married. SIMON'S affairs have prospered, and he now moves into a fine house on Lexington Avenue—and while the money lasts he demonstrates that he knows how to enjoy life. Through the perfidy of a politician whom DICK and SIMON have trusted, however, the AUCTIONER loses his entire fortune, and his newly acquired mansion has to go with the rest. But SIMON is by no means cast down or daunted, for his is too sturdy a soul to whine at the hard knocks of Fate. Back he goes to his peddler's basket and cheerfully undertakes to begin life over again once more. (Produced by David Belasco.)



"The Auctioneer:" FRANK NELSON as Mo Fininski, DAVID WARFIELD as Simon Levi, and HORACE JAMES as Dawkins. Photograph by White, New York.





A scene from "The Auctioneer;" MARIE BATES as Mrs. Eagen,
DAVID WARFIELD as Simon Levi, and JANET DUNBAR
as Helga. Photograph by White, New York.



HORACE JAMES as Dawkins, DAVID WARFIELD as Simon Levi,
MARIE BATES as Mrs. Eagen, and JENNIE MOSCOWITZ
as Mrs. Levi, in "The Auctioneer." Photograph by
White, New York.



“The Temperamental Journey”

Adapted by Leo Ditrichstein, from the French of André Rivoire and Yves Mirande

For an artist to be famous, he must also be dead. JACQUES DUPONT comes to this conclusion, anyhow. For JACQUES' pictures wont sell; and he and his wife DELPHINE are in a bad way when MARIA, the daughter of their landlord, invents a rich buyer—whom, she avers, called in the DUPONTS' absence, took one of the paintings away with him, and left in payment a sum of money—which precisely equals MARIA'S savings. Later, DUPONT finds the canvas in MARIA'S room—and proceeds to commit suicide. He is hauled out of the water by a party of yachtsmen and returns, two weeks later, just in time to watch his own funeral from the window of his friend, BILLY SHEPHERD. He learns that DELPHINE has already become much interested in a successful painter, VERNON NEIL, and also discovers that since his supposed death, he has become famous and his paintings in great demand. In view of these facts DUPONT decides to stay dead. Three years later he comes back from France with a number of new paintings, by himself, which he claims to have discovered, in his assumed character of an art collector. He finds DELPHINE and NEIL married. The lady brands DUPONT'S own new pictures as forgeries and asserts that some others done by NEIL are genuine “Duponts.” DUPONT also finds that MARIA has preserved as sacred two canvases he had given her on the night of his attempted suicide, and has refused huge sums for them. At this, DUPONT discloses his identity, buys his freedom from DELPHINE, marries MARIA—and brings his temperamental journey to a stopping place. (*Produced by David Belasco.*)

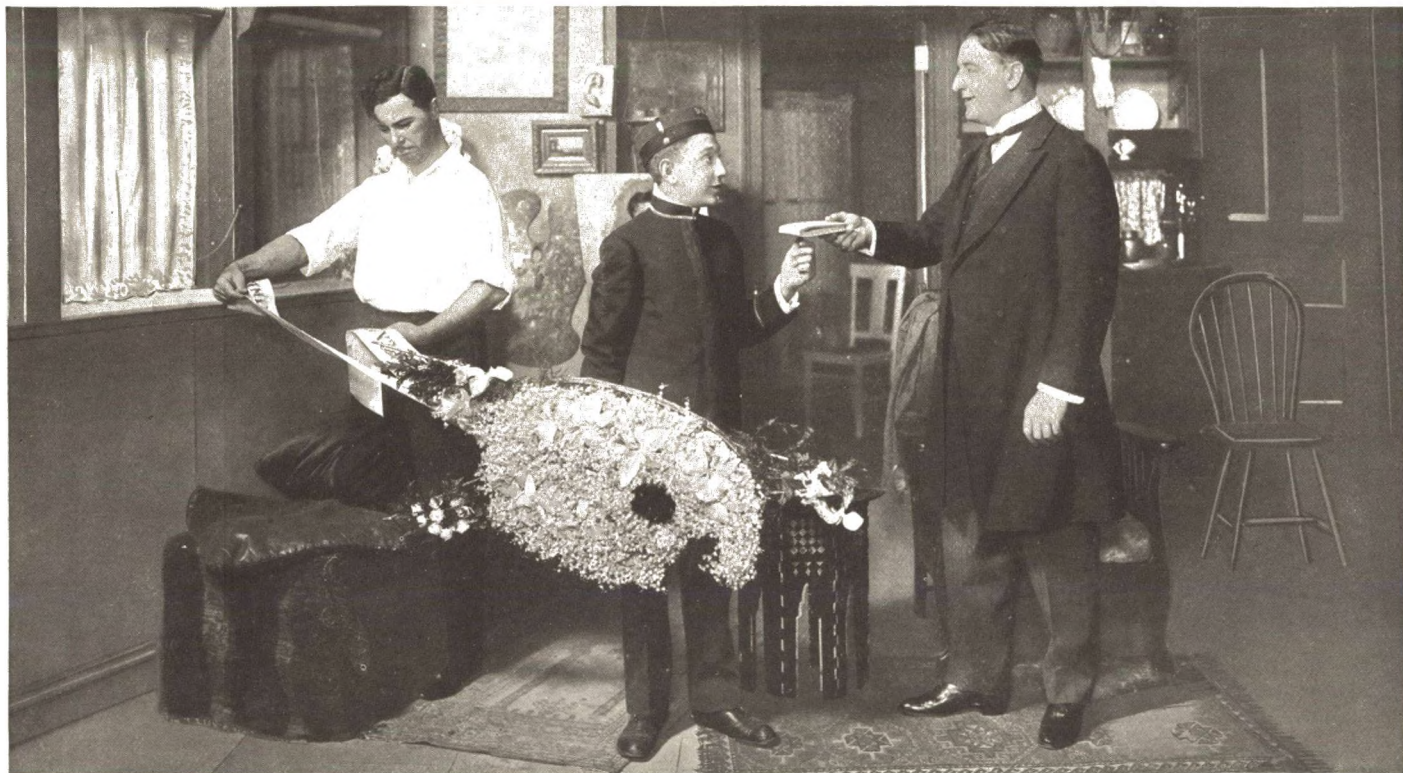


RICHIE LING as Billy Shepherd, CORA WITHERSPOON as Fanny Lamont, and JOSEPHINE VICTOR as Maria, in “The Temperamental Journey.” Photograph by White, New York.





LEO DITRICHSTEIN as Jacques Dupont, and JOSEPHINE VICTOR as Maria, in "The Temperamental Journey."
Photograph by White, New York.



"The Temperamental Journey" LEO DITRICHSTEIN as Jacques
Dupont, WILLIAM DIXON as a Messenger, and RICHIE
LING as Billy Shepherd. Photograph by White,
New York.

"The Beauty Shop"

Book and Lyrics by Channing Pollock and Rennold Wolf. Music by Charles Gebest

DR. ARBUTUS BUDD runs a beauty shop in New York, but although he is highly successful in making but one chin grow where before there were two, he finds himself hard pressed for money. Creditors as well as clients are crowding his waiting room when news comes that the wealthy uncle of his ward ANNA has died in Corsica, leaving a fortune. In desperation DR. BUDD hies him forthwith to the birthplace of Bonaparte and feudal bloodshed, taking with him not only his ward but also VIVIAN and GLADYS, two of the beauty-shop assistants. Arrived in Corsica, the hapless BUDD discovers that ANNA'S fortune is a myth and that they have inherited nothing but a vendetta with the MALDONADO family—indeed, one CARAMBA of that ilk immediately takes the warpath against him. BUDD now evolves a bright idea: he will marry the daughter of the MALDONADO clan—NATALIE by name—and thus avert bloodshed. When he sees NATALIE, however, he realizes that she is of a homeliness beyond even his own professional aid; moreover, the bloodthirsty CARAMBA himself proposes to marry the lady. So poor BUDD finds himself between the devil and the deep, deep sea: if he marries NATALIE, CARAMBA will kill him; if he doesn't, her father will undertake his murder. In spite of this hideous difficulty, BUDD eventually escapes both murder and matrimony. And with the young ladies safely married and BUDD safely single, all may be said to end happily. "Come Along, Little Girl," and "All Dressed Up and No Place to Go" are the most memorable songs of the performance. (*Produced by Messrs. Cohan and Harris.*)



ANNA ORR as Vivian, LAURENCE WHEAT as Daniel Webster Briggs, JACK HENDERSON as Phil Faraday, and TESSA KOSTA as Anna Budd, in "The Beauty Shop." Photograph by White, New York.



A scene from "The Beauty Shop." ANITA ORR, as Vivian,
GERTRUDE ALDRICH as Miss Montmorency, CHRISTINE
MANGASARIAN as Gladys, and RAYMOND
HITCHCOCK as Dr. Arbutus Budd.
Photograph by White, New York.



RAYMOND HITCHCOCK as Dr. Arbutus Budd, and chorus of
Fishing Girls, in Act III of "The Beauty Shop."
Photograph by White, New York.



EDWARD MORA as Caramba Maldonado, GEORGE E. MACK as
Lugubrio Sobini, RAYMOND HITCHCOCK as Dr. Arbutus
Budd, and EDWARD METCALFE as Garibaldi
Panatella, in a scene from "The Beauty
Shop." *Photograph by White,
New York.*

"Madame President"

Adapted by Jose G. Levy, from the French of Maurice Hennequin and Pierre Veber

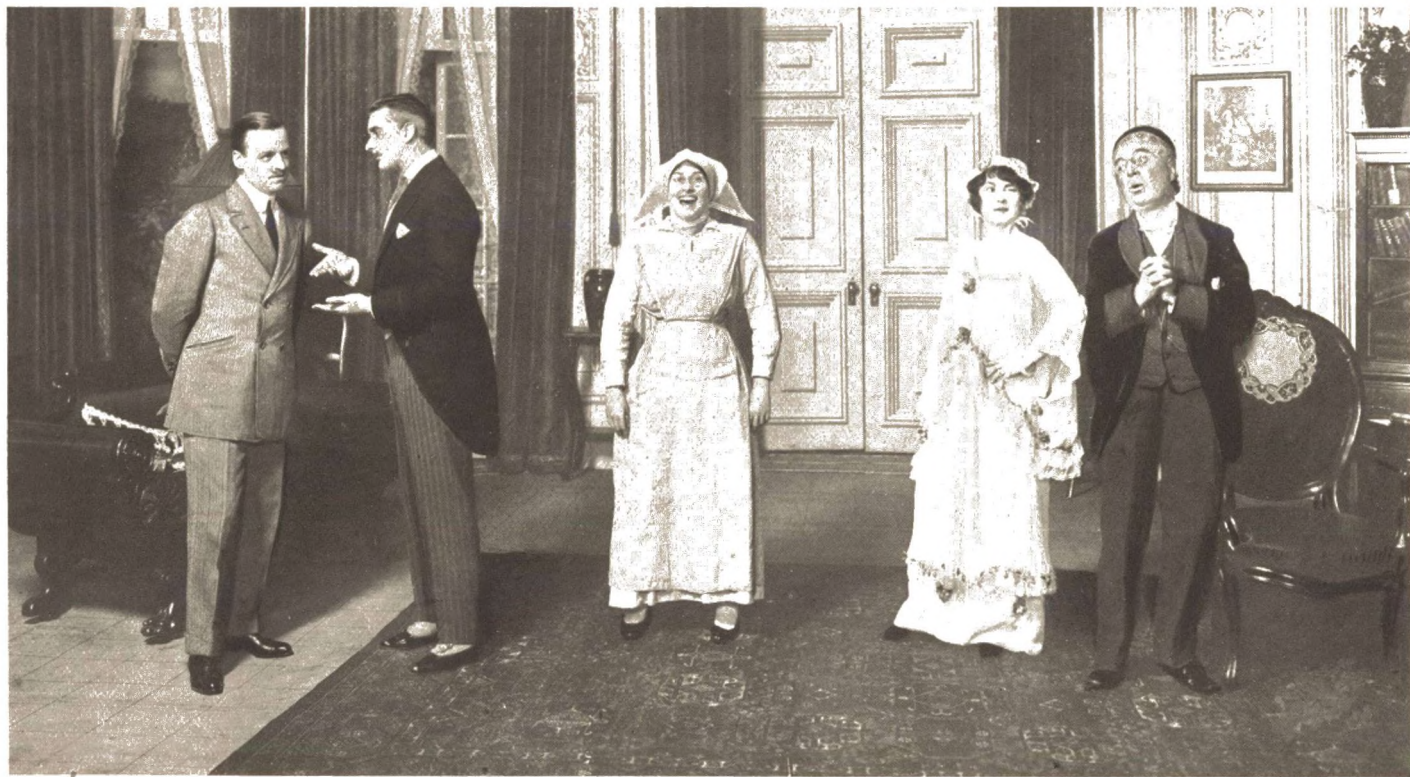
M. GALIPAUX, president of the court in a provincial French town, is a modest man and his services have gone unnoticed for so long that his wife ANGELE decides to call on the Minister of Justice and herself urge his promotion. While ANGELE is away, an actress named GOBETTE, whom GALIPAUX has caused to be expelled from her hotel because of her noisy supper party, takes it into her head to revenge herself upon GALIPAUX by spending the night under his roof and thus ruining his reputation. She has hardly arrived when CYPRIEN GAUDET, the Minister of Justice, comes to pay GALIPAUX a visit; he of course takes GOBETTE for MADAME GALIPAUX; and when she starts up a flirtation with him he responds enthusiastically. The scene now shifts to Paris, where the real MADAME GALIPAUX calls on the Minister of Justice—only to be mistaken for a cleaning woman. GOBETTE, GALIPAUX and GAUDET also call there and a whole series of startling incidents transpires—the most surprising being an attempt of GAUDET to kiss GOBETTE with the result that her dress becomes unfastened and drops to the floor. Eventually, however, everybody becomes clothed and in their right minds again, and the result of it all is the longed-for promotion of the much tried M. GALIPAUX. (Produced by Charles Dillingham.)



CHARLES LAITE as Octave Rosemond, and
FANNY WARD as Gobette, in "Madame
President." Photograph by White,
New York.



W. J. FERGUSON as Marius, J. W. DEAN as Cyprien Gaudet,
and FANNIE WARD as Gobette, in "Madame President."
Photograph by White, New York.



A scene from "Madame President:" CHARLES LAITE as Octave
Rosemond, W. J. DEAN as Cyprien Gaudet, ELENE FOSTER
as Sophie, FANNIE WARD as Gobette, and GEORGE
GIDDENS as M. Galipaux. Photograph by
White, New York.

January
1914

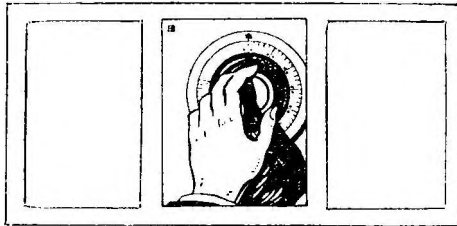
THE
BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XVIII
No 3

**Detective
Despair**

by

**FRANK
BLIGHTON**



HERE is a most fascinating mystery story: a safe in a great office building has been blown open, from the inside; how could it have been done? It is up to Graham to find out, or lose his job—and his job means a lot to him. Out of his despair is born the determined will which solves the problem—and a very curious one it proves. You will find this a story of really exceptional interest.

AT half-past seven o'clock in the morning William Graham, night watchman of the top five floors of the twenty-five-story Baffin Terminal Building in New York City, shoved his key in the recording ratchet of the time clock on the twentieth floor and virtuously took his departure to his Brooklyn residence.

At half-past nine his wife came into the bedroom where he was sleeping and roused him with the statement that the

superintendent had telephoned the drug store at the corner, leaving a message that he was to come back to the building at once.

At half-past ten, very sleepy and irritable, Graham confronted Richard Hill, his stern-faced superior, in the private office of the structure where he was employed, and waited to be told why he had been summoned.

"Graham," coldly began the superintendent, "where were you last night?"

"I was at work here, sir."

"Did you make your rounds as usual?"

"I did."

"When were you last on the twentieth floor?"

"I looked in on the main hall-recorder at about half-past seven this morning."

"How many times did you visit it during the night?"

"I made the usual rounds, sir—ten times, at least, as the recorder will show unless it is out of order."

"The time-clock seems to be performing its usual functions," dryly remarked Hill, spreading out the cabalistic tape with a nervous frown. "Did you notice anything unusual during the night on that floor?"

His query was kindly, and Graham lost irritation as his curiosity increased. But he only replied:

"No, sir."

"The Columbian Securities Company is on that floor," tentatively mused the superintendent, his eyes wandering toward the window.

"It is," admitted the watchman. "I looked into the front office every time I came down the hall. It is always lighted during the night, by a special order."

"Come upstairs." Hill rose as he spoke, as if on a sudden impulse. Together they entered an express elevator, quickly stepping out and down the hallway to the suite of offices mentioned. It occupied the whole of the north half of the west corridor. Graham saw that the office curtains were drawn over the glass door marked "Entrance." Hill tapped thrice on the pane. The door opened and at once closed as they entered.

Graham's eyes almost popped from his head. He gave a gasp of incredulous surprise. The huge double door to the Cort-Hammond fire and burglar proof wall safe directly across the room was swung wide. Its interior was rent and torn; the inner steel sheets were jammed outward and contained jagged holes which shoved the Harveyized steel out in corresponding hummocks on the exterior. The varnish and paint of the interior were smoke-stained and grimed. Masses of feathery fragments of leather

and paper cluttered the safe's floor, and scattered through the *débris* were charred and splintered fragments of what had once been the cherry compartments of the vault.

Two unpretentiously dressed men were scanning the same picture which the startled watchman visualized. One of them he knew was Everett Featherstone, president of the concern; the other man was a stranger to him.

"This is Graham, the night watchman on duty on this floor," said Superintendent Hill.

"Oh, yes," responded the president, looking at the subordinate. His glance was not entirely unfriendly, and Graham breathed easier. The office was ominously quiet. Billy noted the absence of the army of clerks and stenographers who usually occupied it during the day, and the room suddenly grew very oppressive.

"Well, Graham," continued Featherstone, "we were very much surprised this morning at the appearance of things around here. Did you hear any explosion during the night?"

Graham's dry lips moved without articulation and his hot tongue rattled in his mouth. But presently he recovered himself and gasped:

"I did not, sir."

"Was anyone on this floor last night at all?"

"No one that I saw, sir. And," he went on, excitedly, "I'll take an oath on a stack of Bibles as tall as this building that I saw that safe when I went down the corridor this morning at seven-thirty as plainly as I see you now, Mr. Featherstone."

"You did?" sharply queried the other man, turning suddenly.

"I did," affirmed the guardian, stoutly. "And it was just as it always was—locked, doors in place, and not a sign of anything wrong." His under lip shot out pugnaciously. The consciousness of work well done sustained him. He looked straight into the unwavering eyes of the stranger until the superintendent broke in. Then he turned in his direction.

"Graham," quietly remarked Superintendent Hill, "that safe has been burglarized and more than a hundred thou-

sand dollars in cash was taken from it some time between last night at five-thirty and Mr. Featherstone's arrival at nine o'clock this morning. It came by express after banking hours. You say that you were on this floor at least ten times between coming to work and leaving. The time-recorder shows that you, or some one, pressed the automatic signals as usual."

The watchman calmly reached for his hip pocket and drew out a steel key-ring attached to a chain which was fastened at the other end to his suspender button. He stepped closer to the superintendent and extended the jingling bundle.

"You'll find my time-lock key right there," said he, quietly. "I used it all of last night on this floor and the four above it, as the regulations require. I can see that this safe has been blown. I don't know what was in it. I know that the safe was closed and it looked to be locked the same as it always looks when I went past this door not later than twenty-five or twenty-seven minutes past seven this morning. That's all I've got to say, sir."

He detached the chain and handed the bundle of metal to his superior. Then he stepped briskly over to the wreck of the safe on the opposite side of the room.

"As you seem to be passing the buck to me, gents," he succinctly observed, "I don't suppose there's any objection to my looking at this thing for a minute, is there?"

"Not at all, Graham, not at all," exclaimed Featherstone, with another side-wise look at the silent man, who was again appraising the same subject.

Billy stepped to the side of each door in turn and then whirled fiercely on the watchful trio.

"You said there was a hundred thousand dollars in here, didn't you?" He looked at Hill, who nodded in reply.

"Well," went on Graham, with a glance in Featherstone's direction, "I'm only a night watchman, tramping up and down these here five floors twelve hours a night, and the most I ever see is eighty dollars a month. But one thing I'd like to know," he belligerently continued, waiting a moment for his words to

gather weight: "where's the man that was touching off the stuff inside that safe with the hundred thousand dollars when you locked it up?"

"The man *inside*?" echoed Featherstone.

"That's what I said," doggedly returned Graham, "the *man*. This here safe was blown from the inside, gentlemen. There aint the mark of a drill or a sledge, or even the feet of the little-old-man drag on the outside of the doors. Look for yourselves! There aint a crack where they could have poured the soup in; the combination is in place, which shows they didn't knock it off, don't it?"

"Rats, Graham!" interpolated the superintendent. "Don't talk such silly stuff. How could a man have lived inside that safe when the explosion came that tore it open?"

"Well," defiantly shot back the aroused employee, "if you're so wise about how it wasn't done, mebbe you kin tell me how it was? You say there wasn't any man in the safe. I'll admit I didn't see one go in—nor out, either. But, supposin' he was in—he might have dressed up in a parlor stove or some other armor when he pulled this thing off," he angrily snarled. "If there wasn't a man in there, tell me how this thing was done. Do you s'pose one of the big bank notes got up on its hind legs and blew them doors with a brainstorm? There's something queer about this thing, gentlemen. I tell you again, I saw that safe at seven-thirty this morning, and it was all right then. And it's all wrong now—aint it? Who did it? How did they do it—and without making a noise? And how did they get in to do it? And why, if they knew the way to get into that safe without my seeing or hearing them—that is, if they could get in without damaging the safe from the outside—why'd they have to blow the thing to get out again—if they wasn't locked in last night?"

"You've summed the mystery up very cleverly." The stranger nodded grimly in Graham's direction. "Several of the very questions you asked I have been asking myself for the last half hour. Are you quite certain that the safe appeared untouched on your last round, Graham,

or might it not be possible that in all this excitement and shock you have unintentionally carried the impression of its condition as you saw it earlier in the evening?"

There was a pacific quality in his voice, for all its terse and authoritative inflection. But Graham only glowered at him in disgust.

"I haint certain of nothing—not even that I'm alive—unless I'm dreaming all this," he retorted. "But I *always* look into this room; understand? *Always*, not sometimes, when I go past. It's the only office on this floor that I can look into, because it's the only one with a clear glass panel in the door. All the rest are clouded glass but this one. And all the rest are always dark, unless a tenant happens to be staying in late, while this is always light. That's why I'm certain, Mister. I've been in this building for five years. I've worked at this business for fifteen. I haint a boy, and I haint a boob. I'm a night watchman, and I've got a family that I have to support at this business. I tell you that safe was all right when I left this building, and that's as far as my responsibility goes. I aint paid for catching burglars after they've put over a job—I'm paid to keep 'em out."

II

The Baffin Terminal Building was practically a city set on end in the midst of a greater city. It occupied a ground space of an entire city square. If the twenty-five floors which composed it were laid side by side, with its corridors widened to an average street, it would have made a very cozy little municipality in area alone.

It derived its name from the terminals of three transcontinental railway systems which cleared their passenger traffic in the roaring subway seventy feet below its street levels. It had its own system of water-works, its own electric light and sewerage; its street railways ran vertically as elevators, instead of horizontally; its heating system was a marvel of efficiency; the army of cleaners in blouses and skirts kept it immaculate every hour of the twenty-four; its uniformed watchmen were as

well-disciplined and more reliable than any police force of a town with the same population; it had a telephone exchange system which invariably gave accurate and swift service; two great telegraph and cable companies fought for the messages its residents sent and received.

High-priced *chefs* and obsequious waiters ministered to the appetites of the thousands who swarmed in and out of its restaurants daily; newsdealers and stationers reaped remunerative rewards from its patrons. It boasted a roof-garden, three barber shops, a Turkish bath with a huge salt water plunge beside a tank of fresh; it numbered among its renters lawyers, doctors, dentists, photographers, contractors, manufacturers' agents, surveyors, engineers, brokers, public stenographers, merchants, florists, druggists, confectioners, construction corporations, railroad and steamship officials controlling world-wide traffic, tailors, haberdashers, grocers, fruit and provision dealers, and scores of others who cater to the necessities, comforts, and luxuries of the delirium termed "modern civilization."

Its permanent population easily approximated that of Pittsfield, while its transient trade, if transferred to the Berkshire hills, would have made that inland Massachusetts city resemble an old home week, a county fair, a carnival, a circus, a political convention, and an I. W. W. riot all rolled together into one.

It was uniquely modern, even bizarre, in its enormous capacities and unfathomed potentialities. There was no other office building in the world which could boast so many tenants nor of such diversified occupations. If the volume of financial transactions which originated or were consummated within it daily were to have been withdrawn from Gotham's banks, the direct and indirect result to the New York clearing house would shortly have caused that institution to welcome a receiver in bankruptcy.

Into this hideous ferment of vortexing humanity, Billy Graham launched himself two hours after his interview in the office of the Columbian Securities Company. The chief of the great detective agency who had been summoned

frankly admitted his temporary paralysis at solving the mysterious crime, to say nothing of apprehending the men who had committed it. Likewise he conceded that Graham was apparently telling the truth.

Featherstone and Hill promptly acquiesced in the same conclusion. That mollified the touchy night watchman, who thereupon demanded what was to be done. He scoffed at the suggestion of sleep, grew peevish at the thought of calling in the city police, and finally, in a burst of temper scolded them all so heartily that they appealed to his sense of loyalty to go out on the man-hunt himself.

Graham raged over the time already lost.

"Somebody's got away with a bundle that's as big as a horse-collar," he stormed. "And you ask me to find 'em. I'm a night watchman, gentlemen. I'm not a detective, with my name in the papers and the magazines telling what a clever duck I am at fifteen cents per tell. You know just as much about this thing as I do. And you knew all you know now an hour and three-quarters before I heard of it. Now you say: 'Go and see what you can do.' Well, I know one thing. If you three people aint hypnotized yourselves into using your hats for phonographs, I'll get out and get busy, somewhere, and try to do something, instead of sitting here like an old hen with the pip trying to hatch Rhode Island Reds out of door-knobs."

With that he strode through the door, leaving the three bewildered and staring blankly at the melancholy wreck of the ruined safe.

From sheer force of habit, Graham went down to the "change-room," where he found himself rummaging aimlessly at the locker. He took out his pipe and tobacco bag, re-locked the closet and stepped into an express elevator to the top floor. From there he went to the roof, sat down in the lee of the big circular water tank, smoked silently and thought for two hours.

The fire died in his pipe; the wrinkles in his forehead deepened; he rose, walked mechanically to the parapet running around the roof's edge and looked down the canyon-like space between the

buildings to the street three hundred and fifty feet below. Like a man in a dream he wormed his way to the edge of the roof overlooking the west side of the building. The roar of the street floated up to him in a subdued murmur; the squat blots of auto's on the pavement jerked along, like water-beetles over the surface of a pond; the individuals swarming along the sidewalks or crossing the street made Graham think of mites in a slice of cheese.

He scanned the granite surface of the low wall with eyes so fiercely focused that they ached when withdrawn. He turned and walked stupidly back toward the scuttle through which he had emerged, and cursed vigorously as his hat brushed off when his head struck against the web wires forming the broad antennae of the wireless apparatus on the roof. The crash of the big coil inside the little house vibrated over the copper-colored lacings of the "aerial capacity," and the induction they radiated spread over the watchman's forehead like a spider-web one encounters in an unfamiliar place.

Graham recovered his headpiece and went around the other way as he started again on his return journey. Through the grimy window panes of the wireless office he could see the spark of the Hertzian wave-generator leaping flatly between the brass knobs of the big Rhumkorf transformer.

Straight to the superintendent's office he went, digressing only to inspect an empty office on the floor above and directly over the one which had been robbed. Hill looked up anxiously.

"Would you mind taking me back to have another look around that room?" queried the subordinate.

"Certainly not." Hill reached for his key. "What do you know, Billy?"

"I know I'm due to be framed-up as an accomplice unless I beat somebody to it," brutally retorted Graham. He lapsed into a significant silence, nor did he speak again until his lean, square-ended forefinger was pointing at the large, irregular spot on the outside of the safe door, near the edge where it met its fellow.

"What do you make of that, Mr. Hill?"

"Looks like a burn," replied the superintendent, after a careful scrutiny. "The varnish or enamel or whatever it is seems to have melted and run—at least it ran down here. See, it's thicker?"

Graham nodded gravely.

"Might have been done with a blow-pipe," the superintendent went on to suggest.

"No chance, Mr. Hill."

"Why?"

"I'd have seen it. It would have to be a pretty hot flame to melt that enamel—people with a blow-pipe couldn't have done it in a minute. To work a blow pipe, they had to get in here—didn't they?—and hold it against the safe door? Well, Mr. Hill, I don't want to seem bull-headed, but I just got to repeat that there wasn't anybody in here before I went away at seven-thirty this morning. That safe was just as good as new when I last looked at it—look here!"

He broke off and stepped back to the side of the wall.

"You can see it from here just as plain as I could have seen it through the glass. Look at that ugly mark. Do you think I wouldn't have spotted that, and got suspicious, and come inside with my master-key? Besides, why would anyone want to try to heat this door outside for a sixteenth of an inch? That heat would never carry through all this steel and fire-proof lining. Yet they blew it off *from the inside*, didn't they?"

"It certainly looks like it, Billy," wearily responded the other man, moving aimlessly away. The watchman's eyes were searching the carpeted floor around the front of the safe. His sharp glances traced and retraced every square inch of its surface, using the octagonal pattern as a guide. They brightened as he caught a brassy gleam over toward the leg of the mahogany table about ten feet from the wrecked safe doors. He walked over and picked it up.

The superintendent was looking earnestly at the transom. Despite his belief in Graham's integrity, he found it impossible to reconcile his re-iterated statements with the safe's condition.

Billy screwed his face into a grimace as he noted that one side of the small copper ball in his hand held a tarnish spot strangely like that of the only mark on the safe door. He dropped it in his pocket and turned eagerly toward the superintendent.

"Mr. Hill, will you do me a favor?"

"What is it, Graham?" countered the puzzled superintendent.

"Telephone for Mr. Featherstone and that fly cop that he had in here this morning. Oh, I knew him—that was Burnside himself. Have him put the nippers on me and drag me out through the front door, and into a taxi. Then we'll lam some bunk into the papers, if it aint too late, telling how I've been arrested as an accomplice, and how Burnside is stretching his net for my brother-in-law, a man with a shady reputation, that's disappeared. Get busy; we aint got much time. But I want him to turn me loose soon's we're a couple of blocks away. If I don't glom the ginks that pulled this job, I'll agree to plead guilty to it myself!"

III

"You see!" triumphantly exclaimed the weary eyed watchman, as he pointed to a portable steel document box in the corner. "I was telling the truth. There's your coin, Mr. Featherstone—you'd better count it."

The astonished magnate fumbled at the brass catch on the bag's upper edge with trembling fingers. But he turned suddenly to look at Graham, as that individual paradoxically added:

"And yet, I've got to own up that I was lying all the time. But I didn't know it. Come up to the office, will you? Oh, your wad is all there—I counted it myself before I brought it down. The steel box and the books above it caught the force of the explosion."

Superintendent Hill, Detective Burnside and the elated president of the Columbian Securities Company followed meekly to the door of that corporation's suite. Billy Graham opened it with his master-key. They paused, amazed, on the threshold of the brilliantly lighted interior.

The wrecked safe stood immaculately prim and without stain before them.

"Gets you, don't it?" grinned the watchman. "Now, just step outside again for a minute, will you, and look through the glass, while I raise the curtain."

They complied. More mystified than before, they re-entered the room.

"You see how they fooled me?" Graham continued, stepping over to the front of the safe. He reached out both arms and suddenly folded it together. "This was the screen they worked behind. An old gag, but still rather nifty, eh? Here's one of 'em." He pointed to a young man handcuffed to the wrecked door. "Come across, now, with the inside stuff. I've got you dead to rights. There's the screen you had hid out in the wireless house on the roof; there's the harness either you or one of the other fellows used to let you down from the floor above and into the window. There's the swag, too. Come on; who was in on this besides you?"

Billy jammed his pipe-bowl with fragrant tobacco, lighted it, puffed contentedly and waited.

"Oh, you're still stubborn, are you? Well," went on Graham, pulling out his watch, "it's just eleven-thirty P. M. now. By to-morrow, you wont be tongue tied. Mr. Featherstone, I call this a pretty fair eleven hours of work. You figure out how much you've saved every hour since you put this thing up to me. I can't divide a hundred thousand by eleven—haint very good at fractions, myself; all I know is the night watchman business, and I guess I'm getting a little rusty at that."

Burnside's admiring gaze was growing.

"Where did you get your lead?" he asked.

"Well, in the first place"—Graham paused to relight his pipe—"I was willing to bet my life on every word I told you to-day about that safe's condition when I rung off the last time this morning. But I couldn't make it match the way it looked when I came in here. Now I know no one came in here through the halls or the corridors; I know I saw that safe at least every half-hour all night; yet there she was—smashed to

hell and a big wad of coin gone. I guess I was just plumb ornery about this here mess, but up on the roof this afternoon I got to figuring it out that I'd been bunked some way."

"You were mistaken?" interpolated the superintendent.

"I was," candidly admitted Graham. "Then I began to just go after this thing in a common-sense fashion—no, I don't exactly mean that—for good sense aint common. But I said to myself if some one *had* come in there and blowed that safe, with me looking at it all the time, they must have come in some way. A real he-man don't dissolve and float through a concrete and steel partition like these in the Baffin Terminal Building, does he? Or through a key-hole? And I had to own up that I was just hot-headed when I said the bloke that blowed this box was inside. Of course, he wasn't, or we'd have fished his wishbone out of the paper this morning."

"Fine!" ejaculated Burnside.

"If they didn't get in through the door—and I was reasonably sure of *that*—there was just one way for them to come in, and that was through the window. Mind you, I'm up on the roof, fighting with my orneriness. Now, this here office is twenty stories up—and they couldn't use a ladder to climb up from the street, and I didn't hear any aeroplanes buzzing around here last night, either. So I just figgered they must have let themselves down some way."

"Bully reasoning—straight cause and effect," muttered the detective. Graham did not appear to hear.

"I pipes off the roof on this side of the building, because I don't know any way a burglar can swing round a corner and hit one particular window. But there wasn't a sign on the stone coping up there. Then I says to myself: 'You damn old fool, these interiors are twelve feet from floor to ceiling. They're easy fourteen or fifteen feet apart from story to story, when you figure in the terra cotta fireproofing between and the steel beams. Why would a crook use a rope seventy feet long when he could use one only eighteen feet long at the outside?'"

He complacently reached for another match, and in the interim Featherstone remarked:

"Isn't it absurd? And all of this time I was trying to remember seeing some man like those photographs you showed me, Mr. Burnside, who might have come into our office!"

"You can find the hook-marks on the under side of the metal window sash in the room above," resumed Graham. "I knew then how they had come in, soon as I noticed that the catch was off on the window in this office. That was something, but it was just a teaser. I wanted to know *who* come in and *where* they took this coin. So I starts to look over the safe again. That burnt place bothered me a whole lot. It didn't seem to mean anything, and then it meant a whole lot just because I couldn't explain it to myself. The more I looked at that no-account spot the worse muddled I got until I happened to see this little brass ball on the floor ag'in' the table-leg."

He passed the sphere over for inspection. One side of it contained a hole, threaded. Directly above it was a tarnished spot, much like the one in the safe door.

"Then it hit me like a ton of brick," went on the narrator. "Why, not ten minutes before I'd seen *two balls*, just like that, up in the wireless room on the roof. Electricity or something that used it was at the bottom of this deviltry. An electric spark would make a little burn on that enamel, and I knew that the night wireless operator was the only fellow I'd seen up around here last night. Not a bloomin' tenant was in or out after I came on duty. Of course, the operator could come up or go down and I wouldn't think anything of it. But, if I was right and it was him, would he come back? I took one more jump at trying to reason, this time in the dark, and figured that, like every other crook, he'd feel safer if he thought somebody else was up against it for what he'd done. That's why I told Mr. Hill I wanted to be arrested. Sure enough, he did. And, between four o'clock and the time I nailed him with the goods, about an hour ago, I had the whole plant in my fingers."

"You mean you found out how he exploded the safe from the inside?" asked Featherstone.

"Yes. You see, Charlie helped me out in that. Charlie's my son." A note of paternal pride crept into the hitherto colorless narrative. "I went straight to Brooklyn and telephoned for Charlie. He's a student at the Polytechnic Institute, makes X-ray machines, and juggles a lot of things that you can't hear, see, taste, feel, or smell. I put it up to the boy. He explained to me that this little brass ball was probably one pole of a Rummykorf coil—something like that. It sets up waves or vibrations in ether—not the first cousin to chloroform—but something that's everywhere. I asked him if it could go through steel. He said he didn't think so. Steel and lead and such things, he said, would shut off the waves of Hertz. I felt myself slipping until I remembered that this spot on the safe was toward the edge of the door, where it folded over the other door. Now, if those doors wasn't air-tight or wave-tight the waves could go right in and do their dirty-work. And they did—he can tell you how if he wants to."

Graham jerked a thumb at the pallid-faced young man staring moodily at the carpet.

"It was mighty cute," the night watchman observed. "I'll give you credit. But you was a mutt to leave that varnished screen back in under the bed in the wireless house on the roof, even if it does fold up. Still, I gotta admit you fooled me, kid."

The youth's face flushed with perverted pride. He raised his head defiantly.

"You'd never got me if I'd had two hours more and hadn't been fooled by that story in the evening papers," he asserted. "I go off duty after the last foreign dispatches are relayed over the telephone at four-thirty or five in the morning. I had the bag with me right then, but I saw you, so I had to leave it until to-night."

Graham laughed as he went on:

"Well, some folks has a lot of education and some of us has to pick it up from hard knocks as we go along. That's why I'm a night watchman. But,

seeing it's all over but what the judge says, do you mind telling how you planted the juice inside the safe, and what the girl's name is that helped you?"

A scornful smile fleered over the face of the prisoner. His thin lips drew together until they formed only a narrow carmine line across his face.

"You'll never know her name and you'll never catch her," he sneered. "Besides, I told her the package contained only some valuable papers I wanted her to keep a couple of days for me. I knew they had coin here but that was paralyzed me. She wouldn't do anything wrong. The package she thought was only some papers was really a cell of dry battery, in circuit with a coherer and a polarized relay, which was wired to an explosive of my own."

The youth's voice rose in a note of defiance.

"Some day I'll get a pardon for that formula—if I don't get tired and blow up the jug where they send me. I wired my small coil to the light circuit in the room above before I let myself down. When the Hertz rays went through the cracks in the safe they bridged the Norway iron filings in the coherer. That let the current from the small cell of dry battery flow through the coherer into the polarized relay. When, under this current, the north pole of the relay became the south pole, the lever shifted and touched off the explosive with an ordinary electric percussion cap. The

only place I fell down was on this nose old pup," he brutally concluded.

Billy Graham showed no signs of irritation. Instead, he regarded the prisoner sadly. He swallowed once or twice and turned to the other men, dabbing his eyes with swift passes of his gnarled fingers.

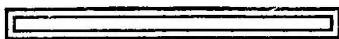
"Excuse me, gentlemen. This has been a pretty hard day for a night watchman that haint got much education, and I'm getting old. I was sure in hell when I bounced in here this morning. I had to climb out some way. Guess that's the only reason I could—because I *had* to, or be in bad the rest of my life myself."

His voice quavered a little. He paused to regain his composure, then turned appealingly toward the president of the Columbian Securities Company, now tucking the crisp piles of greenbacks into the bag with a grim smile.

"We'll see you're well paid for your good work," replied that official, cheerily. "It's phenomenal, isn't it?"

Superintendent Hill and Detective Burnside nodded, but Graham put up a protesting hand.

"I don't want any reward, in money, Mr. Featherstone. I guess I'm somewhat to blame myself for being so careless." A tender smile flitted across his face. "Mebbe you've got children of your own. Anyway, I wish you'd take a little time before you decide on this youngster's punishment. He's just about the age of my Charlie."



A ROMANCE OF THE NORTHLAND

A splendid novel of love and adventure in the Canadian wilds will begin in next month's BLUE BOOK. Harold Bindloss, who wrote "A Delilah of the Snows," "The Cattle Baron's Daughter," "Winston of the Prairie" and many other well-known novels of open-air life, is the author; and we can promise that this new story will afford our readers a treat of a really exceptional sort.

Complete Résumé of Previous Installments

“INNOCENCE” is the name which Clay Landrum has given to his wonderfully beautiful painting of a nude young girl, for which his *fiancée* Esther has posed as model. Richardson Buchanan, a wealthy man who pretends to be a connoisseur of art in order that he may the more easily pursue the women who earn their livelihood as artists' models, offers ten thousand dollars for the painting: Landrum promptly declines the offer.

Yeomans, the art dealer, reminds Landrum that to offend Buchanan will be to ruin his career; but his influence is counterbalanced by that of Kathleen Morrison, a wealthy young heiress and philanthropist, who urges the artist to be steadfast in his refusal. Landrum takes Esther and a number of his artist friends to a Bohemian restaurant. There Buchanan finds them, and by the exercise of the sinister talents of which he is master, contrives to meet Esther and to influence the whole party to accept his invitation to a dinner at the Café de l'Opera.

The millionaire has already discovered the weak point in Landrum's armor—a craving for alcohol. So at the dinner—a feast graced by all the luxuries of which wealth could conceive—Buchanan contrives to play upon the artist's failing.

Esther is seated beside the millionaire, and Landrum finds himself next to a fascinating woman—one of several with the names of whom Buchanan's is linked. As the dinner proceeds, Landrum's jealousy of Esther increases, even as his growing intoxication maddens him. The climax comes when the servants bring expensive presents to each of the women—and Esther's proves to be a costly diamond brooch. Landrum springs up, knocks down a waiter who interferes, snatches the brooch from Esther, and hurls it in Buchanan's face. After a terrific struggle, the artist is finally overpowered; but as they are about to force a sedative dose of morphine upon him, he wrenches free and rushes out.

In his despair and shame, Landrum drinks himself into a stupor. Afterward he is cared for by his friend, the drunken artist Nye. When Landrum has recovered somewhat, the two go to Esther's apartment. At the door they meet Buchanan—and Nye forces the millionaire to leave without seeing her. Later, Nye explains to Landrum that his own wife had been one of Buchanan's victims.

And now, when Landrum has practically succeeded in shaking off the temptation of drink, comes word from a magazine editor that a certain set of illustrations for which the artist had accepted a commission must be completed in six hours. Landrum has always taken great pride in his dependability; he cannot bear to fail now; and he calls upon the whisky-devil to help him complete the almost super-human task. By the aid of the stimulant he succeeds in finishing the drawings, but the ordeal leaves him weak and exhausted. And then it is that he meets Esther driving in Buchanan's electric coupé—which he had sent that she might take the air during her convalescence from an illness which had followed the dinner fracas. Landrum suspects the worst; and the one-time lovers part in anger.



“INNOCENCE”

The fourth installment of the remarkable novel by Edwin Bliss, wherein life among the Bohemian set of New York is daringly depicted: Landrum's fiancée and model, Esther, leaves him for the millionaire, Buchanan; the artist plans revenge.

B Y E D W I N B L I S S

IX

HIS OTHER SELF

CLAY had torn the knee of his trousers in the fall. His right wrist pained frightfully and, looking at it, he saw it was sprained a bit. He opened his mouth to curse but his throat was so frightfully constricted by the rage that rent him that no words would come. Nye went to his studio with him, then returned to his own, offering no comment.

Clay quickly changed his clothes and washed up. He was very quiet now. Once he looked in the cheval mirror and was surprised to find that rage had smoothed out the wrinkles on his countenance, had burned down the bloat under his skin. His expression was terrible. His lips were tightly compressed and his eyes blazed with hatred. But the whiskey-sotted appearance had disappeared.

He sat down at the window, throwing open the door to allow a draught through the room. He feared no longer. He wanted to fight anyone who should venture to come near him. His brain was working rapidly and in a direct line.

Esther did not care any more: that was the foundation for his trend of thought. Well, if Esther did not care, then life held nothing for him. And if life was empty, he should grasp to himself the tighter the idea of revenge upon the one who had spilled all the sweetness from his cup. Buchanan must suffer.

He was not wild any longer. Everything was plain, coherent. His fingers twitched no more at thought of twining them about the throat of the millionaire; his eyes did not glaze with blood-lust. It was simply retributive justice. Esther had made her resolution clear to him, and he alone could circumvent her.

He did not quite know how he was going about it—the painting of “Innocence” might give him an idea, embodying almost in the flesh the girl he loved, as it did. So much of his own soul had gone into the work that he knew he could dispose of it only as he could dispose of the subject.

He shuddered as he recalled the last expression in her eyes, the gaze of loathing and hatred. He must amend that—or balk Buchanan. He was will-

ing to sacrifice himself to that. But how—how—how?

He looked at himself in the glass, wondering at the astonishing change which his rage had brought about. Before, under the influence of the whisky, he had gone seedy, had cared nothing for his personal appearance; now he studied himself much as an actor would survey his features in the glass, just before the last call before his cue.

He shaved a bit more carefully, put a bit of boracic acid in his eyes, then gave his face an ironing out with towels wet at the hot water faucet. He might never have had a drink, from outward appearances, when he started down the stairs. Emerson poked his head out the door of his studio and beckoned him, his face betraying a surprise which he tried vainly to conceal. Clay stood in the doorway, insolently smiling, indifferent, frankly impatient. For some reason or other he found all his old affection for Emerson gone, looked at the chum of the lean years with eyes that might never have seen him before.

"Well, Emmy?" he demanded, rather sharply.

The little fellow fidgeted nervously. He had expected to speak with a broken-spirited man, had expected to comfort and console and advise, but here was one he had never seen before. He felt a curious embarrassment in the artist's presence, and lunged awkwardly at his subject.

"See here, Clay," he blurted, "we've been pals long enough to talk straight from the shoulder. Hardy, Slegel, and I called on Esther to-day—"

"I just met her below," Landrum coldly interrupted.

Emerson stared at him as though suspecting he had suddenly developed an irrational streak, but the cold, hard eyes fastened impersonally upon him showed his mistake.

"Why, she was ill in bed—"

"Downstairs in Richardson Buchanan's electric," continued Clay, as though he had not been interrupted. "She looked rather well, Emerson. Is that all you have to tell me?"

"Yes—er, no—that is—oh, hang it all, Clay, I want to talk to you about this booze thing. You're the top notcher

of the game right now. You've got your big chance and that chance isn't going to hang around long unless you grab it. It's a way that chances have. Now Clay, it's been tough sledding for us all, and you alone had nerve enough to stick to what you believed was your destiny. Don't let it slip—"

"Is this to advise a sale of 'Innocence?'"

"No, hang it all; it's advising you to paint—to paint every minute of the time—to paint just as I know you dreamed of painting when fame and riches would be yours and Art could be spelled with a big *A* and money with a little *m*. I'm not preaching a temperance lecture, Clay, but good common sense. Grab this chance while it's red hot. Cut the booze. I know the stuff. It is a good friend for a long time and then it slips up behind you and cracks you one with a black-jack. Tie a can on it while this thing is ripe. It isn't only for my sake and for your sake, Clay, but for Esther. You should have heard her pleading with us—"

Landrum smiled. Had he laughed, croaked, made any sound, Emerson would have felt better. But that smile—such a smile! Agony and derision, mockery and love, hauteur and baseness—everything was in that cold, chilly satanical smile that hovered about the thin lips, played in the steely depths of the luminous gray eyes, puckered the high, white forehead.

"Is that quite all, Emerson?" he queried softly.

Emerson nodded, knowing he had lost, had blundered his appeal.

"Then all I request of you is that you will kindly not interfere with my affairs any longer."

He turned upon his heel and moved slowly down the stairs. For a long time the little decorative artist stood watching the opened door. Had there been any heat about the insult, had he even slammed the door, it would have been a relief. But no—it had been cold, thoughtful, irrevocable, final. Quietly he closed the door, moving to the farthest corner of his studio that he might not hear the steps of his erstwhile friend upon the stairs, those leisurely steps.

A mad sort of joy lightened Lan-

drum's heart as he emerged into the open air and moved across town toward the Avenue. His pulses were beating fast, yet with a regular, steady pound that exhilarated and delighted him. He laughed softly to himself as he recalled the expression upon Emerson's clubby face, the look of a wounded dumb brute. It had given him pleasure to inflict the wound. He stood apart from himself and looked at this new Clay Landrum, looked at him admiringly, winked at him cunningly, and the new man winked back at him with such a fiendishly jolly expression that he could not repress his chuckles.

He was so interested in this new friend walking with him that he moved up the Avenue, altogether unconscious of the crowd, for once oblivious to life and the living of it, freed from the search for new sketches, new angles. He felt that this rollicking companion of his would always keep him supplied with ideas. Already his brain was in a whirl from the maze of diabolical thoughts, the grudges, hates, malices that boiled and seethed within.

Before the window of Yeoman's he halted, taking a curious satisfaction in nudging aside the rather shabbily garbed, slender figure of a girl staring adoringly at the painting of "Innocence" against the magnificent velvet draped interior. What a fool he had been to paint such a thing! He smiled, frowning as his eyes encountered those of the girl. She was staring at his face, staring as though her eyes were fastened there by terror. He entered the gallery.

"Yeoman," he ordered curtly. "I wish to see him immediately."

The attendant bowed. Landrum sneered as the black, pointed mustache of the dealer immediately appeared from the first exhibit room and the man came forward, rubbing his hands propitiatingly. What a silly thing that this fellow should approach him in such servile fashion! Why, it had only been the other day that Yeoman would have hedged and hemmed and hawed about staking him to a canvas. But he was a fifteen thousand dollar man now—he was the artist who would bring a figure—he was Landrum, whose hands were the hands of money.

Money—how he hated it because the thing that had brought the possibility of it was this painting, "Innocence." Money—he would toy with this thing which other men worshiped, spit upon it and toss it from him to show his utter contempt for it. Yet he would always retain the ability to make it, produce that which would bring it in; otherwise these dogs would kick him as a lower cur than themselves. Yes, he would flaunt his ability to make money before them, see them lick their slimy chops and then draw away the bone from their avid lips.

"You have decided to sell, Mr. Landrum?" Yeoman queried, taking it quite as a matter of course, from his manner, that such should be the reason for bringing the artist back to him.

Clay shook his head indecisively. He liked to perplex the man, to bait him as a mischievous youngster would a cat by dangling a mouse above it, just out of reach.

Yeoman rubbed his hands the harder, smiling brightly.

"Well, well, it doesn't make much difference," he laughed aloud. "Buchanan's offer and indorsement has got winded about and I have five orders for your work. The papers have sent their critics here and the reporters wrote about the crowds—it's one of the greatest sensations ever pulled in this country. It's the first time I ever knew a living artist to create a furore by his work in New York."

"I'm not thinking of painting for a while," Clay answered slowly.

"Oh, but you must. Now is the time—"

"*I'm not painting just now.* By the way, I dropped in to tell you to send 'Innocence' to my studio immediately." He started to turn away when Yeoman's hand gripped his sleeve, whirling him around sharply. He glared back into the man's eyes, eyes that were at once incredulous, infuriated, astonished and fearful of his painter's sanity.

"It's suicide, man," he declared hotly. "Didn't you hear what I just said. You can't make people think you're a wonder while you're alive by having crazy anecdotes told about you. Even Whistler had to die to make them sound good.

'Innocence' is getting big publicity now. It is getting orders. You turned down a whale of an offer. All right. You can't refuse to allow it to be shown when it's bringing in orders that will mount to a few hundreds of thousands. Man alive, I tell you—"

"Send it to the studio."

Clay turned away and had almost reached the door when again Yeoman's hand fell upon his wrist. There was nothing but rage in the dealer's eyes now.

"Listen, Landrum," he snarled. "You've got the big head or you're still drunk. I don't know, and I don't care which it is. There's a fortune in this for you and there's money in it for me. I'm not going to allow you to throw it away. You know that I am Yeoman. Well, Yeoman has a lot of power in this city. If you take 'Innocence' out of this window right now, I'll use every ounce of that power to kill you so dead the people won't know there ever was a Clay Landrum. I'll kill you in the way I know how to kill artists of your habits and caliber." He waited a moment, his eyes fastened like a basilisk's upon the artist; then, slowly, his tone changed to one of entreaty.

"Come, Landrum, don't be an ass! Don't be an ass, old man. We'll work together to get the most out of your work. You have the artistic goods and I know it. I have the salesmanship qualities and you know it. Let's pull together. You probably have a notion of selling 'Innocence' yourself—got an offer that listened good. But I tell you it would be foolish to take it off exhibition now. Haven't you now?"

"I intend selling it if the party wishes to buy it. I haven't inquired as yet." Clay's smile was devilishly amused as his eyes still held the perplexed ones of the dealer. "Come, Yeoman, take the painting out and send it to—"

Yeoman whirled upon his heel, lifting both hands emphatically to the assistants in the front room. His voice cracked like the snap of a whip as he spoke.

"Take 'Innocence' from the window. Replace it with that Holmesworthy nude that just came in."

Landrum merely smiled as the dealer

turned upon him again. He knew the significance of the placing of a Holmesworthy there, knew young Holmesworthy's work to be similar to his own yet no copy, knew that the man had great merit, style and breadth of conception, though his management of pigment, his juxtaposition of masses, his ideas of the constructive arrangement of colors, was decidedly un-original. Still, Yeoman could gloss over these things and indeed could use them as points of artistic value.

But it seemed to mean nothing to him, this plot of the dealer's. As a matter of fact, he did not care a hang one way or another. Let Holmesworthy win—what difference did winning make? Winning—why it was the essence of all things bitter and vile and valueless! He glanced at this new Clay Landrum, and the strange creature laughed with him, laughed cynically, yet with such an expression of wisdom that he could not be pleased at his own judgment.

He walked jauntily down the steps, turning to observe the removal of his masterpiece. Carefully, with infinite pains, the men labored, directed by Yeoman himself. The velvet portières parted and "Innocence" disappeared from out the window. A stifled sob, the sob of one who suffers deeply, cruelly, smote his ears, assailed him with a poignant barb of reproach. It was as though he had stolen the heart of the sufferer. He looked around, to see a slender, shabbily garbed slip of a girl walking swiftly away—down the Avenue.

Her back was racked with the sobs she strove to repress but could not.

X

KATHLEEN

Landrum sat alone in his studio, brooding, brooding over the changes of a scant few days. Below, he could hear Nye moving about, restlessly feverish. He had hated that tigrish step before. Now, it was a matter of indifference to him. Everything was a matter of perfect indifference now, Esther—indifference; money and fame—indifference; friends—he could not stomach them any more; work—he had lost his relish for it. And

he was tired—tired. Was there nothing in the world to care for, to stimulate him as of old?

The heavily wrapped painting of “Innocence,” standing in a corner, met his eye and he untied the strings with steady fingers, tossing the great wads of wool that protected it into a corner. Upon the easel he placed it, studying it coldly and impartially.

It was the “Innocence” that had belonged to him, and not to the model. It was his own dream of happiness that the rich man had deliberately stolen from him. It was very much like the painting of Nye’s in the saloon—that same idolatry in the work, the same idealism. Buchanan had stolen once. But he, Landrum, was an instrument of Providence to prevent another such theft.

“The God-call of Man to Woman!” Even now the cadences of Kathleen Morrison’s voice seemed to strike upon his ears, soothing his spirit like a heart balm. And Buchanan would steal that from him.

There came a knock at his open door.

He rose quickly, bowing gravely, at the beautiful woman tapping upon the open door. Strange that Kathleen Morrison should call at such a time!

Like a breath of fresh air she was as she entered, drawing her hands out of the long white gloves and tucking them up about her wrists. Coldly he looked upon her wonderful beauty now, the impression of saintliness that hovered about her. It was a sham, just as everything connected with her sex was sham, false.

She seated herself quite naturally, after his greeting, her manner cordial yet business-like. For a few moments she played with the tinkling silver rings upon her mesh hand-bag, studying the painting upon the easel. She turned with a ringing little laugh.

“I’m afraid I must capitulate, Mr. Landrum,” she cried gayly. “I will duplicate Mr. Buchanan’s offer for ‘Innocence’—ten thousand dollars, was it not?”

Clay nodded quietly. Somehow, he did not care to sell. He had taken a harsh pleasure in looking at the thing, reviling the falsity of it.

“I fought and fought against its appeal,” Miss Morrison continued lightly, “but it kept coming back the more I tried to put it from me. Then, when it disappeared from the window at Yeoman’s I thought I could stand it no longer, and—at my weakest moment, the saleswoman arrived who was to carry me completely away.”

Her eyes grew serious and she studied her hands as they lay in her lap. The wonderful poise of her appealed to Landrum, icy cold though the mood had been upon which she intruded. What a wonderful subject for a portrait she would make, sitting there gravely at war with herself—despite her millions—over giving way to a costly impulse. Her mellow voice was very low, almost a whisper, when she continued, but so well modulated that every word stood out like a cameo.

“A little telephone girl, Mary Moffatt, at the Balkingham, where I have an apartment, was telling me about how much she would miss the painting in Yeoman’s window. She had met you, just a little while before, Mr. Landrum, and she was all a-flutter. I drew her out, and from that simple little art critic found that I had not been wrong in seeing what I did in the painting, that it was all there—just as I had seen it myself.”

For a moment Clay did not answer. He was standing, now looking at “Innocence,” then turning to the prospective buyer. She had lifted her wonderful eyes to his once more and he found himself again trying to determine the color of them and failing.

She was hurting him, this woman, tearing his heart to bits. He felt a cruel, cold wave stealing over him. He laughed, meeting her wistful look with a bitter one.

“I have found that you are both wrong,” he said quietly. “The picture is false, false in conception as the subject was false.”

Her eyes half closed, and tiny wrinkles of pain gathered about the corners of the lids. She did not speak but her lips parted and he took a cruel delight in seeing that her bosom rose and fell spasmodically with the pain he had caused her.

"False," he repeated coldly, "as hell itself. It is hell—the gift of a Creator to a living man of ideals and dreams which he builds within that man in order to smash, just as the sculptor smashes with his mallet the clay model with which he is displeased."

He drew closer to the painting, the work in which he had put his very soul. Esther's eyes were luring him closer; her lips were smiling sweetly, alluringly. But, as he looked, the face loomed at him from out of the glass of an electric brougham and the lips were hard as sapphires. False! False!

"I am sorry—wont you let me tell you that I am sorry?"

Like the scented breeze of a first May day playing through the strings of a lute were her tones. Her fingers, impulsively resting upon his wrist, were cool and velvety. She had risen and was standing beside him. Again his eyes filled with tears and again he fought them back. Why did the woman torment him, try to keep alive within him the folly that his painting showed?

"Rumor has a million tongues, Mr. Landrum," the woman continued very slowly as he held his head away from her, "and—forgive my saying it—I have heard some things. Please—please don't be bitter. Don't cast out of your life the things that are worth while, the real things."

"Worth while!" He laughed hopelessly.

"The song within your soul, the joy of knowing that the life of one little telephone girl like Mary Moffatt has been brightened by a dream you were able to bring from out yourself. The joy of knowing that the life of one poor woman who often grows tired and fearful that she has worked ill where she thought and hoped to work well has been cheered by a tangible expression of all she ever hopes for. Just the two women—Mary Moffatt and myself—should make you happy."

He steeled himself against the luring witchery of her voice, the sincerity of her tones. He drew his hand away and paced the floor. With a sigh, she re-seated herself.

"You loved—you love her very much, the model," she continued softly. "I

have heard about the last few days, Mr. Landrum. She must love you very much indeed—a woman must love the man who thinks of her as you have thought of this girl. She may not show it, but, remember that you are male and she is female. Remember that the ways of a woman are often strange ways, and baffling indeed."

"Love! the love of a woman!" He laughed again as he whirled upon her, this old maid who dared speak to him, while he suffered, of something she knew nothing of. She read it upon his face, for her eyes filled with tears of rage which she quickly suppressed.

"Where a woman loves, she does not ask for references," she continued softly. "She gives her heart without reserve and, from the moment of giving, she screens her eyes to his faults, only resting her hand upon his head, love telling her of his vices and showing her the way to heal.

"You have the making of a woman's world, Mr. Landrum. You have the marring of a woman's soul. Which will you do?" She looked from the painting to his face, and the contrast deepened the lines in her forehead. "Be very careful, sir, how you choose. If you mar, Mr. Landrum, you will only have a heavy load to bear with you through life. Around every corner you will expect and hope and dread meeting her; upon the car you enter, the carriage you pass, you will look for her face; in every little rain-drop, every snow-flake, you will see her eyes, the eyes of the soul you marred. You cannot escape them. They look from the stars upon you. The back of the girl just ahead of you is the back of the woman you marred, the face that disappeared just as you entered the shop is the face of the woman. Be very careful, sir, for the night will bring no relief. Close your eyelids, and in that narrow slit between them and the retina, the woman will stand—will stand and reproach you."

He stood very close to her, his nostrils quivering with the sensations set up within him as he looked into her eyes, enmeshed himself in her voice. He could not see anything but himself as his face looked back at him from the

mirror of her pupil. Like a saint she was, as she pleaded with him, pleaded with him not so much for the woman herself as for the soul within him which Esther had brought into full grown life.

“You—you—” He drew away from her, frightened at what he read in those eyes, frightened yet a-thrill. “You know of love!” he murmured.

She opened her lips to answer, and her face grew very soft and tender, and her eyes closed while a smile illuminated her face, such a smile as he thought the angels might wear with only heaven about them and their last thought of sordid Earth forgotten.

And then he turned away, ashamed for having spied upon her unfolded soul, and his eyes fell again upon the painting. In that second his eye-sight played some quip upon him, for the face of the painting caught a curious shade of light that drew the eye-lids of Esther down till but a pin-point of flaming pupil showed, and the lips grew thick and red, and the face was the face of Buchanan. He smothered a curse as he sprang back to get another focus upon the work.

Innocence!

The painting of Nye’s in the saloon had been that of another Innocence—and the whole thing was false—false—a lie and a tissue of cleverly concocted lies. The light had told him the truth at last. He knew his Innocence for what it really was.

“Ten thousand dollars, I think Mr. Yeoman said was the offer,” said Miss Morrison, drawing a tiny check-book from her mesh bag.

“Miss Morrison,” he said quietly, turning upon her and fastening her with hard eyes, “I have another purpose for the painting. You say that you have heard of the last few days—I know what you have heard and that has probably only been a part. I am going to use the painting of Innocence to protect my fellow-men.” He laughed raucously, at the swift alarm that leaped to her eyes.

He recalled something Nye had told him. Whisky is the outlet for emotions of the Anglo-Saxon. It relaxes him. Whisky cannot be cured until the

cause is cured, and the cause with man is almost always a woman. The sodden sot does not drink because of a craving for the stuff, but because, even as the heart may beat after death, so will the memory of a grief remain—even after the actual cause of grief is forgotten and the dulled brain still ticks its message to the sot that whisky will revitalize that memory. And the memory of a grief is better than its complete loss. That had been Nye’s purpose in selling his portrait of his faithless wife to a saloon. To show the falsity—the falseness of clinging to the Past instead of peering and prying into the Future.

“Yes, I must decline to accept the offer again,” he murmured coldly.

“What are you going to do with it?” Her voice was strangely harsh and unnatural. She rose and clutched his arm, and the pressure of her fingers bit nigh to the bone.

“Rumor has a million tongues, Miss Morrison,” he mockingly parroted her own words. “You will doubtless learn in time.”

She relaxed her grip, moving slowly toward the door. There was a weariness to her back, a hopelessness that seemed to come from a spiritual sagging, for her physical carriage was perfection itself. At the door she turned and half held out her hands to him. He watched her quietly, not stirring.

“Don’t—don’t hurt—yourself, Mr. Landrum—please,” she pleaded. “Don’t hurt yourself. Forget what I said to you about the woman; forget everything but—don’t hurt yourself. I know—what it is to do—that.”

“I know you do,” he answered coldly.

She staggered slightly back, a little “oh-h,” of pain coming from her lips, a cry of distress very faint and child-like, yet distinct as a bell. Then she turned away and went slowly down the stairs. Clay watched her steadily, coldly, looked at the place where she had been until the chugging of the motor outside told him that she had gone. Then he turned—turned and smiled at his reflection in the mirror.

Well, this woman would not bother him again, this beautiful woman who

would lure from him his misery, his hatred. His expression had told her that he read her secret, read and scorned her for it.

Carefully he stooped and collected the woolen pads from the corner, then carefully wrapped "Innocence" up once more.

Buchanan could not have Esther, but the world of which he intended to become a part could have the Esther that had been Innocence, and could see the falsity of it all.

Then he would attend to the millionaire.

XI

MAN-MADE AND LABELED

When Esther removed her tiny white teeth from her lower lip, a little fleck of red blood streaked down her softly dimpled chin. She smiled as she looked at the smear in the mirror of the luxurious electric. Somehow, she did not know this new self that smiled back at her, this soft, curling creature with the exquisite features and the narrow, speculative expression in the eyes that had always been so wide and innocent. There was something purposeful in the expression of the face that looked out of the glass that made her laugh aloud, knowing that some whispering, unpleasant quail that had always acted as a check upon her actions before had become unleashed.

Landrum—she was done with the drunken brute. Buchanan—Buchanan was the real resource. Both of them spelt luxury, wealth, sybaritic enjoyment. She was going to have this. She would have vastly preferred it with the fruits of the labors of the stunningly powerful looking young artist, but since he had shown that he intended making a continual ass of himself, then Buchanan should provide it for her. But time was fleeting. Every moment that she wasted was one moment closer to the fading of Youth, and Youth meant power to gain.

She did not worry about her chances with the multi-millionaire. She only bothered about the means of approach. Like all clever women, she knew that man loves to pride himself upon his

conquests, but that all such conquests that pass readily are not real ones at all. She knew that when man starts out on feminine conquest bent, should the woman in question chance to want the man, then the man is hopelessly lost. She knew that. But—she was perplexed as to the campaign to wage against the Buchanan purse.

She allowed herself no illusions regarding the man. She knew that it was her youth and beauty that he wanted.

Not for nothing had she worked in Yvonne's, where many accounts were carried on the books for many women and sent to one man. Not for nothing had she learned in the gossip of the shop the inside tales that made the gayest French novel dry as dust compared to the apparently soulless figures of the auditor's books. And she knew the game, knew that tens of thousands of girls in New York lived by their wits, receiving and never giving—never giving until that inevitable moment arrived which Robert Browning referred to as "the time and the place and the loved one."

She shuddered. A musical show had stolen the line for a title and she knew it well. That time had been inevitable for all. Would it be inevitable for her? All of the girls had told themselves that it would not—priding themselves upon a chastity which was epidermis-deep and eventually bemoaning a lost virtue which, through the surge of the over-powering Nature-God, cleansed their silly inner selves of years of mental libertinism.

Esther had no illusions about herself. In her way, she loved Landrum. She knew that when he kissed her, the world faded away, leaving nothing before her vision save the one man. She knew the throbbing agony of longing for him, knew the happiness of being with him. But that was temporary, and there were always the long, long hours between, the hours which she wished filled with luxury.

Urged by some impulse she could not define, she pressed the button and directed the driver to Buchanan's office. She had no idea where the millionaire would be, knew no reason why she should start her campaign with a

visit there, save that she knew how most men of affairs hated the interposition of women in their business and that therefore Buchanan would take such a call as the innocent expression of an overwhelming impulse.

Twilight was clustering heavily over the town when she entered the great sky-scraper and shot toward the top of the building. Over everything was the hush that always seems so much a part of this time of day, only now the hush was that of a great anticipation, a tense hush that presaged the roar of millions released from the day's toil.

She was immediately ushered into the private office of Richardson Buchanan. The quiet magnificence, the spaciousness of the outer offices which occupied the entire floor, had made but little impression on her. Now that she stepped into the heavily carpeted room of the millionaire, looked at the gross figure hunched forward in the swivel chair, she caught her breath with a little gasp.

Buchanan rose to his feet with the brisk alertness of a cat. Again she caught herself wondering at the astonishing agility of this great mass of flesh. Her hand was lost in his and she wondered at the steel muscles the soft flesh incased.

“This is a surprise,” he murmured in his too-rich, soft tones. “Just in time to make an old man forget all the worries of a hard day.”

She laughed, dropping her head in pretty confusion.

“I couldn't seem to wait—to—to thank you for your kindness,” she murmured; then, reaching out, she grasped both his hands impulsively, holding them tightly in her own and lifting her eyes with a visible effort and meeting the yellowish white of his own without a symbol of her disgust.

“I couldn't seem to wait to thank you,” she repeated in a burst of gratitude. “It seemed so wonderful that you—so busy—should bother and think about—about—me.”

Richardson Buchanan's pin-points of pupils seemed completely to disappear under her gaze. She saw his shoulders shake, and exulted, felt his hands tremble slightly and, despite herself, a warm

wave of emotion rushed through her body, suffusing her face and making her hate herself for it when she caught the expression of delighted incredulity on his gross countenance. He turned to his desk with an effort.

“Just a few papers to sign,” he murmured, and his voice was beclouded.

She laughed lightly, stepping to the window and looking down from the tremendous height. Across the way, far, far below, another sky-scraper reached only half way up to her. She could see a Tom Thumb of a man upon the roof. Far down in the narrow street, little insects hived, black bugs sped, puffs of vapor bursting in their wake. The sky was suffused daintily with a myriad of pastel shades while the glistening silver ribbon of river was ruthlessly cut by toy boats. And those insects were men; those black-backed bugs were motor cars; that sliver of water was the great river, and those toy boats were the ferry boats with their hundreds of passengers. But she was here, viewing them in their proper perspective, viewing them from the office of the man whose wealth and power dominated a hundred times such insects as she could see even from this height; she was here in the mountain top of the ruler of Power itself—Esther Winthrop.

She turned toward the desk. Lightly in his hand he drove a fine-pointed pen across the bottom of the sheets of paper, checks, blue prints, documents. The lines he made were delicate, fine, expressive of exquisite sensibilities. Yet his great back was thrust against the back of the chair as though he would burst through it; his great legs were planted upon the floor as though all these insects were trying to lift them. Yes, under the softness of flesh, under the delicacy of writing, was always the steel of strength, the throb of virility. The thought softened her to him, softened her even as it hardened her resolution. He looked swiftly up at her, rising to his feet.

“Venice is a runway of rats compared to it,” he said. “There is no view to compare to our New York, no place to mention in the same breath.”

He stood beside her, legs planted far apart, his great arm brushing against

her slender one. She could feel, even through his coat, the tremendous vital force of the man, could feel and long to draw away yet could not. For a long time, he did not speak and, glancing up into his face, she caught a hungry expression there that astonished her. It was as though the toad that had lived its thousand years within the heart of the rock glimpsed the light of day and longed for it, yet knew that it could not be a part of that light; as though an orchid born high in the thickening tangle of some black, loathsome jungle of Borneo sucked at the very vitals of the beautiful woman at whose corsage it lay, only to find itself a thing apart from real life; as though some forest log were overturned and the sickening whitish fungi beneath reached out toward the light of Nature—looked out, longed and, longed, died.

"God, I love it," he muttered, and she knew he was unaware of her presence, had forgotten her entirely. "It's all Man—Man—Man. Let them have their mountains, their oceans, their forest camps, their country homes, but give me New York. It's Man—Man—Man. Every rock has been wrested from this Nature, despite itself, and placed to suit the ends of Man; the rock itself has been bored to suit the convenience of Man; the very heart and soul and bowels of Nature—this Nature they rave about—have been torn and bled and battered and bruised to save Man five minutes of his time."

She shuddered at the long, twitching flexions of the muscles in the arm against her own. Like another *Caliban* he was, cursing that which he could not understand, exalting that which he found to be in his own element. He must have caught her feeling, for he laughed lightly and moved toward the door.

Swiftly the electric traversed the distance between downtown and the Avenue. Evidently the chauffeur understood his master, for he switched at Thirty-fourth Street across the thoroughfare, into Broadway at its busiest. The giant men of iron upon the Herald building were alternately lifting their hammers and chopping down the time, remorselessly as any woodsmen. Esther

looked at the throng that hemmed them in, wondering that nobody of them all so much as glanced at those horrible figures, killing precious time with their bludgeon blows.

Eight o'clock—it was Time they were slaying. Eight o'clock—it was Youth they tortured with each stroke. Eight o'clock—it was that much nearer the end of Youth. And Youth was Power, and Power did not die; but Youth died—died—died under the business-like strokes of the clockmen. She reached out, impulsively clasping her slender fingers about the great arm of Buchanan. He looked down at her and smiled.

Her eyes, while she was consciously unaware, took in everything, immersed in the whole yet subconsciously disassembling the whole into its component parts. The white blaze that stretched up Broadway seemed placed there to light the way for her along this giant aisle of pleasure.

The tiny shops tucked away meekly between office buildings, theatres, hotels and restaurants made brave show to draw the gaping crowd along the lane, with barkers, sandwich men, and lesser electric signs. Aloft, a bare-legged Roman, incandescent hearted and bodied, drove a monstrous incandescent chariot to an uncertain finish line of corset, tooth powder, automobile, and toy advertisements. An agile cat, never weary because of the electric muscles of her, played with a spool of thread that grew from out a giant dynamo of the mysterious fluid. Champagne and ginger ale in bottles thirty feet long squirted electric carbonizations into exquisitely chased electric cups and goblets. Brownies joyously tortured teeth forty inches wide by one hundred long with tooth brushes of electricity.

Theatres exploited stars and plays. Cafés extolled their wares. And the jostling, hysterically gay crowd upon the streets madly scurried about in the auto-intoxicating glory of their own achievement.

Esther was conscious of attentive maids in cloak rooms, genuflecting waiters, seductive orchestras, brave show of white shirt fronts and gorgeous frocks. She was conscious of whispered

comments, flattering glances, eager attention from many. But it was a haze to her, a rose-tinted haze through which she wandered with bedimmed eyes.

She reached out her mental arms until they tired, and she sighed luxuriously as she curled herself out and laid her mental cheek upon the bosom of this man-made night. A different night it was than any she had ever known. There was none of the softness of the real night, just as there was none of the unpleasant realization of the harsh morrow that began with cold dawn; there were none of the tingling spurts of pity which night brought to her maidenhood before, pity that midwived dreams of a shaggy-haired man whose image thrilled her inexplicably, sometimes bringing her bolt upright in bed with the wonder of him. But it was a night of reality, a night that she might always have, that she had it in herself to gain, to have and to hold and to love—love—love always.

Upon the stoop of her shabby furnished rooming home, she reached out both hands once more and impulsively took the wrists of the one who had introduced her to this new world. She did not speak as she looked into his eyes.

Richardson Buchanan's eyes met her own. She could not see the pin-points of iris, so far had they receded within their fortress of pupil. He seemed to be a-shudder with the chill cruelty of Nature, a beautiful exotic fouled by the fertilizer that gives it more power for display. The tremble of steel muscles sent shivers through him. She knew they were there, knew it and was acutely conscious of it even as she turned and stepped within the dark vestibule, knew it and exulted. He was her pawn, her plaything to do with as she choose. And she had chosen—had chosen life—the life that was Man-made.

Esther lay long awake that night, staring at the ceiling. She was aware that her eyes felt peculiar, that they ached

as they had never ached before. She tried to persuade herself that they smarted, rubbed them. But she knew it was no smart. She knew it was the tensing of the muscles about the eyes, knew it was the searching expression, the hard, questioning look that had been in her eyes throughout the day, the expression she had caught in the mirror, in the eyes of the women along the Avenue, the eyes of the women of the evening.

Faintly to her ears came the slow, measured beat of Time. Before her eyes rose a giant, inexorable figure of iron with no incandescent halo about him to relieve his Doré-esque aspect.

One—

She waited, breathless. She put her fingers to her ears that she might not hear, closed her eyes that she might not see. The figure on the other side of the clock lifted his arms. Again the fatal, musical tintinnabulation of sound.

Two—

She opened her eyes. The alarm clock on the little table greeted her. The hands pointed at two o'clock. She sprang from the bed and, governed by some mad whim, threw the inoffensive clock from the window.

Two o'clock—Time—nothing could stop its flight. And its flight meant death to the ruler of power, to Youth. It meant Age, and Age meant loss in this man-created life she had sipped at this evening.

A shudder shook her frame, shook her into a fit of sobs that left her eyes hot and blistered for the lack of tears. A memory came to her, etched clearly against the haze of the night. Richardson Buchanan had still not even offered to touch her hand. He was not won yet.

And the iron figures were killing time, killing Youth.

She was wakened by a strange sound, one she had never heard before. Her jaws pained. Instinctively she realized that, in her sleep, she had been grinding her teeth.

THE next installment of “Innocence” will appear in the February issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale January 1st.



A Fight for Christmas Dinner

One of the most tensely exciting of "Blue Funk" Carson's exploits: to give a young man accused of cowardice a chance to prove his courage, he takes the boy with him among cannibal hostiles; a fight, a flight—and a victory.

By JOHN BARNETT

I

"I TELL you, the fellow's a thorough cur. He's disgraced us all!"

Three Englishmen sat together in the tawdry hotel bar of a little West African coast town. Around them Portuguese and half castes were drinking and chattering. The bar was brightly lit with poisonously smelling lamps, and the atmosphere was stifling, although it was within ten days of Christmas. Outside, under the blazing stars, the air was close and still, unrefreshed by any breeze.

"Yes, we're all disgraced through him. He's given the Dagos something to sneer about for once. And the niggers even are singing songs about the Englishman who ran away!"

Carson, the English trader, looked up lazily from a secluded corner. He was tall and narrow shouldered, with sleepy eyes and dull red hair.

"What are you fellows talking about? I only came up coast to-day." The three were old acquaintances of Carson's, and they gave him hearty greetings. His name was a by-word in West Africa for cool recklessness. Fresh

drinks were promptly called for in celebration of his coming.

"We were talking about Cyril Dugan. Haven't you heard the yarn, Carson? He's a young chap not long out from home. Hang him, I wish he'd stayed in England! We've no use for curs out here, disgracing us before the Dagos and natives!"

Carson lifted his eyebrows, sucking leisurely at his cheroot.

"What has he done? You seem pretty hot against him. Personally, I have some little sympathy for cowardly people." The other three laughed good humoredly. It was always old Carson's way to talk in that way about himself.

"Oh yes, we know all about that!" one of them retorted. "For a cowardly person you take some queer chances with your precious life! You'll take one too many some day. What is your latest bit of deviltry, Carson?"

Carson's lean face was imperturbable. "Never mind about me. Tell me about this boy."

"Why, he went on a trading trip with Jack Camber, up river. They did well enough until they came to the Mtombis' country. They've always been danger-

ous, treacherous devils, those Mtombis, but my word, they're simply asking for a lesson now! Anyone but these slack Dagos would have given it them long ago. Cannibalism is only one of their pleasing little habits. They'll eat nigger if they can't get anything better, but white man is what they really love for 'chop.' But you know all about them, of course."

"I know something," Carson answered. "My pal Dick Bennett has a store beyond their country."

"Yes, poor devil, and a thin time he must have of it! I don't envy him his Christmas!"

"I promised to eat my Christmas dinner with him this year," Carson said quietly.

"Well, you'll have to break your promise. It would be simple suicide to keep it. The Mtombis are 'out' and mean real bad business. You wont go, of course?"

Carson shrugged his shoulders. "What happened to Jack Camber and this cowardly boy of yours?" he asked.

"Oh, their camp by the river was rushed one night. The Mtombis must have been stalking them for days, I fancy. It was only a small party of the devils. They began as usual by throwing spears and firing 'potleg' into the camp. Jack Camber was badly hit in the leg. Then the Mtombis rushed in earnest. After that, well—the story is somewhat vague. All we know for certain is that young Cyril Duggan and three or four of his boys got clear away in the canoe. Jack Camber, being wounded and helpless, was—left to shift for himself! Poor old Jack! I hope he gave the brutes indigestion! He was lean and tough enough!"

Carson frowned slightly at the story. In common with most of his fellows he held the simple theory that almost the one unforgivable crime was the desertion of a pal.

"It sounds pretty rotten," he said. "But what's your authority for the yarn?"

"Oh, Duggan himself admits it, more or less. He says that Camber was cut off in the rush, and all that sort of thing. It would have been hopeless to try to rescue him. That's his version,

and it might sound fairly plausible. But one of his boys has been chattering. I don't think he had ever seen an Englishman show the white feather before. It struck him as a distinct novelty. According to his yarn, Duggan never worried about poor old Jack at all. It was just a case of saving his own dirty skin!"

"The native boy may have been lying," Carson suggested. "You wouldn't take his word against a white man's."

"No, rather not, but all the boys tell the same yarn. And Duggan isn't pleased with himself a bit, although he tries to brazen it out. I tell you, Carson, it looks black against him. And he's been made to feel it. The sooner he clears out, the better."

"He's only a young chap, you say?" Carson asked.

"Yes, about twenty. And—my word, here he is!"

Carson glanced up sharply, and saw a tall young fellow enter the bar.

He was a well built boy enough, with a face that should have been distinctly good to look at. But it was spoilt just now by an odd, hunted expression in his dark gray eyes. He made his way to the bar and ordered a drink, glancing around him with a queer mixture of defiance and misery. Carson and the other Englishmen watched the scene with curiosity. Everyone was staring at the English boy. The Portuguese and half-castes were whispering together with ugly laughter. Even the bartender's manner was as offensive as he dared to make it. He pushed forward Cyril Duggan's drink and slapped down his change with an insulting grin. He too had heard the story of the English youngster who had left his pal to die. Cyril Duggan's thin cheeks flushed hotly under their sunburn.

"No, it's not all jam for him," one of the Englishmen said grimly. "Why doesn't he clear out and hide? He'll never live this down, and quite right too!"

And then a queer thing happened, one that was remembered for long by those who saw it.

"I believe somehow that he's got a backbone," Carson drawled lazily. "Here goes to prove it!"

He lifted his long, lean body from his

chair and walked slowly up to Cyril Duggan. As he advanced, a hush fell upon the crowded bar. The Portuguese and half-castes ceased to chatter. They waited eagerly to see what Carson was about to do.

Carson spoke in a clear voice.

"They tell me that you're a coward, Mr. Duggan," he said. "They tell me that you left a wounded pal to be wiped out. Is that true?"

The room gasped at his words, and gasped more sharply at what followed. Without hesitation Cyril Duggan struck Carson fairly across the face with his open hand.

"True or not, there's my answer!" he cried.

The audience looked for instant violence. If Portuguese or half-castes had been concerned, knives would have been drawn at once by the two chief actors. As they were English, and therefore mad, anything might happen. Possibly there might be shooting with pistols. More probably they would pummel each other brutally with their fists. In any case, there should be a pleasing spectacle.

But to the general amazement Carson did not instantly resent the blow. He smiled quietly and wiped a smear of blood from his face.

Cyril Duggan stared at him in wonder. He knew Carson by sight and reputation. It was inconceivable that he should overlook the insult of a public blow.

"I'm ready to fight you," Duggan said hoarsely. "You've called me a coward! I'll meet you with pistols when you please." And then Carson spoke, in his usual easy, lazy voice. "I'm not sure that I care to fight you," he said.

Cyril Duggan went white.

"What do you mean?" he said fiercely. "Damn you, what do you mean?"

"You are disgraced," Carson said, and his words, from him, sounded oddly cruel to the three who knew him well. Carson, in their experience, was not a cruel man. "I can refuse to fight you, if I choose. And I do refuse to fight you—yet."

"What do you mean?" the boy repeated hoarsely.

"You've got to prove yourself worth fighting," Carson answered with a faint smile. "If you're a coward—well, I'm not going to disgrace myself by meeting you. If you're not—well and good. And I'll give you a chance to prove it."

The room was hushed to a tense silence. Every man within it was straining his ears to hear. This scene was unique in their experience. They stared with all their eyes at the shamed, white-faced youngster and the tall, lean man with blood-smeared face who held the stage. "Carson was always a trifle mad," one of the Englishmen muttered. "You never can tell what he will take it into his head to do!"

"I start up river to-morrow," Carson went on coolly. "I am going through the Mtombis' country. There will be—perhaps a little danger. I propose that you shall come with me. It will be a test. If you pass it, I will fight you when we come back—if we come back."

For perhaps half a minute Cyril Duggan stared almost stupidly at the speaker. And then there came an odd gleam into his eyes.

"I will come—I shall be glad to come!" he said, and turned and walked quickly from the bar.

Carson smiled lazily and sauntered back to his friends. "You surely didn't mean it, Carson?" one of them said. "You were joking, man, surely? It's almost certain death to try the Mtombis' country just now!"

"Oh yes, I meant it," Carson said quietly. "I have to go through that country, anyway, and at once."

"Why do you have to? Is it trade you're after? I tell you, trade is hopeless until a strong expedition is sent up river!"

"Didn't I tell you?" Carson drawled. "I promised to eat my Christmas dinner with Dick Bennett. And I always keep my promises."

"You're mad, stark mad! And if you *must* chance your life by going, why should you take that young cur with you?"

"Oh, that," said Carson, "that is merely a little whim of mine. Perhaps I wish to test a certain theory about his character. Put it down to insanity! So long, you chaps!"

And he lounged from the bar.

The three gazed after him.

"I never did understand old Carson," one of them said. "It wasn't like him, somehow, to make things harder for that boy when everyone was against him. What has he got in his head, do you suppose?"

"Lord knows! But I doubt if we see him again, or Duggan either. The Mtombis will take care of that. But he's a good chap, alive or dead. It's my turn to shout. Here's to old Carson, and may he pull through!"

And the toast was drunk with full honors.

Carson always hated to explain his eccentricities, but next morning some sort of explanation of his latest whim was forced from him. He returned to his room, after making all preparations for a start in the evening, to find a girl awaiting him. She was slight and dark and very pretty, and her great black eyes were ablaze with anger.

"What you do to my Cyril, where you taking him?" she cried at sight of Carson.

She spoke her broken English with the quaintest, prettiest accent. Carson guessed that there was more Portuguese than English blood in her veins. Her exquisite face might have moved any man to gentleness, and Carson was always incapable of harshness to any woman.

"He is coming up river with me," he said gently.

"You want kill him, I suppose!" the girl flashed out. "I hear dat you insult him, going to fight him. You all call him coward! What do you know 'bout my Cyril? He better dan you all! I love him, and he love me—once. Now everything spoilt. He say he no able to marry me, now dey call him coward. He not—not coward! Oh! I hate you—hate you all!"

And then Carson made his explanation. The girl, as she stamped her tiny foot, with the tears in her great eyes, might have wrung an explanation from a statue.

"Perhaps I believe in your Cyril," he said. "Perhaps I think he is no coward. But he has got to clear himself, if he is to do any good out here. There is a

stain upon him now. That is why I am taking him with me. There will be danger—oh yes, there will be danger. But if he pulls through alive, if he shows himself no coward, all will be well with him once more. Do you not understand?"

The girl's charming face lost its anger, but her eyes were piteous.

"I understand. You good man. But bring him back—bring him back to me!"

She caught at Carson's hand and kissed it, before he could prevent her, and darted from the room.

That evening the odd pair of adventurers started up river in a canoe, with Imbono, Carson's huge negro body-servant, and half a dozen boys.

II

The two spoke little amid the chances and hardships of their journey. Cyril Duggan seemed to be watching Carson, wondering what the man had in his mind towards him. Carson had insulted him, had apparently gone out of his way to make his position harder, and yet—he found himself liking the lean trader, could almost believe that he wished him well. And deep in his heart was a passionate resolve to accept this strange chance that Carson had given him, and to prove himself no coward after all, in spite of—everything.

As for Carson, he was just his placid, rather silent self, getting good work out of his boys without blows or abuse, and dealing coolly with all difficulties as they came. But he in his turn was also watching Duggan, observing him unobtrusively as the trials of the journey tested him, and steadily he was coming to believe that his instinct had been right about the boy. He might or he might not have yielded once to panic; Carson as yet was far from certain upon that point; but he did believe that there was good stuff in Cyril Duggan.

He recalled that evening among the rapids when the canoe was overturned. There had been sharp peril for them all, peril from the rocks that gleamed razor-like amid the leaping, rushing water, peril very real and ghastly from

lurking crocodiles, but young Duggan had not failed. He had borne himself with the coolness of a veteran, steadying the scared boys and backing up Carson and Imbono in the wild work of retrieving canoe and baggage. Carson had observed him well, and once again he had wondered at that story of cowardice. But now they were nearing the Mtombis' district, and the boy's real trial was about to come.

It began with a night attack upon their camp. They had landed upon the bank and eaten supper without fire or other light. Carson might love knife-edged danger for its own sake, but all the same he was one who neglected no sane precautions. Their awakening was rude. There was an ear-piercing yell from the native sentry, mingled with the sharp report of his rifle, and then he had plunged for the shelter of the camp, landing upon all fours among the awakened sleepers. And then came savage howls and the roars of ancient muskets as the Mtombis strove to rush the camp.

Carson was cool and adequate as ever. A sharp word served to bring the flurried boys to their senses. Cartridges were in readiness, and there was cover of a sort behind the piles of thorn bushes with which Carson had surrounded the camp. A sharp little volley met the dark, swift-moving figures that came charging through the moonlight. Neither Carson nor Imbono were accustomed to waste cartridges at a crisis, and Cyril Duggan proved himself as steady a marksman. The Mtombis checked and drew off for a space, seeing that their surprise had failed. Carson gave a brief order to Imbono, and then turned to Cyril Duggan.

"We must take to the canoe," he said. "They're in too strong force for us to hope to hold the camp. Imbono will get the boys and baggage aboard, and you and I will lie on guard in case of a sudden rush."

"Right!" Duggan answered, so coolly that Carson smiled at him.

"It's not a bad lark, is it?" he said cheerfully, and Duggan remembered having heard men say that Carson was only really cheery when other people were beginning to make their wills!

"No, jolly good," he answered. "But must we really clear out?"

"Yes, no option," Carson said. "It's only a fool who never knows when to run away."

He saw the boy's face change, and was sorry for his thoughtless words. Cyril Duggan had remembered the disgrace that lay upon him. In the excitement of the fight he had clean forgotten it for the first time. He turned his face from Carson and thrust more cartridges into his repeater.

There came a faint whistle from Imbono in the canoe.

"He's ready for a start," Carson muttered. "Get aboard and I'll follow."

Duggan raised a flushed face.

"No. I'm damned if I will!" he answered. "I'm going last!"

Carson smiled pleasantly.

"And so you shall," he said. It was not his habit to yield the post of danger to any man, but he felt that he owed the boy some reparation. He climbed down the bank and aboard the canoe, and half a minute later Cyril Duggan followed him. "Thanks," he muttered, as he took his place beside Carson in the stern. Before they had gone two hundred yards they heard an outburst of disappointed yells as the Mtombis rushed the deserted camp.

"We've done them in the eye this time," Carson said with a chuckle. "But the game's not over yet by a long chalk. Word will be passed through the villages. We've got a tough row to hoe, if we're to get clear through. After this, we'll lie up by day and travel by night."

And for two days and nights they followed that program with success. It was literally a game of life and death that they were playing, with the odds cruelly upon one side. The constant, menacing strain of that game would have worn down the nerves of most men, but Carson, as usual, was at his best and brightest through those days and nights. And the boy whom he watched proved himself his equal in gay hardihood. They joked together constantly through those long hours of deadly, pressing peril, this strange pair who were to meet one day with pistols—if they lived! Carson often wondered if two men so oddly placed had ever

faced danger together. But his faith in the boy and his liking for him were growing fast.

It was upon the third day in the dawn that the death chase fastened grimly upon their heels. The river had broadened out into a chain of narrow, shallow lakes. In the gray light they were searching for a landing place where they might find shelter through the day, when Imbono pointed astern with a sharp exclamation. Two large canoes, packed with warriors, were surging after them.

"So they sighted us from that last village!" Carson said cheerily. "We ought to have landed before the light grew, but we can't land now! We should meet with too warm a welcome in this district! Lay on to the paddles, boys! We've got to show our heels!" The boys needed no urging. Already the paddles were buckling beneath their strokes. The canoe shot forward, more than holding her own. From astern came wild yells and useless shots. Carson, sitting with his repeater across his knees, chuckled grimly. "Let 'em waste powder!" he said. "We're out of range of their gas-pipe muskets. Steady on, boys! No need for that pace. We can keep 'em at a distance with our rifles, Duggan. I'm not in the least afraid of those noisy gentlemen astern!"

"Our boys have been paddling all night," Duggan said.

"Yes, I know," Carson answered, "but they can hold to it through the day with our help at a pinch. When night comes we can land and give those chaps the slip. But it's the villages ahead that I'm really thinking of. We're almost bound to be cut off. However, sufficient unto the day!"

"The canoes are creeping up," Duggan said coolly.

"I want them to," Carson answered. "It's time they had a lesson."

When the canoes were almost within the range of elderly musketry, the two white men opened fire. The range and rapidity of their repeaters seemed to come as an unpleasant surprise to the Mtombis. From the leading canoe came yells of pain and fury. One warrior, shot through the breast, sprang to his full height and reeled overboard, almost upsetting the canoe.

"Aim for the canoes, Duggan!" Carson cried. "A few shots below the water line will slacken speed for them. We don't want to break our hearts with paddling—yet. Ah! good boy! Those shots went home, I fancy!"

The canoes, in a slightly leaky condition, were turned and paddled out of range. After a while they came on once more, but at a respectful distance.

"Yes, they've learned a lesson," Carson observed with satisfaction. "But they won't give up the chase, of course. They mean to 'chop' us, sooner or later. Well, it's never been an ambition of mine to furnish a meal for a nigger! We'll disappoint them, if we can. You and I had better take a spell at the paddles, Duggan. We can go our own pace now, and we shall want to save our best paddlers for when the real pinch comes."

For hour after hour the chase endured, the two native canoes hanging sullenly astern of the fugitives at a distance that never varied. The Mtombis had learned prudence. They would not give another chance to those devilish rifles that were so swift and powerful. Their turn was coming soon, as Carson had rightly guessed. Some while after noon he peered ahead through the blinding glare, and gave a sharp whistle.

"Yes, there's a village right enough!" he said. "Our friends behind have sighted it too. They are loosing off their muskets to warn their pals ahead. Bear off to the right, Imbono. We are going to have a little real fun now!"

He glanced at Cyril Duggan's face and smiled pleasantly at what he saw. This boy might have failed once, but all the same he was a good man to have beside one when the real pinch came. Or so Carson fancied. At any rate, the real pinch was coming now.

The paddlers, in obedience to Imbono's vivid exhortations, had put on pace. They drew slightly away from the pursuing canoes, but, as Carson swiftly saw, there was no chance of spurting past the village before the alarm was given. He perceived a bustle upon the bank, and two more large canoes put out and were steered at speed to cut off the fugitives.

Carson laughed happily.

"It'll be sharp work now!" he said. "Imbono, get all the pace you know out of the boys! You and I, Duggan—well, we've got to show these new arrivals that we're pretty handy with our rifles. If it comes to hand-to-hand work, they've got us on toast!"

The native boys paddled gamely and desperately, but they were beginning to tire. Already the canoes astern were drawing up with triumphant yells. But it was their new enemies with whom the white men were chiefly concerned. It was certain now that there must be fighting at dangerously close quarters. Carson and Duggan fired as swiftly as they could shove home cartridges, but their stream of bullets failed to check those two swiftly overlapping canoes. They lost men heavily, but they came on. Now they were within musket fire, and one of Carson's paddlers sank down with a groan. Imbono took his place, and the canoe swung on, scourged by a bellowing, ill directed fire.

"It's no go!" Carson said suddenly. "We're leaking fast. That cursed 'pot leg' makes big holes. Make for the bank, Imbono, and paddle hell for leather! It's our only chance—to get ashore—"

His words ended in a sharp gasp, as the canoe was turned for the far shore. "What was it?" Duggan asked anxiously. "Are you hit, man?"

The blood was jetting from Carson's shoulder, but he laughed gaily. "It's nothing," he answered. "Give way, boys!" That sudden double for the shore had saved them for the moment. All four canoes were paddling savagely in pursuit. Carson's weary paddlers were doing nobly. Imbono was a sight to see, as he swung his paddle with the great muscles standing out like knotted thongs through his wet black hide. Duggan still fired savagely upon the pursuers. As he groped for fresh cartridges he realized that Carson had ceased to fire. He glanced at his face and saw that it was deadly white and that he was reeling where he sat. "You're hard hit!" he cried.

Carson tried to smile.

"I think—I rather think you've got your chance, Duggan!" he muttered; and then he fainted.

Duggan, with a word of encourage-

ment to the paddlers, pulled out a handkerchief and bound up Carson's wound as tightly as he might. Carson, he saw, had fainted from loss of blood. Duggan raised himself and looked around with tightened lips. The command of this losing fight had devolved upon himself. He was now responsible for the lives of these natives and of that wounded man. As Carson had said, his chance had come. And he swore in his heart that somehow he would rise to it.

They were near to the shore by now. The paddlers, with the last of their strength, were gamely holding their own. Behind them, three hundred yards away, the four pursuing canoes were surging along almost abreast. Cyril Duggan saw that they would be able to land with something to spare. But afterwards—what then? There was cover at least upon the shore. It was clothed as far as the eye could reach with dry, sun-scorched reeds above the height of a man's head. Those reeds would cruelly retard their flight, burdened as they were with a senseless man. Well, if the worst came to the worst, they must die fighting. Surrender was ludicrously out of the question. Cyril Duggan smiled grimly at the thought. It was something to have one's course of action defined so simply. "Imbono, you and Sam take Mr. Carson between you when we land," he ordered. "Push straight ahead for all you're worth. I'll come last."

Imbono nodded. His sullen eyes, as he paddled, never left his unconscious master's face. Carson was the one living creature for whom Imbono cared. Duggan knew well that Carson could safely be entrusted to the giant's care.

The water was shallowing fast. The wallowing, water-logged canoe was driven against the bank, and the fugitives with their burden sprang ashore, and plunged amid the reeds. Duggan came last, as he had said, repeater in hand. He knew that there was little chance of life for any of them, and yet—his brain had never felt more keenly alert to seize upon any chance that offered.

Through the clogging reeds they fought their way. In a little while they heard the yells of the Mtombis as they

dashed ashore in pursuit. Duggan was close upon the heels of Imbono and the boys. He realized that they were in a long, deep, narrow gully running between high rocks. Their progress was still hampered by those maddening reeds, but at least they were an equal hindrance to their pursuers. Yet already they were gaining steadily upon the fugitives. Duggan could hear their cries and see the swaying reeds. At the head of the gully the ground was bare for some thirty yards, and here he came to a swift resolve.

"Go on, Imbono," he panted. "I'll try and hold 'em back for a bit, and then I'll follow."

Again Imbono nodded without speech. He had no thought save for the safety of his master. The other white man must follow his own path.

Duggan, left alone, chose his ground with care. Beyond the bare space the reeds rose up once more, and here he crouched, himself invisible to those who came. The pursuers, advancing across that narrow way, would offer a fair mark. Surely he could check them for a little while. He had given up all thought or hope of life for himself. Carson must be saved, if possible; that was his one idea. Because Carson was now helpless and in his charge, and, even more, because Carson had given him his chance.

Ah! they were coming now! He saw the dry reeds sway and part, and a dozen dark, sweating figures appear. There were more behind, but Duggan did not wait. He fired swiftly, shot after shot, but with most effective aim. His nerves felt firm and cool as ice. Three natives dropped shrieking, and the rest sprang back into cover, fearful of an ambush. Already they had proved the deadliness of the rifles that these white devils carried.

This was the stern beginning of a slow, running fight. Duggan retreated with grim slowness, halting wherever the reeds opened out, to give the pursuers a taste of his quality. He dared not try to hold his ground for long in any spot, lest the natives should outflank him. But one gully led to another, and the high cover was his friend, and somehow he kept up his end in that

queer fight. And all the while, as he fought and sweated and drew slowly on, his heart warmed to the thought that surely Imbono, with the boys and the wounded man, was securing a long start. And if for himself this retreating battle against odds could end in only one way, well—Carson, as he thought, had fairly earned his life from him.

It was when the natives were growing bolder, when he had just realized that his cartridges were running out and that the game was almost up, that the thought which was to save him came to him like a flash. The breeze was blowing freshly in his face as he retreated, and the reeds were dry as tinder. A hunted man's brain works sharply. Even as the thought came, he acted upon it. He twisted a long torch of reeds and struck a match. The parched reeds caught like gunpowder.

Duggan swiftly sprang across his front, plying the torch, and as he went, a great roaring sheet of flame rose up. The breeze saved him, but even as it was he was badly scorched. He retreated blindly for a few yards, half suffocated with smoke, and then he stood and watched a mighty wave of fire, growing as it sped, swoop forward, crackling, raging and spouting flame, against his lurking foes. He heard wild screams and yells as the fire swept on. . . . He never knew how many of his enemies perished horribly, or how many slunk back to their villages to tell of the white devils who are most terrible and to be feared when they have turned at bay and all seems lost.

The moon had risen when Imbono halted at last from his forced march. Carson was coming back to his senses. Imbono administered whisky, and his master opened his eyes and stared about him.

"What's happened?" he asked. "Duggan—where are you, Duggan?"

Imbono answered:

"He lib for die, I tink. He say to me, 'You go on. I try and hold dem back for a bit.' I done what he say."

Carson staggered to his feet with an exclamation.

"Good God! and you let him do that! You ran away with me and left him to die!"

"I done what he say," Imbono repeatedly sullenly. "He white man; he know best. I want save you if I could. No dam time to talk just den!"

Carson shut his lips. He knew his servant, and his tried, stubborn loyalty to himself. He picked up his rifle.

"Come on," he said shortly, and he began to stagger along the backward track.

"What you doing, where you going?" Imbono asked with amazement. "You lib for mad if you go dat way!"

"We're going back," Carson said stubbornly. "We're going to find Mr. Duggan—" And then he gasped and stood staring through the moonlight.

"I'm either delirious or there's Duggan himself!" he muttered. And it was Duggan. He came limping up to the little party, weary, scorched and wounded, but with a faint smile upon his blackened face. It was such a smile as a man may wear who knows that he has retrieved himself.

Carson caught at his hands with unwonted emotion.

"Old chap, I'd almost given you up! We were just going back to look for you. What miracle has pulled you through?"

Cyril Duggan told his story simply and briefly enough. He was almost done up and he was choking with thirst, but a few mouthfuls of weak whisky and water restored his strength.

"You saved the lot of us!" Carson said when he ended. "It was a great piece of work, and my word, you're a boy to be proud of! But I knew you'd got it in you. I was sure of it from the first!"

"I owe you a great deal more than I can say," Cyril Duggan said simply. "You gave me my chance. If it hadn't been for you—"

Carson interrupted him hastily.

"Let's eat what we've got—it's little enough—and then sleep for a spell. We're all pretty well played out. But we're out of danger now, judging by what you say. And we're within a few

hours' march of Bennett's store. Do you know what night it is?"

"By Jove, it's Christmas Eve, I believe!" Cyril Duggan answered, after reflection.

"Yes, and we'll eat our Christmas dinner to-morrow with old Dick Bennett, as I promised," Carson said with satisfaction. "I always like to keep my promises."

When they had eaten their scanty meal, Cyril Duggan spoke a trifle awkwardly.

"There's just one thing I'd like to tell you, Carson. There *was* some truth in that story they told about me. It wasn't as bad as they made out; there was no chance of saving poor Jack Camber, but—I *did* lose my head a bit."

"You're not the first who has lost his head in his first fight," Carson said kindly. "I know that I was scared to death in my first scrap. You've had a bad time of it, old chap, but it's all right now. I shall have a tale to tell the boys when we get back to the coast that will change their minds about you—just a bit!"

Cyril Duggan laughed to hide his feelings.

"But aren't we forgetting something? What about that little scrap of ours with pistols?"

Carson chuckled.

"I think that duel is off. I don't fight a man who has saved my life. Besides—a certain little lady had a talk with me before we started—"

Cyril Duggan flushed and his eyes brightened.

"Anita? You mean Anita! She—the darling—somehow she believed in me all through!"

Carson looked at him with a queer envy in his eyes.

"Some of you have all the luck!" he said.

Dick Bennett, lean and worn with fever in his lonely store, received his tattered guests uproariously; few Christmas dinners have been eaten with a gayer zest than theirs.



The Second Butler

When is a butler not a butler? If you care for a
sprightly story, with a lot of blithe,
wholesome humor in it, you'll
like this one very much.

By MARGARET G. FAWCETT

AFTER she had arranged her easel to her satisfaction in the shelter of the great barrier of rocks, Miss Helmcourt's maid enthroned herself on a camp stool and surveyed her solitude with a sigh of satisfaction. It was barely eight o'clock, and the guests at Pinchurst were bound to sleep late after the dinner-dance of the night before; she had at least two hours, therefore, in which to attempt a study of this wonderful mass of turquoise and pearl that was sea and sky.

An hour later found her working industriously and happily unconscious of the fact that a cloud, in the shape of a man's head, had loomed up on her horizon. The man himself, who was blond and clean shaven and who had the fresh look of one who has begun his day with a plunge in the sea, had scaled the barrier of rocks from the other side and was only a few feet from their summit when a glimpse of the artist below halted his progress. After he had stared hard at her for the space of five minutes without attracting her attention, he coughed loudly, and this ruse also failing of its purpose, he crossed the summit of the barrier and began deliberately to climb down on the

other side. A loosened bit of stone falling at her feet finally aroused the artist from her absorption, and glancing up she recognized with a frown of annoyance Larke, the second butler.

Unabashed by the frown, he stopped and critically inspected her canvas. "Odd thing," he commented, "how old Serannes' characteristics bob up in the work of his pupils. Those short, messy little brush-jabs, now, and that remarkably low sky line—I wonder, does the old master still have his atelier in the Boul' Mich'?"

For a second, but only for a second, Miss Helmcourt's maid looked disconcerted. "You seem," she commented coldly, "to know your Paris a trifle better than you know your pl— Is that a copy of Keats you're carrying?"

The second butler flourished the small volume unblushingly. "It is," he admitted. "I don't know whether it has ever occurred to you," he continued pleasantly, "but I consider Keats pre-eminently the poet for the morning. Swinburne, perhaps, for high noon, old Omar after the coffee and the cordial, Byron, Pope or some other cynic for the later hours of the night, but decidedly Keats for the morning."

The artist absently stirred with her brush a little puddle of paint on her palette. "For a servant," she remarked dryly, "you seem remarkably well up on the classics."

"Oh, they help to vary the monotony of butling. One has to have something, you know. Hardy, my chief, plays the accordion, but I've no talent. It's different with you, now." And he stared in honest admiration at the little sketch she had begun. "I wonder, with your gift, you're content to be a lady's maid."

"I shouldn't say you were overburdened with ambition yourself."

"There's where you're mistaken," he protested quickly. "I have an ambition—a great and overwhelming one."

"And it is?" In spite of her effort to suppress it, interest warmed the tone of her voice.

"To be a perfect butler—like Hardy," he answered, staring down at her solemnly.

Miss Helmcourt's maid bit her lip angrily. She had believed him to be in earnest when he was merely poking fun at her! She began industriously to paint.

There followed a silence of five minutes' duration which the second butler employed in rolling and lighting a cigarette. "I suppose you've heard of the robbery at the Crossroads last night," he remarked suddenly. "The thief took, among other things, an emerald necklace, valued, they say, at \$50,000. I must confess," he went on, seemingly undisturbed by the fact that Miss Helmcourt's maid was not evincing the slightest interest, "that it's an awful greedy burglar who's doing the job. Take the missus' string of pearls that was lifted. One single stone would be sufficient to provide funds for—well, let us say for a whole year's study in Serannes' atelier."

"Or secure one leisure for an uninterrupted study of the classics," unexpectedly supplemented Miss Helmcourt's maid.

"Quite so," he agreed imperturbably. "I hadn't thought of that. Well, this is the day we clean the plate, and with the wind veering toward the east, Hardy is bound to be peevish. *Au revoir!*"

"Good morning." Miss Helmcourt's maid managed to inject a great deal of relief into her voice, but when she was alone she forgot her painting and sat for a long while staring frowningly out at the turquoise sea.

Later, however, when she carried a breakfast tray into Miss Helmcourt's room, the frown had disappeared from her brow and her eyes were dancing.

"Why, Pen', how excited you look!" Mary Helmcourt sat up in bed and stared at her maid.

"I've been chucked under the chin," that young woman giggled, setting down the tray and straightening her cap.

"You've been *what!*"

"Chucked under the chin. It was,"—airily,—"bound to happen, you know. Sooner or later every maid with the slightest pretension to good looks is chucked under the chin." And this one executed a clever little *pas seul* on the pink and white rug in front of the dressing table.

Miss Helmcourt shuddered. "It's terrible to think of you living like this, Penelope," she wailed. "It's on my mind every single minute of the day."

"Pooh!" Penelope, who had caught up a hand-glass and was studying her profile critically, smiled reassuringly over her shoulder. "Don't you worry about me, Molly," she said. "I'm having the time of my life. Poor, dear Dad having been a bishop and a snob, I guess my tastes are just naturally low." Suddenly she dropped the mirror and hurrying over to the bed gazed sternly down at the worried looking pink-and-white lady in it. "Now see here," she admonished, "this wont do, you know. Remember, to-night is *the night!*"

Mary Helmcourt promptly set down her coffee cup and clasped her hands.

"Oh, Pen'," she sighed, "if I only make a good impression! My whole future depends on it. It will justify everything."

"Well, you will." Penelope's voice expressed serene confidence. "And it will be a good joke on that ugly little Opperwitz, too. When I think how you camped for weeks, half starving at that, outside his door, and weren't even

permitted to see him! I hope you rub it into him when you're famous!"

Miss Helmcourt gave an experimental cough. "Thank goodness, my throat is perfectly clear," she said. "Did I tell you that Mrs. Gallatin has sent to town for Madame Rumleigh to accompany me? She thinks of everything, though I know she's half sick over the loss of her pearls. Pen', it hurts me to think we're playing her such a trick!"

"Fiddlesticks! Anybody with the loads of money she has can't be seriously injured by what we've done. That reminds me,"—Penelope perched herself at the foot of the four-poster,— "Larke, the second butler, you know, told me this morning that there's been another robbery in the neighborhood— at the Crossroads this time."

"Good heavens! Mrs. Gallatin will be positively ill when she hears it. I hope,"—naively,— "it wont spoil things to-night. Do you think I'd better wear the blue-green tulle?"

"Yes," Penelope approved, "that's the most becoming. I hope, Molly, you realize what a dash you're cutting here," she added. "Those pearls bought a lot, didn't they?"

"Oh, Pen', when I think how we've staked all—even our self-respect—on this one issue! And, after all, Oppervitz may not like my voice."

"Nonsense! There isn't a soprano at the Metropolitan who can touch you!"

"Well," replied Mary Helmcourt, squaring her shoulders, "I'm not going to let myself think of anything but success. Goodness, are you sleepy?" For Penelope had given a tremendous yawn.

"I've been up for ages. You see, it's such a ripping morning I thought I'd go down to the sea and work on one of those pictures Merton said he might dispose of for me this fall. By the way, a funny thing happened. While I was at work the second butler chanced along and, after inspecting my work, had the impertinence to tell me that I must have studied with Serannes."

"How in the world would he know Serannes!"

Penelope shrugged her shoulders. "Perhaps he cleaned brushes in Ser-

annes' atelier," she suggested carelessly. "He's lived abroad, you know."

"No, I didn't know. I wonder, Pen',"—Miss Helmcourt eyed her maid keenly,— "if you realize how often you quote the second butler?"

Penelope blushed. "Oh well," she retorted, "one has to have a little amusement, you know. And Larke is quite a superior person. He reads Keats and—"

"I presume," Miss Helmcourt interposed sarcastically, "it was he who chucked you under the chin."

"He? Certainly not! It was a guest—that impossible Western person—Mr. Harrington."

"Mr. Harrington!" There was a note of dismay in Miss Helmcourt's voice. "Why, I thought I told you? He isn't a guest at all—he's a detective employed by Mrs. Gallatin to find her pearls."

For a second, but only for a second, Penelope's airy confidence seemed to desert her. Then she tilted her chin saucily. "Well, he can't suspect us, you know," she declared with assurance, "—which reminds me that instead of gabbling here I'd better be seeing the housekeeper about that slip of yours that's to be pressed." And snatching up the tray she whisked gayly out of the room with it.

In the butler's pantry, Hardy's assistant was rubbing up the silver with an energy which seemed to prove the truth of his assertion that his only ambition was to be a perfect butler. As he worked he chatted with his chief, who, ancient and apoplectic, stood watching him with an expression that was half deprecating, half admiring. Miss Helmcourt's maid, crossing the dining-room in search of the housekeeper, was suddenly arrested in her progress by a voice which she recognized as Hardy's.

"For God's sake, do be careful, Master Willy," it implored. "You don't know what an awful risk you run!"

"Nonsense, Hardy,"—and Penelope marveled a little at the affectionate note which robbed the second butler's voice of its usual flippancy, "the risk is nothing! What we must think of, man, is the reward."

A shuffle of feet caused the listener to scurry back through the door by which she had entered; and when, five minutes later, she made a fresh sally into the dining-room she found Larke industriously polishing the Chippendale serving-table with a piece of chamois. Her intention was to pass him without a glance, but when she reached the table she stopped and asked abruptly: "Is your name Willy?"

Bowing low before her, he flourished the chamois and paraphrased glibly,

"Father calls me William,
Sister calls me Will,
Hardy calls me Willy,
I hope you'll call me Bill."

"There's no reason," she retorted haughtily, "why I should call you anything. Moreover," she added accusingly, "I believe 'Master Willy' is what Hardy calls you." And then, curiosity overcoming her sense of discretion, "I happened to overhear just now—" she began.

But what it was she overheard she hadn't a chance to tell, for a door at the farthest end, which connected the dining-room with a sun-parlor, was poked open suddenly and a fat face peered in.

Instantly the second butler stood at respectful attention. "Is there something, Mr. Harrington?" he asked.

"No—that is—yes, a little thing." Mr. Harrington, diffidently emerging into the room, seemed the most embarrassed member of the trio. "I'm leaving on the 4:30 train this afternoon, you know," he explained, "and I wanted to be sure that Hardy knew so he could arrange about the luggage."

"Yes, sir. I happened to overhear Mrs. Gallatin give precise orders about the motor this morning, sir."

"Oh, then, that's all right." He stood awkwardly hesitating, and it occurred to the observant Penelope that the second butler would have played the rôle of guest with better grace than Mr. Harrington was playing it. "By the way, Larke,"—the latter shot the inquiry suddenly,— "weren't you formerly in the employ of Wilmer, the steel man?"

"No, sir; previous to getting my present screw I've lived abroad, sir, mostly."

"Ah, I'm mistaken, then. I haven't a very good memory for faces—except pretty ones." And with a leer at Penelope he ponderously withdrew.

The second butler tiptoed across the room, peered through the door at the retreating figure, then closed it and sauntered back to the serving table. "Rather overdoing the part of the newly made Western millionaire, isn't he?" he remarked to Miss Helmcourt's maid.

"You know he isn't one?" she demanded.

"He's Frank Whiting of the Burt private agency—one of the small army of sleuths who've been attracted here by the robberies." He made a pretence of resuming his polishing, but out of the tail of his eye he was watching Penelope.

"Have you been long in Mrs. Gallatin's employ, Larke?" she asked.

"Not quite a month," he answered. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing." She began, absently, to tie knots in her handkerchief. "Supposing," she said, "the man who's been committing these robberies should learn that the coast was clear. Wouldn't it be a good opportunity for him to—to—"

"Make his get-away?" supplemented the second butler as she hesitated. "Well, as a matter of fact, he'd be playing right into Whiting's hand, for he's not going back to town, you know. That was merely a bit of false information dropped for our benefit."

"*Our benefit*," repeated Miss Helmcourt's maid breathlessly. "Why do you say *our benefit*?"

He raised his shoulders an inch or so and dropped them. "Perhaps I like the association," he answered lightly. "To be looked upon as the companion, even in crime, of one—"

Fortunately for the second butler, however, for Penelope's temper was rapidly rising, Hardy came in just then, a bunch of keys in his hand, two cobwebby bottles under his arm, and taking advantage of the diversion, Miss Helmcourt's maid managed a dignified exit.

From an inconspicuous balcony which accommodated several other

ladies' maids besides herself, Penelope that night heard Miss Helmcourt sing before a small but distinguished audience that included a dapper little man who crouched low in his chair in the rear of the ballroom and who smiled superciliously when the vocalist of the evening made her appearance. Penelope's hands tingled to box his ears for that smile, but before Mary Helmcourt had sung half a dozen bars of her opening aria she observed that a look of alert attention had replaced the smile, and decided to suspend judgment.

As a matter of fact, that look gave way in turn, as the song progressed, to a series of extraordinary expressions which, Penelope felt sure, must pre-empt either an operatic career for Molly or an apoplectic seizure for Opperwitz. And when, at the conclusion of the aria, the latter sprang to his feet and shrieked Bravo! after Bravo! at the singer, punctuating each with such reckless handclapping that he burst his white kid gloves, she knew it was a career and not a seizure and hurried away to hide her happy tears.

Being a creature of mercurial temperament, however, when she caught a glimpse, from an open window, of a voluptuous Lady Moon riding high in the sky, she forgot, for the moment, her friend's triumph and began to picture the effect of the light on the sea and the sand and the sentinel rocks.

A few minutes later, wrapped in a long coat, she was stealing through the gate that guarded the servants' entrance to Pinchurst. Searching, she found the beginning of an obscure little path that was her own discovery, and following its windings, she came out presently at the point of rocks where she had sat and painted that morning. Here she established herself in a sheltered nook and stared with worshiping eyes at the moonlit ocean.

"I will go back to the great, sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men—the sea!
I will go down to her—"

she began softly to quote, and then stopped in the middle of the line and bit her lip. She never would have thought of Swinburne, she told herself

angrily, if it hadn't been for her conversation with the second butler that morning. Sternly she banished the thought of him from her mind and began resolutely the task of impressing on her brain, in terms of line and mass and tones, the scene before her. She stuck to her task valiantly for an hour, at the end of which period she succumbed to the lullaby the sea was crooning and fell fast asleep.

A spatter of rain in her face awoke her, and she opened her eyes on a changed world, for the moon had disappeared and the rocks that had been gray and ghostly were black, and great waves were mouthing them hungrily. Springing to her feet, she pulled the hood of her coat over her head and ran breathlessly back along the path that led to Pinchurst. The house was forbiddingly dark and, to her intense dismay, she found that the servants' gate in the high brick wall was locked.

Here was a pretty situation, for even supposing she could scale an eight foot barrier of brick, the chances were the house itself was securely bolted for the night. Penelope clenched her fists in anger at her own carelessness and began desperately to strain at the gate. She was still intent on this hopeless task when a noise behind her startled her, and glancing fearfully over her shoulder she saw a dark figure creeping toward the wall.

"W—who is it?" she called out in a quavering voice.

"Larke," the figure answered promptly but softly, and with conflicting emotions of relief and annoyance, she stood up and faced the second butler. "Enjoying a nocturnal stroll?" he queried politely.

"Don't be silly," she retorted nervously. "Can't you see we're locked out?"

"You're locked out," he corrected. "I happen to have a key." Whipping something from under his coat, he thrust it into her hands. "Hold this so I can see the lock," he ordered, and Penelope found herself clutching a dark lantern. As its rays fell on his face she saw that there was a bruise over his left eye and that he was very pale and seemed oddly excited.

"You're hurt!" she cried involuntarily.

"Pooh, a mere scratch," he assured her. "You should see the other fellow." As the gate swung in, he reached out his hand for the lantern. "Better let me have it—I don't want the light seen from the house," he said coolly.

Stealthily was the word which Penelope felt best described their progress across the paved court to the little door reserved exclusively for the use of the servants, and when they reached it she rather looked for Larke to produce a jimmy. Instead, however, he took out another key. Some dark object slipped from his pocket with the key and Penelope stooped and picked it up and, after a momentary hesitation, thrust it in the pocket of her ulster. When she glanced up, the door was open and the second butler was fumbling with the slide of the lantern. As her face came within the circle of light, their eyes met, and before she could act on the warning his own unconsciously flashed, he bent over and kissed her full on the lips.

For a second the world stood still; then she struck out blindly with her clenched fist and turning, fled madly through innumerable rooms and corridors and up black stairways until, quite unexpectedly, she found herself in Miss Helmcourt's bedroom. The latter was sound asleep—a night light, unextinguished, and an open book on the satin coverlet telling their mute tale of a vigil overtaken by sleep. Remorsefully Penelope put out the light and retreated to the dressing-room. Here she presently bethought herself of the dark object she had picked up in the court outside, and thrusting her hand in her pocket she drew it forth to the light. It was a black half-mask.

Not a wink of sleep visited Penelope's eyes that night, or morning, rather, and with dawn came the resolution: she and Mary Helmcourt must go back to town. After all, they had accomplished what they came for. Opperwitz had heard Molly sing and liked her voice and there should be no difficulty about her finding an opening. But when she entered the latter's room shortly before ten o'clock, Miss Helmcourt had

news for her which banished every other idea from her head.

"Read that," she said tensely, and thrust under Penelope's nose a brief note scrawled on expensive paper.

"My dear Miss Helmcourt—" she read, "I wish you and your maid would come to my private sitting-room at half past ten sharp this morning. I'm sorry to name such an early hour, but it's very important.' Why, it's Mrs. Gallatin," she added, studying the signature. "What do you suppose she wants?"

Miss Helmcourt wrung her hands. "Oh, I suppose she's learned everything!" she cried. "I wish we hadn't done it! I'm so—"

"Nonsense, Molly, what if she has? Opperwitz is crazy about your voice and if she doesn't like—"

"But the humiliation of it!"

"Now look here, Mary, do, for heaven's sake, be a sport!" And Penelope took her friend determinedly by the shoulders. "I don't believe that Mrs. Gallatin has found out anything and anyway I'm not afraid of her. Hurry and dress; let's see what she wants."

Mrs. Gallatin's sitting-room was a small but luxuriously furnished apartment and made the mistress of it, plain of face and squat of figure, look like an unattractive stone in an expensive setting. She was sitting with Mr. Harrington behind a flat gray writing table when the two young women entered the room, and although both rose, she did not come forward. "I have just received some astonishing and painful information," she began after a brief "Good morning," "and I have summoned you here to see if you cannot give a satisfactory explanation. You remember," she went on, fixing her eyes on Miss Helmcourt's blanched face, ignoring Penelope, "that a few days after your arrival here with other members of my house-party, I lost a string of valuable pearls; and I think I told you that Mr. Harrington, who joined the party last week, was really a private detective employed by me to recover the jewels—"

She was interrupted by Mr. Harrington, or Frank Whiting, to give him his proper name, who bent over and whispered something in her ear.

"We'll wait a minute," she said, and then added, as some one knocked on the door, "There he is now." In response to her "Come in," the second butler entered.

Miserably anxious though she was, Penelope found herself wondering a little at Larke's debonair appearance. In spite of the disfiguring bruise over his left eye, he seemed quite at his ease, somewhat superior, indeed, if anything, and also curiously elated. She tilted her chin haughtily. Not for worlds would she have this creature suspect her discomfiture.

"I sent for you, Larke, because what this gentleman has to say"—Mrs. Gallatin indicated the detective's presence with a wave of her hand—"concerns you even more than the others."

The second butler bowed and regarded Mr. Whiting with an air of polite inquiry.

The latter cleared his throat importantly. "It's quite unnecessary for me to state," he said, "that in addition to Mrs. Gallatin's loss of the pearls there has been a series of other jewel robberies in the neighborhood. My first theory was that some experienced professional was responsible for the jobs, but investigation soon convinced me that a trio of clever amateurs was pulling them off—amateurs in this sense," he hastened to add, "that their names are not yet known to the police."

As he paused for breath, his eyes chanced to encounter Penelope's and the astonishment and scorn he read there seemed to incense him, for he pointed an accusing forefinger at her and shouted: "Young woman, how dare you come masquerading here in the guise of a lady's maid?"

A deep red flamed up in Penelope's face and she opened her lips to speak, but before she could utter a word Mary Helmcourt's voice wailed out, "Oh, it's true—it's perfectly true, and I'm so ashamed."

"Ah!" The detective threw a triumphant glance at Mrs. Gallatin, who made a valiant attempt to appear indignant but who only succeeded in looking grieved. "Let us review the facts," he hurried on. "When Mrs. Gallatin re-

turned last month from Europe and be-thought herself of the daughter of her old friend, you, Miss Helmcourt,"—he stabbed the shrinking Mary with an accusing forefinger—"and the young woman, Penelope Brewster, were living in a two-room flat in New York City and were without visible means of support. You were struggling to get a hearing as a singer and your friend painted pictures which she never sold. From time to time one or the other of you visited a pawnshop of shady reputation and, for ridiculous prices, disposed of more or less costly jewels. Your last transaction there was these." And he took from his pocket and held up for inspection a short string of pearls. "Mrs. Gallatin, having secured the address of her old friend's daughter, generously sent her an invitation to spend the month of August here, and the pearls—I think I'm on the track of their owner—provided the means for accepting the invitation. Doubtless Mrs. Gallatin would have included Miss Brewster in her invitation"—he fixed his relentless eye on Penelope—"only, as it happened, she had never heard of her. With the guests representing such good pickings, however, it was out of the question that she remain behind. She came, therefore, as Miss Helmcourt's maid."

Again Penelope attempted to speak, but Mr. Whiting's bullying voice beat down her own. "I don't believe that in the beginning you planned anything on a big scale," he conceded. "Indeed, I am willing to admit that all you wanted was enough money to tide you over an awkward time. Unfortunately, when you arrived here you encountered and fell an easy victim to the real criminal mind. Young man,"—he turned dramatically on the second butler—"it was with the hope that you would confess all, restore the rest of the jewels and save these young women from public disgrace that, at the request of Mrs. Gallatin, you have been summoned here this morning."

"But it's all so preposterous—you must let me speak!" Penelope had reached the limit of her patience and the words came with a rush. "It's quite true I'm a painter, not a lady's maid, but those pearls,"—she pointed to the

short string on the table—"were mine. They were willed me by my grandmother and so were all the other jewels we sold when Molly and I got hard up. Oh, Mrs. Gallatin"—she held out her hands impulsively—"don't blame Molly for what has happened and don't suspect either of us of being thieves! When you wrote that invitation and mentioned that Opperwitz was to be one of your guests, it seemed such a good chance. You see Molly had been camping on the little beast's doorstep for weeks and he wouldn't even see her. So I sold the pearls and then—they didn't fetch very much, and Merton, the art dealer, had said that he might dispose of some seascapes if I could manage them, and Pinchurst was on the sea and—and there was the dread of spending August alone in New York and so—so we thought of this way. It was wrong, I know, but don't, don't think we are thieves!"

Mrs. Gallatin looked bewildered and Larke curiously relieved. As for the detective, he seemed disconcerted for a second—but only for a second. Drawing a bit of black cloth from his pocket, he waved it before Penelope's astonished eyes. It was the burglar's mask she had picked up and carried to her room a few hours before.

"W-why that—that—" she stammered, but before she got any further, the second Lutler intervened.

"Belongs to me," he finished composedly.

"Oh, you're willing to admit it, are you? Perhaps you will also be good enough to explain," proceeded Mr. Whiting, snapping the spring of a leather case on the writing table and disclosing a necklace of pearls so lustrous that the other string looked cheap by contrast, "how these stones which Mrs. Gallatin has identified as her own happened to be among your effects when I searched them this morning?"

Larke consulted his watch. "It's a long story," he said, "but now that the noon edition of my paper is on the street with the main facts there's no reason why I shouldn't tell it."

Advancing a few paces, Larke earnestly addressed Mrs. Gallatin. "A year

ago," he began, "I returned from a long absence abroad with very little money, but possessed of an idea which I believed was to result in a great book, and I settled down in New York to write it. In nine months I was penniless, but the book was finished, and sure of its success, I hurried it off to a publisher.

"It came back in a fortnight," he added, after a brief but eloquent pause, "with merely the customary blank of rejection. I sent it out again, of course, and then set about finding work, for my situation was desperate. But it was midsummer—New York's dullest season—and I couldn't obtain even the promise of a job. Finally, as a last chance, I applied to the editor of the yellowest newspaper in the city and he offered me the berth of second butler, which he had at his disposal through having saved a big employment agency from some exposure. For years he had had in mind a series of Sunday features on life below-stairs in big country houses, but this was the first opportunity he'd had to secure the real stuff. I accepted the assignment."

Mrs. Gallatin fumbled with her smelling salts; the two girls stared and the detective openly sneered. "I suppose," he suggested ironically, "you are going to tell us that you took the pearls as a souvenir of your first experience in the servants' hall."

"No," quietly contradicted the second butler, "I took the pearls—"

He was interrupted by the sharp ringing of the telephone on the writing table, and mechanically the mistress of Pinchurst reached out for the receiver. "Yes?" she called. "Why, it's Sheriff Widener!" she exclaimed in an astonished aside. "Wait"—for Mr. Whiting had taken an impulsive step forward. She listened intently for a few minutes. "He says," she presently announced excitedly, "that the burglar was arrested this morning in the Haunted Cave and that Mrs. Reid's emerald necklace and Polly Olmstead's tiara and the jeweled Buddha Mr. Strayhorn lost have been recovered, and—" She raised the receiver to her ear again. "He wants to speak to you, Larke," she said after a little.

"Hello," called the latter, taking her place at the telephone. Suddenly he laughed. "I told you," he chuckled, "you'd find him trussed as tightly as a Christmas goose! . . . No, there was no danger . . . Pooh, a mere scratch . . . Yes, I kept the mask as a souvenir . . . Wait, I want you to explain to Detective Whiting here about the pearls."

Mr. Whiting accepted the receiver grudgingly. "He says," he explained reluctantly as he slipped it on the hook a few minutes later, "that Larke last night tracked the burglar to the Haunted Cave where he had concealed his loot and that after tying him up securely he turned all the swag over to the sheriff except your pearls."

"I meant them to be my apology for accepting that assignment," the second butler explained humbly.

The detective edged sheepishly toward the door. "The sheriff wants me to come down and see if I can identify the prisoner," he mumbled, and bolted suddenly.

Mrs. Gallatin hurried over to the two girls and grasped a hand of each. "I think you're both mighty plucky!" she exclaimed. "And I'm sorry I let that stupid detective influence me against my better judgment. As for you, Mr.—" She turned to Larke.

"William Larke is really my name," he hastened to assure her.

"Mr. Larke, I sincerely thank you for my pearls. I suppose you know a reward was offered—"

"It belongs to Hardy," he interrupted, "who, by the way, began his career as butler in my father's house. It was he who suggested that the occupant of the Haunted Cave might be the burglar and not a ghost. Moreover," he added, "I don't need the money; I've found a publisher for my book."

"I congratulate you," she observed a trifle distantly.

"There's just one thing more," he said. "I have no intention of writing those Sunday features; I've offered that editor this burglar beat instead."

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Gallatin, and instantly the shade of coolness disappeared from her manner.

An hour later, Penelope, who was still wearing her cap and apron, joined the second butler at the gate of Pinehurst, where he awaited the motor that was to take him to the station. "Ah, you did get my note, then," he exclaimed, setting down his bags and advancing eagerly to meet her.

"Yes," she admitted, "but I can't think," she added coldly, "what you can possibly have to say to me—after last night."

"You mean that kiss?" Mr. Larke studied his highly polished tan boots ruefully. "Look here, Penelope," he said, glancing up suddenly, "if you could have seen how pretty you looked with those fascinating curls of yours peeping out under that hood and your eyes like stars and that dimple showing in your cheek, you wouldn't have blamed me."

For a second Miss Brewster looked pleased, but she sternly banished the expression. "Perhaps such things are permissible in the servants' hall," she observed disdainfully, "but please remember that the masquerade is over now."

"Are you staying on here?" he asked irrelevantly.

"No, it would embarrass Mrs. Gallatin, who's been so dear. I'm leaving on the two forty-five."

He seized her hand joyfully. "What luck!" he cried. "I'll wait for you at the station and we'll travel up to town together."

"We'll do nothing of the sort," she retorted, struggling to release her hand.

"Listen, Penelope." He possessed himself of the other hand and held both fast. "I love you awfully. Aren't you going to give me a chance to tell you so?"

"But it's perfectly preposterous—you've known me barely a month!"

"In my dreams I've always known you. Look at me, Penelope," he pleaded.

Unguardedly Penelope raised her eyes, and though she swiftly veiled them again she knew her secret had escaped her; and she made no protest when, for the second time in their brief acquaintance, the second butler bent his head and kissed her full on the lips.

“The Winged Victory”

A vivid drama of life among the aviators, by a man who is both an authority on aeroplanes and a writer of intensely interesting stories. This narrative deals with a race for a prize in which a woman wins, then loses—and then wins again.



By HENRY M. NEELY

SEVENTY-FIVE hundred good, hard dollars lay in the vaults of the Farmers' Bank at Rolston—waiting.

Seventy-five thousand people walked the streets of Rolston, crowded the bulletin boards in front of the newspaper offices, looked up expectantly into the sky above—waiting.

Four hundred or more miles away, somewhere, many thousand feet above the earth, three monoplanes bucked into the teeth of the biting west wind, whirled the white fringes of fog back from their gleaming propeller blades, plunged their snub noses into the very hearts of the menacing rain clouds in a grim fight for Rolston.

Seventy-five hundred dollars! Five thousand to the winner, twenty-five hundred to the second, and nothing at all to the loser.

And the whole seventy-five hundred to one if only one finished.

Aline Norvall set her white teeth hard together as she bent over the *cloche* of her Bleriot. All around her was nothing—nothing but shapeless, intangible mist, without beginning and without end, half transparent in a gray and muddy way but impenetrable to any distance. Above her it rolled, underneath, ahead, on all sides. It shut her in, pressed about her, piling up in big, formless billows until the Bleriot

snapped into it and then it whirled together into the vortex of the propeller, lashed back at her and whipped into blinding spray upon the glass of her dripping goggles. Behind her it trailed away in a writhing helix that rose and fell and twisted back upon itself like a huge dragon of myth in the agonies of battle with a conquering god.

Seventy-five hundred dollars! And against her breast, crumpled and damp in the pocket of her leather coat, lay the letter from her mother from which arose like the cry of a poor little child in pain that one appeal, “The disgrace will kill me if it is ever found out. Can't you help us?”

Help them! She whose winnings in the past six months were more than her father had earned in a life-time! She, who was billed from the Atlantic to the Pacific as “The Winged Victory,” whose contracts exceeded those of any two men in the business and whose name alone was enough to fill any field! But of the thousands that had come to her, how pitifully few remained. Eight of them gone for the machine she was driving with its seventy-horse-power Gnome, eight more for the other one that awaited her at Rolston, six smashed to kindling against a stone wall at Akron—and her life pulled out of the wreckage only by the merest

chance. Four more were crated up with the new engine coming from France, three in the automobile that was on its way by express, two for the apartment in New York—and so it went down the long list of things that she had found so necessary since her sudden leap into fame.

Over her circling propeller, she saw the driven murk of cloud come tumbling down upon her, and as she plunged into it, she felt the machine rock and pitch as the wind-gust struck. Almost like a drunken thing, it staggered as she pulled it up. Her engine coughed and missed fire and she started upright, blanching with the sudden fear of a volplane into the hidden depths below. Again it missed and she felt herself sinking as the power waned. She held her *cloche* poised for instant diving if the motor stopped. But, almost as she made up her mind to risk it, the loud purring came again, even and deep, and she mounted once more on her strong wings, climbing steadily over the angry billows of mist.

And still came the cry from the letter crumpled in her leather pocket, “The disgrace will kill me if it is ever found out. Can’t you help us?”

Her own brother! Her little brother Frank, whom she had mothered in her big-sister years and of whom she had felt so proud! Ten thousand dollars of other people’s money! Only for a little while—and he had been so sure of winning and of putting it all back before anyone should know! In her own bank account lay only a scant four thousand dollars, with seventy-five hundred in the vaults at Rolston—waiting. First place would leave her still a thousand short. She must not only win; she must be the only one to finish.

Somewhere in that seething infinitude of storm cloud were the other two. Somewhere they were bending grimly over their *cloches* as she was bending over hers, shaking the blinding spray from their goggles as she was shaking hers, straining every nerve to pierce through those thickening walls of muddy vapor as she was straining hers. Somewhere—or was one of them even then paying the inevitable penalty, lying cold and still in that horrible flat-

tened heap that such a fall would mean—one of them with whom she had shaken hands so gaily as they mounted their machines that morning? She shuddered and bent closer to her work.

Stankov, she knew, would fight to the end. Courtly and gallant as was the little Russian on the earth, suave and soft spoken and laughing always with his merry eyes, he was a very fiend in the air, and one by one, had captured the altitude and speed records, the Michelin cup and half a dozen of the bitterest of the European circuits, until he had been proclaimed the greatest aviator of his time. Stankov would stick.

But Warren Merrill?

Her drawn lips curled with a touch of scorn as she thought of him, yet the scorn turned to a wistful little smile. Warren Merrill! That he, of all men, should be contending with her for the prize that meant more to her than any purse for which she had ever flown.

Out of the murk ahead she seemed to see his somber eyes bent upon her as they had bent a year before in the half light of a chilly dawn on the broad field at Mineola.

“Drop it all, wont you?” he was pleading. “It is an inhuman business for a woman. Give me a chance. Aline—I need you so.”

But she only laughed with the abandon of the woman who knew that soon the world would be at her feet.

“The poor boy!” she had mocked. “With all his millions, he finds one toy that he cannot buy.”

The eyes in the storm cloud ahead drew back with a quick wince of pain as they had done that day at Mineola, and again his voice came to her:

“I wouldn’t buy you if you were the last woman on earth. My God, will no one ever forget my money?”

The *cloche* jerked fitfully in her hands and she steadied the machine to another gust. Tumbling mountains of fog rolled ominously over and over each other, clutching for her with long fingers of ragged, dirty white, whipping out and back again and piling high in her path as she dashed among them. Yet always keeping ahead and burning with a depth of pain that she struggled hard to shut from her sight, were the eyes

of Merrill, as they had been on that other day on the same broad field at Mineola. She had heard men shouting her name as she had climbed down from her machine, her ears still deafened with the roar of the engine. She had shattered the deeply rooted prejudices of them all. She—a woman—had won the coveted expert pilot's license of the International Federation. And, as she had walked triumphantly among them back to the hangars across the road, she had seen Warren Merrill watching her; and tauntingly, in the intoxication of her new-found fame, she had strode over to him.

"There!" she had said. "When you have proved yourself man enough to do that, you may come and talk to me."

And to-day he raced with her for Rolston.

Only a year ago! Triumph after triumph had come to her since then, but the sweetness of it all was gone. No longer was the song of her steady motor a song of victory; more it seemed the snarling protest of some wild thing that she had only half tamed and that would some day turn upon her and wrest back its freedom as she lay lifeless and horrible, an inert and unlovely mass where it should fling her. All the glory turned to ashes! That poor little child's cry coming pitifully from the letter crumpled in her leather pocket, "Can't you help us?"

And, ahead of her, the somber eyes of Warren Merrill still bent upon her from the storm clouds.

Time after time her Bleriot rocked as the gusts swept up under her. Snarling whirlpools of wind, flung off from the main current, snapped at her planes, fanged them for destruction and were left whining behind as she tugged loose from their clutches. Not for a moment did she have a respite. In the wake of every burst of wind came a vortex into which she plunged madly in spite of all she could do with the *cloche*. And then a fresh upward gust struck her and lifted her on high again, only to drop her suddenly as before, helplessly downward until her far-raised elevators struck a more tangible resistance and slowly straightened her out to face a fresh onslaught.

The muscles of her arms and shoulders ached with the constant tension. Her feet felt like leaden weights upon the steering bar. Numbness crept down her wrists and into the bloodless fingers that gripped her *cloche*, but still she plunged and rose and plunged and rose again, grimly fighting through the heaving banks of cloud that swirled up constantly to block her path.

After the storm came calm. Through thinning fog-banks, she sped steadily on until the sunlight broke fitfully through the rifts and she came out at last into an air radiantly bright and vibrantly clear.

Stretched beneath her lay the earth, concave like the inside of a huge, round saucer, the horizon seeming on a level with her eye, the center so far under her that no detail was plain. She headed down and looked below in surprise, for she had not realized how far she had climbed in her three hours' battle in the blinding mists. She rubbed the moisture from the glass of the altimeter on her wrist and glanced at the dial. Twelve thousand feet! She had never been so high before.

But nowhere in all that vast expanse of space could she see either of the others. They might be far below her, merged in the shadows that lay over the earth. They might be far behind—might, indeed, be lying there silently waiting for the finders to come upon them with bared heads and reverent, final hands. But they could not be ahead—they must not! She alone must finish that ordeal, and her face drew down into hard, tight lines as she felt once more the letter in the pocket of her coat.

Seventy-five hundred dollars—and Rolston still four long, bitter hours away!

The eyes of Warren Merrill vanished with the clouds and only the thought of Stankov remained. She tried to pierce the earth shadows many miles ahead, for there Stankov, with his hundred horse-power, would be if he were still in the race. But she saw nothing of him. He must be down somewhere behind—and she had a chance. Of Warren Merrill she had no fear. With two

such veterans as herself and Stankov against him, it was impudence for this fledgeling to start in a race that the hardest had refused to enter. But even as she dismissed the thought of him, the drawn lines of her face softened and she remembered again her defiant "When you have proved yourself man enough to do that, you may come and talk to me." He had proved it, but he had not come to her.

Far below her, she saw a black speck dart from the shadows above a forest, shoot across a lighter field of ploughed ground and disappear again. She gripped her *cloche* tighter and half rose in her seat to see ahead over her left plane. It was gone. Slowly she pushed her *cloche* forward and headed down, her tense eyes fixed upon another light field in the path of its flight. Breathlessly she waited. Then a choking sob shook her as she saw it cut across a corner of the brown patch and fade again into the blue-black of the surrounding fields. It had gone too quickly for her to make it out clearly, yet one or the other of them it must be. Stankov and defeat or Merrill and a fighting chance?

Again she pushed her *cloche* and steepened the angle of her descent. So intent was she upon the speck below that she was unconscious of the higher shriek of the wind whipping past her as, with power still on to its full, she added the tremendous momentum of her dive to the normal speed of the machine. Only the quick change in the key of her motor brought her suddenly to a realization of what she was doing, and she opened the switch and cut off the spark.

In a silence almost oppressive after the thunder of the engine, she volplaned, repressing the thought of Rolston in the unconquerable feeling that she must know which of them it was that flew below—Stankov and defeat or Merrill and a fighting chance.

Her breath was driven back with the mad speed of her dive. Down—down—she went, her *cloche* vibrating its warning to clenched hands that gripped it heedlessly, the stinging wind shrieking its admonition into ears that heard nothing. Eleven thousand—ten thou-

sand—nine thousand feet! The point of her altimeter jerked around fitfully with so unwonted a call upon its elasticity. Down to six thousand feet she continued the plunge; and then, slowly, she drew the *cloche* back and slanted the machine to a saner angle.

And then again she saw the speck, still half a mile below but plainly outlined as it circled slowly and majestically over the gray brown of newly turned earth. It was a hawk.

With the sudden revulsion of feeling that swept over her, she laughed aloud. The unhuman sound of it startled her and, with a swift motion of her hand, she struck the switch shut. But even the answering thunder of the motor could not drown that laugh. It cut through the roar of the explosions and the whistling of the wind; it reverberated among the echoing spaces about her and flung itself back upon her and she mocked it with peal upon peal, rocking and swaying in her seat, only by blind instinct holding her *cloche* steady in her left hand while her right hand beat insanely upon the framework of the *fuselage*. Then came convulsive sobs that shook her shoulders and choked her breath back into her stifled lungs.

"Oh, God! What an inhuman business!" she moaned, and then again, with a wild cry of pitiful yielding, "What an inhuman business!"

And then she added more softly in the words of Warren Merrill, "—for a woman!"

There seemed to be iron bands about her head, tightening, ever tightening. In her ears the humming of myriad sea shells mingled with a high note like a long-sounding violin, with the singing tones of distant bells. Her breathing oppressed her and she swayed with dizziness. A whiff of ammonia from the vial in her coat pocket revived her for the moment and gave her strength to regain control of herself, but still her head ached and her ear-drums pressed in painfully with the sudden change of atmospheric masses in her quick descent. That, and her hysteria, had taxed her more than her three hours' battle with the storm. And, as she suffered there in the vast loneliness of un-

bounded space, she cried again, but this time in despair—

"Oh, God! What an inhuman business—for a woman!"

She would quit it all and go to him when they landed. She would tell him what she had wanted him to know ever since she had read of his going to France and entering the Bleriot school at Pau. She was sorry that she had taunted him, for she knew that it was only her dare that had driven him into a game which he frankly disliked. It had been only the sudden intoxication of her new fame that had turned her head, and she had not wanted him to win her as easily as his wealth had given him most of his desires.

But now she was tired and lonely and, for the first time in her life, just a little afraid. She glanced down over the side of the *fuselage* and shuddered at the vast void that yawned there for her. Her nerves were gone. Even another blinding whiff of the ammonia braced her only temporarily; but, as she placed the vial back in her pocket, she felt the crumpled letter that lay there and instantly she thrilled into new life with its poor little child's cry, "Can't you help us?"

Yes, she would help them. What was this talk of quitting? What was this plan of going to Merrill, the fledgling, and of flinging herself at his feet—she, "The Winged Victory?" What was love to her—what was loneliness—what was this thing, fear, that she had been thinking about?

Before her lay Rolston with seventy-five hundred good, hard dollars in the vaults of the bank.

Her lips curled with scorn at her own temporary weakness. Fear? Bah! Had she shuddered as she glanced over the side of her *fuselage*? She leaned far over now, recklessly, dangerously, calmly studying the dimly-seen earth so far below. Even more to prove her hardihood, she deliberately turned about in her seat and set herself the severest test that an aviator's nerves can have—the test of watching the tail of his own machine in flight and smiling as he notes the vibrations of the straining control wires, upon each individual one of which he depends for his life.

Turning, she drew a deep, defiant breath and squared her shoulders to the task ahead. Mile after mile of the blue and drab earth unrolled over the horizon before her, slid slowly toward her and plunged under the forward edge of her planes. She smiled as she regained confidence and murmured the pet parting words of Arthur Farr, her manager: "Eat 'em up, Aline. Eat 'em up. If it wasn't so undignified, I'd bill you as Eat 'em-up Aline, the Voracious Victory with Wings."

With eyes firmly fixed through the haze of the whirling propeller, she battled on, striving harder in the conquest of her thoughts than in the mastery of her physical weariness. She had flown many a longer course than this, but now, with the nerve-strain of three hours engulfed in the darkness and uncertainty of the enveloping clouds, followed by the shock of her sudden hysteria, she felt the need of a moment's muscular rest that amounted to positive pain. And those other thoughts that she was trying so hard to repress persisted in pounding upon the doors of her memory in spite of all she could do to shut them out.

Well, perhaps she *would* quit after this. Perhaps she *would* go to him since he would not come to her.

But first she must win this race for Rolston and still the cry from that crumpled letter in her leather pocket.

Out of the drowsiness that comes with a long stretch of steady flying, Aline Norvall was awakened by the most dreaded of sounds—the stopping of her motor. Instantly the machine slumped down, but instinct shoved her *cloche* forward and she caught a diving angle just in time. From her great height it was impossible to choose a landing place among the pigmy fields below. All she could do was to look for indications of forest and hill and avoid them; anything more definite must wait until she had plunged through a mile of screaming air to a level that would give her clearer vision and more room for choice. Pin points of wet spray stinging her cheeks told her the cause of her fall. The gasoline feed-pipe had vibrated loose from its con-

nections and she was hopelessly out of the race, for so much of the fluid would be lost by the time she landed that she would not have enough left to finish. But no thought of the prize could come to her now. For a few tense minutes her life itself was at stake, and she kept every faculty alert to meet the moment for instant action.

Soon it came to her. At a height of under a thousand feet, she volplaned for a field that stretched broad and smooth before her. Her wheels flecked the grass tops and settled to the run of the momentum and, as the machine slowed down, she half rose in her seat. Then suddenly she heard a crash; she was hurled violently forward and out upon the earth, while her machine reared, wavered and collapsed in a shower of splintering wood.

Stunned and dizzy, she rose painfully, surveying the wreckage. The wheels had jammed deep in a hidden gully, and the whole Bleriot had bucked over.

In the wave of sudden despair that swept over her, laughter and tears were alike inadequate, and she stood there staring at the hopeless tangle, thinking nothing, seeing nothing, conscious only that she was unspeakably tired and worn, and all that mattered was rest. Her hand touched the crumpled letter in her pocket but it kindled no fire of renewed determination. It was too late—and she was only a woman after all.

As though decrepit from great age, she sank stiffly and painfully to the ground and buried her face in her hands. She did not weep. It seemed as though she had no desire for tears. All she wanted was a chance to close her eyes for a few moments and forget in the blessed silence and darkness. In her ears there still sounded the buzzing of her motor but she shut it out as a memory that was maddening. Often it had come to her this way after a flight was over—the throbbing of her engine, as clear and distinct as though she were still in her machine. And, before, it had always sounded sweet to her, but now it only taunted and reminded her of what she had lost.

Poor little mother of hers! Poor little brother waiting so confidently for her to save him! Poor little child's cry,

“Can't you help us?” coming from the letter in her leather pocket!

The droning of the motor in her memory suddenly stopped; and, startled, she drew her hands from before her eyes. Memory motors had never stopped that way before. She looked up into the clear blue of the sky above her and sprang to her feet with a cry of surprise. A thousand feet up, a Bleriot floated with power cut off, its black wings stretched across a film of distant cloud, its nose headed down in a clean volplane for the field upon which she stood.

Even before it touched, she saw that it was Warren Merrill. His landing was cleaner even than her own had been. Fledgeling as he was, she had been forced during the past week to admire the fine judgment he displayed in his work and the unerring skill that proclaimed him the product of a European school.

He leaped down now as he came to a full stop, and instinctively his hand went to his head, but he smiled as he felt the leather helmet strapped there.

“Please consider my hat politely raised,” he said. “I am glad to see that you are not hurt. I was afraid that I should have to play Red Cross again.”

She looked at him sharply.

“Again?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “I just left Stankov. He had two broken fingers that I put in splints and reduced the swelling with my first aid kit so that he could go on with his repairs. He—”

“Repairs!” she exclaimed. “Then he has smashed up?”

“Not badly.” He looked ruefully at the wreckage beside her. “Nothing like this. Only the warping wire caught on a bush as he landed and tore loose from the plane. One or two ribs broken in the plane, too, I imagine, but a half hour's work will fix it. He'll be up again.”

She studied him curiously.

“And you,” she said, “—you went down and helped him in a race like this? In a race that means not only money but the biggest kind of reputation to the winner?”

“He was hurt,” Merrill replied simply. “I saw him limping around press-

ing his hand under his arm and then putting it up to his mouth. Of course, if it had been merely his machine, I should not have interfered. But broken bones may mean amputation if the swelling goes too long and I knew he carried no first-aid kit. Winning races is all right, but you can't let a fellow suffer that way, can you?"

"I'm afraid I could," she admitted. "And I am a woman."

A trace of reproach came into his eyes as he looked at her.

"You *were* a woman, Aline," he corrected, "before you took up flying."

She flushed rebelliously. It was one thing for her to admit to herself that the game had hardened her; it was another for this man to stand there and tell her the brutal truth.

"And I suppose," she said with a note of bitter sarcasm in her voice, "that, while you were helping Stankov, it did not occur to you that you might be robbing me of winning the prize that his accident would probably have given me?"

He smiled indulgently at the very patent exclusion of himself as a serious probability.

"Yes," he admitted, "it did not occur to me, but I had to help him. It was common humanity."

She shrugged her shoulders and turned to her wreck.

"Under the circumstances," she said, "it doesn't matter."

"But it does matter," he persisted. "And that is why I came down when I saw how badly you had smashed."

She wheeled upon him.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Simply this," he said. "You are going to get into my machine and finish the race. Wait"—as she started to speak. "You will have to do just as I say. The two machines are exactly alike and no one but our mechanics could tell them apart. Besides, the conditions of this race make no stipulations regarding change of machines. I had a distinct understanding with the Rolston people before we started, because I planned to have my other Bleriot at some point on the course and change if it seemed advisable. I was told that it would be allowed. The contest is in-

tended as a test of the endurance and skill of the aviator and they care nothing about technicalities, because all they want is to see a good, sensational ending that will stir up their people. They do not want a failure."

"And do you think," she cried, "that I would accept this—from you?"

"After the way you have treated me?" He smiled as he added the words that were almost on her tongue. And then he became serious again. "You must, Aline. You must do it for your mother's sake. Pardon me"—as he saw the quick look of pain in her eyes—"but I must be frank with you. I know all about it. Your maid, Amy Ellis, saw your letter and came to me in her distress this morning. She would give her very life to help you, and"—his voice sank until she scarcely heard—"she knows that I would too. So she came to me for the money. I knew you would not take it from me even as a loan, and yet I know that you must have it. And so you are going to get into my machine and win this race—for your mother's sake. Come."

She bit her lip in vexation, not at him but at herself for not feeling more angry at him. There was something too honest and sincere about him to permit any petty irritation at his interference in her private affairs. And she knew that, as he had said, he would give his life to help her. She felt now a surging longing to tell him that he was right about her growing hardness, of confessing that she was tired of the inhuman game she was playing and that all she wanted in the world was to have him come to her and say again the words that she had mocked on that day a year ago at Mineola. But he had walked over to his machine and was standing beside it.

Almost without volition, she followed him. He was right. She could not take money from him, yet she owed it to her mother to try again to win the seventy-five hundred dollars that waited in the bank at Rolston.

"What of Stankov?" she asked as she came up beside him. "Will he be able to finish?"

He shook his head slowly.

"He thinks so, but I doubt it. He

had no business to put that hundred horse-power motor on his machine without readjusting everything to it. It is recklessness. It gives him too much lift. On short flights it does not matter so much because it is not such a strain to keep it under control, but in a long and trying race like this there is bound to come a moment of involuntary relaxation and I'm afraid the machine will get away from him. I only hope he can get out of it safely."

She glanced at the sky in the east, searching every inch of the horizon for a sign of the Russian.

"He will be up again soon," said Merrill. "You must hurry."

She climbed over the *fuselage* as he went forward to give a final inspection to the motor. She heard him slapping the valves as he turned it slowly over and then saw him stand up, the propeller poised above his head, ready to start her.

"Wait a moment, please," she said, and she was glad the leather guards of her goggles hid the flush in her cheeks. "I should like to—shake hands with you and tell you how I appreciate this."

He came to her slowly and held out his hand but he did not look into her eyes.

"I'd prefer that you wait until after we get to Rolston," he said uneasily. "You're under a strain now and it wouldn't be fair for me to—to—Really, you'll have to start. Stankov will be after you. Thank me at Rolston."

She felt his big hand almost crush hers in a sudden burst of passion, and then he hurried back to the propeller. But she blessed the very pain that shot through her fingers. She could win now. The miles that lay before her would be child's play and there would be no more weakness. She would win for her mother's sake and because this big man wanted her to win.

With the burst of the first explosions from the motor as he threw the propeller down, he leaped aside and she started her preliminary run across the field. Soon she lifted and circled back, climbing easily until she headed again for the west. She passed over him, waving a farewell and, as she saw him take off his helmet and throw it boyishly

into the air, she settled down to the grind of the long flight.

Confidence came back to her with each mile that she left behind. And, with confidence, she felt the return of her spirit of independence. She almost regretted that she had yielded so easily to Warren Merrill and that she had put herself in a position where her victory would entail an endless indebtedness to him. Yet she knew that no such thought had prompted him to do what he had done; in fact, she was forced to admit to herself that, if the idea had occurred to him, it probably would have deterred him from helping her at all. He was a big man in every way.

"Mix'em-up Aline, the Vacillating Victory with Stings," she paraphrased Arthur Farr, and the laugh with which she greeted the thought cleared her mental vision and her mind swung back again to the fact that she was still in an epoch-making race and that only another accident to Stankov could give her the prize.

It was easy flying as conditions were then. The wind still bucked her, but it had dropped to a steady fifteen-mile breeze that was dangerous only because its very constancy was an invitation to drowsiness and carelessness. She turned and scanned the sky-line behind her, but there was no sign of the Russian. Merrill's map was set to a section very far behind; he had evidently not rolled it farther after going down to help Stankov. That meant that he had gone to hunt her and had voluntarily eliminated himself as a contestant.

She turned the roller slowly, glancing from the map to the country below to locate her position. She found it finally by a little village nestling beside a railroad bridge that crossed a river to the south and a range of hills that jutted away to the east of it. Merrill's penciled figures on the margin gave the distance as seventy-nine miles from Rolston.

Only a little over an hour away! She started with a sudden sharp intake of her breath and felt for the letter in her pocket. After all, she might be the only one. That night, even, she might be able to send her mother the check that would mean so much.

Again she turned and scanned the sky-line behind her. Very faintly and uncertainly at first, she thought she saw a black speck over the horizon, and a second glance left her in no doubt. Stankov was up and after her.

One hundred horse-power against seventy! Nerves that felt nothing against nerves already strained to breaking with the gamut of emotions through which she had run that day! In ten minutes he would be pressing her; in fifteen minutes he would be even, would be passing her. In half an hour, he would be fading out of sight again over the winning sky-line beyond which lay Rolston. But, even as she felt herself giving way to despair, the words of Merrill came to her—"It gives him too much lift. There is bound to come a moment of relaxation."

That was it—that moment of relaxation that was bound to come! She would fight grimly on, trailing him, if necessary, by many miles, yet always hoping for that moment of relaxation. And then she shuddered at her own pitilessness for that moment that would mean victory for her and would mean death to Stankov.

"Oh God!" she moaned, "what an inhuman business!"

She tried to fix her eyes steadily over her propeller, but the thought of that black speck in the eastern sky drew them irresistibly backward again.

He was climbing and gaining fast. Already he was a thousand feet above her level and his line of flight would make him pass her a good three thousand feet overhead. Why he chose to slow down his speed with the extra load of ascending she could not even guess unless, indeed, it was the excess lift of which Merrill had spoken and Stankov was even then resting and allowing the machine to take its own course.

"A moment of relaxation!" she murmured and bent low over her *cloche*.

It seemed endless ages of agony before she saw him directly above. Inch by inch he drew steadily on and, as he passed, she saw the little round blotch that meant his head peering over his *fuselage* as he looked down at her. But he was so far above that all detail was hidden.

Other ages of time passed and when she glanced up again, he was well ahead. But, even as she looked, the impression that something was wrong held her fascinated. His machine was bucking wildly. She saw his planes warping to the breaking point, first on one side and then on the other, and she knew that it meant a tremendous battle with his hidden *cloche*. Still, in spite of all his struggle, he was evidently losing control. He was doing all his balancing with his wings and none with his rudder, and, as she noticed this, she suddenly realized that it meant a steering gear gone wrong. And that meant—

She flinched in panic and tried to tear her eyes away from the moment that she knew was coming. But she could not. Like a woman hypnotized, she sat staring up at the impending horror in the air above her.

Something fluttered at the end of his *fuselage*, but before she could focus it, the tragedy was upon her. Stankov's monoplane swerved sharply upward, the tail dropping. Like a pendulum at the end of its swing, it hesitated a moment, trembled and fell back. But, as the force of the resisting air caught the upper surfaces of its now perpendicular planes, it staggered in its downward plunge, writhed and then turned completely over; and she saw a black form that she knew to be Stankov hurled out clear of the machine.

It was impossible to close her eyes quickly enough to shut out the horror of that fall. She saw him struggling with futile instinct to keep his body erect as he plunged, his arms working convulsively at his sides, as an acrobat works to land upon his feet, his legs thrusting out and drawing back, every muscle desperately tense. But, even as he hurtled down not fifty feet ahead of her, merciful unconsciousness came to him; his struggles ceased and he turned, slowly at first, then faster and faster until, as he disappeared under her planes, he was a whirling blur of out-flung arms and legs.

Beyond a quick, choking sob, not a sound escaped from the girl who watched. She sat at her *cloche* without the movement of a muscle except the

unconscious turn of a wrist as her machine dipped or swerved. Her eyes were fixed straight ahead but the power to see was gone, as was the power to feel. Mentally, physically, emotionally, she had been stunned into complete paralysis of all her faculties.

The miles slipped beneath her; farm lands and forests, villages and towns joined in the endless procession that tumbled up over the sky-line and streamed away behind. The whistle of factories screamed their welcome; and fingers, poised at telegraph keys, flashed the news of her coming to Rolston. Everywhere, as she sped on, thicker groupings of tiny dots that meant people awaited her, cheered her as she soared overhead and watched again in silence until she had disappeared over their horizon.

Still she sat unmoved, her blank eyes fixed with the horror that they had seen.

And so she came to Rolston. Below her, the great fair grounds seethed with a maddened populace, drunk with the excitement of the moment, riotous with the wild abandon of an enthusiasm that would not be restrained. No conscious thought directed her in her landing. Only the reflex of long training and predetermined action guided her numbed hand to the switch, pulled it open and headed the machine down for the final volplane.

Even as she came to a full stop and the crowds surged tumultuously about her, bent on carrying her in triumph upon their shoulders to the vociferous grand-stands, she sat there, without sight, without hearing, without any comprehension of what was going on about her.

Three times, Arthur Farr, standing upon her *fuselage*, yelled his triumphant welcome into her ear, and then, leaping forward, he peered anxiously into her face.

"Here, officer," he shouted, leaping to the ground. "Get these people back. She's sick."

The crowd surged in and then away and one by one took up the cry: "She's sick—give her air—get back." Slowly the cleared space widened and, as they

lifted her down from the machine, Farr supported her with one arm about her waist.

"Aline!" he cried. "What's the matter? Don't you know you've won? Good God, girlie! Can't you say something?"

Very deliberately the wide eyes turned and fixed themselves through him, and he shuddered. They saw nothing, those eyes. Behind them was no intelligence, no thought. Open and clear and limpid as they were, the human factor was gone, and he knew that her mind had become a blank.

In an agony of despair, he called her name, coaxed her, cajoled and cursed. He patted her hands as he would have soothed a child and, as he saw the futility of it all, he seized her roughly by the shoulders, wheeled her around to him and shook her brutally.

"Aline!" he shouted. "Say something, for God's sake. Don't you know me? Me? Arthur Farr?"

With the bodily shock of his attack, she seemed to make a supreme effort. Her lips moved as though to speak, but their only sound was a maundering of something almost inaudible and totally unintelligible. Again he shook her and called her name. She shuddered, started in fright and glanced quickly around. Then, overwhelmed with the sudden deluge of resurgent memory, she covered her face with her hands and shrank into his arms like a frightened child.

"Oh, God!" she moaned, "what an inhuman business—what an inhuman business!"

Farr felt his burden grow limp and lifeless. He seized her in a stronger grip but she slid through his arms and fell in a huddled heap upon the ground while the unseeing grand-stands shrieked a wilder welcome and called to her to join in their rejoicing.

For two days, Aline Norvall lay white and lifeless in a private room in the Rolston hospital.

"Shock," pronounced the doctors with professional finality.

"Shock, nothing," said Arthur Farr. "The game's got her goat. I know the symptoms."

On the morning of the third day, Aline's eyes fluttered open and, as understanding slowly came to her, she saw that her faithful maid, Amy Ellis, was sitting by her bedside.

"Amy!" she cried in sudden terror. "How long have I been here?"

Amy told her.

"I must go at once," she declared, resisting Amy's restraining hands. "You do not understand—oh, I remember now—you saw the letter. Mr. Merrill told me. I must hurry to Mother, Amy. It may be too late."

"It's all right, Miss Norvall," the girl reassured her. "I gave the money to your mother on the day of the race. Everything is all right."

Aline stared at her without comprehension.

"But how did you endorse the check?" she demanded. "And, besides, it was only for seventy-five hundred and Mother needed at least ten thousand."

Amy flushed guiltily.

"It was—it was—Mr. Merrill," she stammered in confusion. "But I promised him I would not tell."

Aline sat bolt upright despite her weakness and crushed the girl's wrists in her fevered fingers.

"What do you mean?" she cried. "Tell me at once—what did Mr. Merrill do?"

The girl's sobs choked her and she could not answer. Aline, with the fury of a wild animal, seized her shoulders and shook her, and then she told her story, broken and almost incoherent with her spasmodic weeping.

"I told him about—'bout the letter," she sobbed, "and he—he said we must do some—something at once and he was—was af—afraid maybe you would—wouldn't win and you would—wouldn't have any mon—money for your moth—mother and he gave me—me a check and his m—man got it cashed for me

and he sent me right to your moth—mother with the mon—money and he said you would pay—pay him when you won. And—Miss Norvall, I'm so unhappy. Please don't be ang—angry with me."

Aline sank back upon her pillow. The sound of Amy's passionate sobbing beside her bed seemed far away as the flood of thought submerged all external sensations.

So that was why he had come down. He knew that her smash-up put it beyond her power to repay him and he wanted to save her the humiliation of being in his debt. Like the swiftly shifting scenes of a photo-play, there flitted before her mind's eye all of the petty little incidents that had marked her ill treatment of him. And each brought with it a hot flush of shame. His faith, his love, his unfailing kindnesses to her had deserved better recompense. In his big rough body, there was the sensitive spirit of a woman, and she realized for the first time how uncomplainingly he had suffered with each slight that she had put upon him.

She reached out now and took the hand of the girl sobbing beside her.

"Amy," she said gently, "you are very fond of Mr. Merrill, aren't you?"

"Oh, Miss Norvall," exclaimed the girl, her eyes flashing. "I think he's the *grandest* man!"

Aline smiled indulgently at her ardor.

"Well, Amy," she continued, "you may sit down now and write to him and tell him that I want to see him just as soon as the doctors will allow it. We can thank him then, can't we?"

"You can never thank him," Amy cried. "Never—*never* thank him for all he's thought of you."

Aline's eyes filled with a great, tender light.

"Yes," she said softly, "I think I know a way."



Mysteries of the Sea

"The Quality of Fighting Sam," a story of present-day deep-sea adventure which for swift-moving action, unique plot and sustained interest has had few equals. You will find it one of the most absorbing tales of this fine series.

By CULPEPER ZANTT

SINCE the change of the monsoon, two months before, the weather had settled rapidly into the usual summer percentage of rain—which means that out of every five hours about three were moist, one cloudy, and one sunny. From his anchorage, half a mile out from Blake Pier, the mate of the cargo-boat *Ravenhead* could scarcely make out the King Edward Hotel on an average morning before the drizzle burned off, for an hour or so, at eleven o'clock. But, along toward five in the afternoon, it generally cleared enough to count every ship in Hong Kong harbor and see the houses among the trees on the "Peak," sixteen hundred feet above the "Praya."

As they were "on the berth," waiting orders or cargo, there was no occasion for the mate to make himself uncomfortable in oilskins. He could give the few necessary orders, and command a view of the "old man's" door, from under the shelter-deck. And he thought he was the first to spot the routine preparations, which indicated an impending departure of that uneven-tempered master-mariner for the shore. As a matter of fact, the steward's Number One boy had beaten him to it by report-

ing, for'ard, that the ol' man was catchee heap washee top-side in tlub—washee chop chop—catchee blandy-peg an' maskee sho'l-side—mebbe catchee g'lil bimeby! So, from under the fo'c's'le-head, as well as from the shelter-deck, there were eyes to note the first appearance of the autocrat at his cabin-door—in sharply-creased brown trousers, starched white shirt, figured vest and brown derby. The collar and coat were never adjusted until he had cast a weather-eye aloft and completed all his other preparations—being equivalent, as it were, to a Blue Peter, only hoisted when he was upon the point of sailing.

"Darcy!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Notice anyone goin' ashore from the *Oranola* this mornin'—any of the shore-boats alongside of her?"

"They was dickerin' with one of the sampans about four bells for a mess of fruit, sir. But I aint noticed any other boats around her ladder."

"Have ye got a Chink in the whale-boat—keepin' them awnin's tight, an' the cushions dry? I aint cal'latin' to spile my clo's on no wet cushions if I can help it. Reckon I wont git no shine

till I strike one o' them coolies along Queen's Road—an' I'm a-goin' to resk it with an umbrel! Mackintosh is too durn hot!"

"Wouldn't that there crash suit o' yours be a heap cooler'n them clo's you got on, Cap'n? Number One boy c'n iron it out f'r you in ten minutes."

"Y-a-s—but how in thunder is it goin' to *stay* ironed out in this blamed pea-soup weather—hey? Think I want to go callin' on ladies lookin' as though I'd slep' in my clo's—an' slep' soused, at that? Say! Who you sendin' ashore with me?"

"Will the bo's'n an' a couple o' Chinks do, sir?"

"Y-a-s, they'll be all right—might tell the bo's'n to pull over to the *Oranola*, first, while I'm gittin' my collar an' coat on. If Cap'n Nickerson happens to be feelin' like it, we might's well go ashore together. Ever hear the nick-name they give him down at the Cape, an' in the Son' Atlantic?"

"Fightin' Sam, wa'n't it, sir? Some sich name as that. How'd he come by it?"

"Waal—I dunno, exackly. But 'twas s'uthin' to do with his never knowin' when he's licked, I reckon. I remember one time when his decks was swep' clean an' his for'ard holds makin' water faster'n the pumps c'd git it out. Had a top-cargo of ile, in barrels—an' his crew was lowerin'-away the boats to leave her—middle of the Indian Ocean, mind you—when he got arter 'em with two big revolvers. Made 'em git up four tiers o' them bar'ls—jettison the ile—bung 'em up—stow 'em ag'in—an' batten down the hatches. Course the ile flattened down the water a lot—but them empty bar'ls gave her more buoyancy when the water got up to 'em in the Number One an' Two holds, an' he fetched her into Port Louis, Mauritius, with her decks awash.

"That was some time ago—but I've heard of other stunts what beat even that. Then he picks up the *König Heinrich* a few months ago, abandoned in the Pacific—an' arterwards, a two-thousan'-ton yacht what the charterer was tryin' to scuttle, down in the Banda Sea. Talk about luck! When the rest o' us do happen to run across a bit of salvage, the

master al'ays hangs onto his ship like grim death to a dead nigger—an' all the underwriters gives us is a leetle over double our expenses for towage. Master's doin' well if he gits five hundred p'und' for hisself. But these cases Nickerson gits hold of is abandoned an' crooked, so that I reckon he's salted down a good sixty per cent of their auction value.

"And Nick's mighty good comp'ny ashore, too—women all seem to be crazy over him. Oh, I don't mean he's dangerous in that line. He kin talk five or six lingoos, an' talk 'em eddicated-like—an' he likes chinnin' with a good-lookin' woman—but I never saw him treat 'em any other way then respectful. If I had any girls o' my own, I'd let 'em travel with him all they was a mind to. Well! . . . Looks like she was lettin' up a leetle. Git that thar whale-boat ready while I'm a-hustlin' into my coat! An' say, Darcy, watch out that none o' them sampan Chinks don't foul your cable when she thickens up this afternoon! They's a lot of 'em in this here bay that seem to do their navigatin' by sense o' smell, when she settles down into pea-soup. A leetle thing like a steamer's cable don't bother 'em none—'less it sinks 'em! Git that whale-boat alongside now, will you! If you keep a-standin' thar with your mouth open, this drizzle'll spile your digestion!"

On board the *Oranola*, a few cable-lengths away, Captain Nickerson—having finished a batch of letters for the outgoing "P. & O." and "T. K. K." boats—had spent the rest of the forenoon trying over some new music on his piano, much to the satisfaction of his junior officers, who thoroughly appreciated his talent in this respect. So he was in a receptive mood when Cap'n Samuels boarded him. The button was pushed; the Number One boy appeared with the Scotch and soda, afterward laying out the Captain's pongee suit, Panama hat and mackintosh—and the pockets of the two masters were stuffed with cigars not obtainable in Hong Kong at any price—unless, perhaps, from the steward of the Honk Kong Club on the Connaught Praya. As they were pulled away from the accommodation-ladder, the captain of the cargo-

boat *Ravenhead* remarked to the master of the geared-turbine *Oranola*:

"Dunno exactly what you got in mind, Nickerson—but I figured we might's well drop in at Wong Phat's, on Queen's Road, f'r a leetle bracer—an' then take the Peak cable up to see a couple o' ladies I happen to know. How'll that strike you?"

"Some class to lady friends in the Peak district—good many of the captains go over Kowloon way for their female society. I appreciate the compliment—and the Wong Phat proposition suits me right down to the ground. That Chink runs one of the most picturesque joints between Nagasaki and Singapore. But I can't say how much time I'll have for social calls until I see what mail there is at Jardine, Matheson's—and it's a good two miles over to East Point. Tell you what I might do—call 'em up on the 'phone and have 'em send in one of their boys with it to Wong Phat's. It's natural enough to want their offices where their *go-downs* are—but it's an inconvenient place to get at from Blake Pier, or anywhere in the middle of the town. Are they your agents, here?"

"Nope. Our boats come to Butterfield an' Swire—China Navigation Comp'ny people. Say—you have 'em send that thar boy—so's you can git through in an hour or so! I want you to meet that leetle black-haired girl up to the Peak—she's one peacherino! Ole man's one o' Sir Robert Hart's imperial customs inspectors—an' doin' mighty well, I reckon, from the looks o' their bungalow."

By the time they had walked up Peddars St. to Queen's Road, the rain had stopped for a while and the 'rickshaw traffic was becoming congested in the stretch between the Court House and the bend at No. 5 Police Station. As the tiffin-hour is somewhat irregular in Hong-Kong, the *chow*-houses are seldom over-crowded—so they had no difficulty in getting a picturesque corner to themselves. In the next alcove were two press-correspondents—a likable young Spaniard on the staff of *La Ilustración*, the big Madrid weekly, and the Eastern representative of *Über Land und Meer*, in Berlin. As both

spoke English fluently and were men who knew their world considerably better than the average person, Nickerson invited them into the corner—Moreno accepting with a grimace of disappointment.

"Your invitation puts us upon honor, Señor Capitan. We may not print anything about you unless you permit. And, me, I was hoping to send my paper a full account of how you catch that swindling *conde Francés* who try to scuttle the yacht he charter'. *Si*."

"If you'll let me expurgate whatever the underwriters would prefer not having generally known, Señor Moreno, I'll give you and Herr Schroeder enough data for quite a story. I'll even mention the names of two guests who were aboard the *Myrtona* with the Count, and took several pictures of her—before and after she was abandoned. They're here at the King Edward. But in return, you must tell me what you know about the *Compania Trasatlantica's* new boats. I ran across a copy of *Ilustración* in the City Hall library, here—with pictures of both those steamers—and I'd like to know something about their engines. You must have the data."

For the next hour, the conversation dealt with ships of various types—interspersed with anecdotes of life in different parts of the Orient. Then one of Jardine, Matheson's coolies came trotting in with Nickerson's mail, and he settled back in his corner seat to go through it while the others talked. To them, he was already a fortunate and rising man—one whose picture had appeared in newspapers around the globe as the salvor of a valuable yacht and a big cargo-boat which had a hoodoo reputation. He had reached that point in his career where a man is not obliged to accept any old proposition which may be suggested to him—where he may pick and choose a bit, consult his inclinations with little apprehension as to food and shelter. But, since his arrival in Hong Kong, his detention there by underwriters and courts, he had felt a sense of impending catastrophe—not by any means a novel experience in his life, but one he hoped was becoming less probable as the years passed. It might have been an effect

of the depressing heat and rain, or a touch of liver—but whatever the cause, he found himself unconsciously braced for a blow of some kind, day and night. Among the letters in his package, was a cablegram, which he naturally opened first.

Capt. Sam'l Nickerson,
Care, Jardine, Matheson & Co.,
Hong Kong.

Inside information Boston Bank not in best condition. Suspension would involve Hong Kong branch. Think not too late for prompt transfer. Other unpleasant news likely—though possibly not final.

JOHN SATTERLEE.

The message had been sent from Thursday Island, in Torres Strait. He read it over several times before deciding that he understood the banking hint; as for the concluding one, he was at a loss to guess what it could possibly mean. On a first impulse, he wrote out a message to the Masters' & Owners' National Bank, of Boston, asking its cashier to cable him the amount of his balance at that time—and send it to the cable office by Wong Phat's Number Two boy. Then he glanced through the rest of his mail, coming to a square letter in the middle of the pile which he opened hastily. The address was written in a stylish woman's hand. The envelope was postmarked "Yokohama"—having evidently come in that morning on the *Tenyo Maru*. As the others were too absorbed in their conversation to notice him, there was little chance of their observing the handwriting—but he shielded the pages with his hands.

GRAND HOTEL,
THE BUND—YOKOHAMA.

My dear Friend,

Your letter reached me this morning. I need not say with what pleasure I read it—or that I hope to receive many more of them. Presently, I'll attempt to answer it at length, but the letter may not reach you at Hong Kong—may not be forwarded for several months. So I'm catching the *Tenyo Maru* with this acknowledgment in order that you may not think me altogether unappreciative.

There are some things you say which must be dealt with frankly—and I'm not in the proper frame of mind to make any momentous decision at present—shall not be until I've been at home for some time. As I feel now, our friendship appears

to have drifted further than I realized or intended. Oh, it has been my fault—not yours. The admission is only fair. And there are no objections to you upon any grounds that my father's daughter would recognize. You are eight years the older—but I consider that in your favor. You're not a wealthy man—but your income would be sufficient for any woman who really cared. You are a man of evident cultivation, and more personally attractive than I've any business to admit. But this taking a woman by storm appears to me unsafe for both. Now that I've had time for reflection, it does not seem that I care sufficiently. What the future may have in store, I cannot tell. I will, however, say this much. My mother's desires for a titled match abroad have no weight with me or Father. They really *never* had—but our experience with the Count would have settled that point definitely. If I ever marry a man, it will be for no other reason than because I wish him for a life-companion. And I think you'll admit that such a decision is one a woman should weigh very carefully before making. Write me frequently. Come and see us whenever you can. Father and I value your friendship very highly.

Sincerely,
DOLORES MURCHIESON.

Nickerson read the letter through a second and a third time, with a growing sense of loss—disaster. Then he re-read Satterlee's cable message, and wondered if by any chance the last hint in it could possibly apply to his relations with the millionaire railway magnate's daughter—relations known to nobody outside of themselves. He'd had no communication with Satterlee since the day they parted in Sydney. But, of course, the story of his saving the magnate and his family from a presumably sinking yacht and their subsequent voyage with him to Hong Kong had been reprinted, with many snap-shots, in all of the Australian papers. Could Satterlee have guessed at a possible infatuation between himself and the girl—and kindly attempted to soften the blow of what he foresaw was an almost inevitable termination of their little affair? It was just like Jack Satterlee—one of the staunchest friends a man ever had! But—Nickerson's jaw, firm and square, set in a determined way that his acquaintances had learned to respect—it struck him Satterlee might have remembered that ordinary rules didn't apply to "Cap'n Sam."

He'd had the usual man of the world's experience with the women of all countries—had joyously indulged in many an open flirtation in this or that of the world's ports. But none of the sex had ever stirred his imagination as had this athletic, out-of-doors country-woman of his who, for several years, had been shamelessly besieged by impecunious members of Europe's titled aristocracy, and was admittedly one of New York's most brilliant catches. Satterlee's point of view would be, undoubtedly, that of the world in general—that a shipmaster, even with several thousands to his credit in the banks, was hopelessly outclassed in any consideration of such an alliance, and that Miss Murchieson would eventually convey some such hint to him if the affair really became serious between them. Well, if that were the case, this letter of hers, considerate and friendly though it was, appeared to bear out the supposition. But—and the jaw stiffened again—there were some men who didn't accept a conclusion as final until they'd tested it a bit. To his way of thinking, the affair wasn't a closed one—yet.

After which—having shoved it back in his mind for later consideration—Nickerson fell to thinking over his friend's other hint. His cable to the Boston bank would reach that city at three o'clock in the morning and be held until the bank opened at nine o'clock—a delay of six hours, at least—probably more. Suddenly he remembered that a wallet in his pocket contained the statement sent him by the bank on the first of the month—which would answer his purpose nearly as well as a cabled reply to his message. Telling the others he would return in the course of an hour or so, he left the *chow*-house and walked rapidly up Des Voeux Road until he came to the banking concern with whom he had deposited his salvage and which acted as the Eastern correspondents of his Boston bank—the manager receiving him with the courtesy due a man of his means.

“Mr. Canning, I've a chance, this afternoon, to make quite a decent pot of money in a private speculation where I'm pretty well secured against loss—

provided I can draw a large sum from you in Bank of England notes. I've reasons for not wishing it known here that I carry any such balance as this, and the one in the Masters' & Owners' of Boston. Of course, I don't want to inconvenience you people—but—” The manager smilingly waved his hand—scentsing future and much larger deposits when the Captain received the proceeds of his speculation.

“Oh, I fancy we shall be able to accommodate you, Cap'n. We're not altogether a strugglin' concern, you know. In fact, we are handlin' some of the Governm't loans—though I'm tellin' you that in confidence. How much would you like to draw?”

“Well, let's figure a bit. I've something over two hundred and forty thousand dollars—gold—to my credit on your books. And here's my statement on the first of the month from the Boston people showing a balance of ninety-eight thousand, there. I've cabled them over thirty thousand since then—but I've no evidence of that to show you. Suppose I give you a draft on them and a check on this house amounting to an even seventy thousand, sterling, altogether?”

The manager tapped the polished surface of his desk for a second or two with his pencil—and Nickerson observed, carelessly: “Of course, I *can* draw on both of you through the Hong Kong & Shanghai—on the strength of my bank-book and this statement—”

“Undoubtedly, Cap'n—no question of it! But, d'ye see, we much prefer havin' you do it direct.”

“Hmph! . . . That's about what I thought. Well?”

“Oh, make out your check an' draft, man—make 'em out! We'll give you the Bank of England notes, of course. It's a goodish bit of cash, you know—but we can easily get all we need, if we're short in the mornin'.”

Slipping the package of crisp thousand-pound notes inside his shirt, the Captain took a rickshaw along to the great offices of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation, opposite the City Hall, where he'd cashed many a draft in the past ten years and was known by sight to most of the of-

ficials. Within a few moments, he had opened an account with the manager upon the understanding that the deposit was to be treated as confidential in every respect. After which, he went back to one of the native jewel shops in Queen's Road, where—knowing exactly what he wanted and having seen it a year before—he purchased from the appreciative Chinaman a beautifully carved jade and opal necklace, strung upon a gold chain of tiny interlocking links—the sort of rare and beautiful thing which isn't shown to every casual purchaser. This he sealed, registered, and forwarded by the outgoing *Nubia* of the P. & O. to Dolores Murchieson, with this letter:

I am enclosing something which I'm sure will appeal to your sense of the artistic. One doesn't come by them every day—but Wun Hsu showed me this over a year ago and, not feeling very wealthy at the time, I jokingly said it would have to wait until I was again in Hong Kong. Wun took me seriously, and has held it ever since. The jade and opals are Ming Dynasty, and the chain is Tsing, or Manchu. I've read your *Tenyo Maru* letter, several times—and must be content, of course, to respect your wishes and viewpoint. The feeling should be mutual, and strong, or the game is a disastrous one to play. Were it not for your confounded money, I'd camp on your trail until we found out whether I was the man, or not—but it's the *woman* I want—without a penny. So I can't follow my inclinations without appearing in a false light. Of course I'll keep on writing—and shall see you whenever the opportunity occurs. Please, however, don't consider that I've resigned. I hate a quitter. I'm leaving this question in abeyance for the present, and occupying myself with some of the other troubles. Hong Kong is oppressive, this visit—don't know why. This rainy monsoon is no worse than usual. But I'm trying to shake off an intangible hoodoo. I think everyone on the *Oranola* will feel better when we clear—with "China general," for Liverpool. Please keep me posted as to your wanderings, and address.

It was four o'clock when he rejoined Cap'n Samuels and the newspaper men at Wong Phat's—but the liquid refreshments and widely-ranging conversation had made them oblivious to the passage of time. In fact, it was a question in Nickerson's mind whether these contributing influences hadn't drifted the Captain a trifle beyond navigating limit

for the social calls which remained fixed in his head. But Samuels' dead-weight capacity was larger than his draft indicated. The ladies at the Peak naturally assumed that he'd been in some locality where alcoholic stimulants were dispensed—but who had not, in the Turkish-bath atmosphere of the summer monsoon? They offered the two masters crisp lemonade, with a foundation of their father's "Martel," and a subsequent dinner which firmly anchored their guest's previous liquid ballast. Nickerson was prevailed upon to play accompaniments while the ladies sang—after which there was a little "penny auction" until the captains took the cable-tram down to the lower town.

Now the Peak tramway station, as everyone knows, is east of Government House and the Public Gardens—and the shortest cut to Blake Pier lies across the Parade Ground in front of St. John's Cathedral, down by the side of the City Hall, and up Des Voeux Road to Peddars Street. Opposite the Parade, are the cricket ground and navy yard. Not a particularly bad section of the city, but a fairly deserted one at night, and often not over-well policed in spite of the neighboring Murray Barracks and the navy yard sentries. They were about half-way across the Parade when—against the electric lights of Queen's Road, mere luminous spots in the drizzling mist—they saw the figure of a man walking steadily along as if he'd just come down from the Gardens, and another one following stealthily behind him. In another moment, two shots were fired in rapid succession. One of the figures disappeared in the shadow of the barracks—and the other, after swaying unsteadily for a few seconds, pitched headlong upon the ground.

Carrying the fallen man under one of the arc-lights on Queen's Road, the two captains found to their amazement that he was Fred Wayne—Nickerson's mate on the *Oranola*. Then two officers came running from the barracks, whistling for a rickshaw as they came.

In New York, the two captains would have been arrested as suspects, very likely—being put to much expense and inconvenience before the

legal red-tape was unwound—but they do things differently in the British colonies. Wayne appeared to be dangerously hurt, so they all went to the hospital with him in rickshaws—waiting until the surgeon had extracted the bullet and expressed his opinion as to the chances for ultimate recovery. Then the army officers went back to Blake Pier with them and picked out a boatman who could be trusted upon the bay at night.

Probably because men belonging to the cargo-steamers anchored in the bay are not sufficiently well supplied with money, as a rule, to be worth the subsequent *bobbery*, they were not molested by any inquisitive party from the sampans and junks, alongshore—and when Nickerson stepped upon his own deck, he sent a bo's'n for Tom Peyn-ington, his chief engineer, and Drake, the first assistant. They came up to his cabin in less than ten minutes.

"What's up, Cap'n! . . . Anything broke loose?"

"What time did Fred Wayne go ashore?"

"A little before eight bells, this evening. Why? He's a great one for shootin' pool—up at the Peak Hotel. Sometimes he stays there all night—fancy the people know him quite well."

"That's probably where he'd been. Cap'n Samuels and I saw him crossing the Parade, when a man ran up and shot him from behind—without giving him any sort of show!"

"My word! Is he dead?"

"No. Up at the hospital. . . . Doctor says he'll pull through all right if he doesn't get blood-poisoning. But it'll be two or three weeks before he's out, and we commence loading at Kowloon, to-morrow. *Could* get rice at Batavia—but it'll pay us better to load with 'China general' from here."

"Who was it that shot Fred? One of the Chinks?"

"Don't think so—wasn't dressed like one, as far as we could tell at that distance. He got clean away, though we might have taken a pot shot or so if we'd thought of it. Does Fred call on any women-folks, up at the Peak—or anywhere in the residence wards?"

"Not unless some one else takes him,

I fancy. Likes the girls well enough—but he doesn't cruise much with 'em alone."

"Then it couldn't have been a case of jealous husband. Of course, in the sampan quarters, they wouldn't bother with that for an excuse. They'd either give him a pipe—let him into the fantan and treat him right in every way—or else they'd cut his throat for what he might have in his pockets. Hanged if I can make anything out of it at all! Fred isn't a quarrelsome chap—not likely to have had a row with anyone at the Peak."

"Well—but—what can you do about him, Cap'n? We'll finish loadin' before the end of the week, d'ye see—eh?"

"I'm afraid we'll have to let Ned Farley take his place and pick up a second greaser, somewhere. Ned's passed, and got his ticket—no difficulty about that—and I reckon Jardine, Matheson'll find a second for me. I hate like the devil to leave Fred here—but I'll stake him to five hundred, gold, and we've been in this port too long, as it is! Hong Kong is bully in the no'th-eas' monsoon—jolly fine people, lots of amusement, best club in Orient, and all that—but when the monsoon changes, it doesn't make so much of a hit with me. Then seems as if everything had gone wrong from the minute we opened up the harbor through the Ly-ee-mun, this trip. Scraped that cussed rock and had to be docked—held up by the courts and the underwriters—waiting here weeks for a full cargo—this new Canton-Kowloon railroad doesn't hustle freight any faster than some others I could mention. There have been a slew of unpleasant things—been tryin' to straighten 'em out all day!"

"Fancy! . . . I'd an idea it was just imagination, Cap'n, but I've been lookin' for one thing after another to happen ever since we dropp'd anchor here. We'll not get out of this a minute too soon for me—no jolly fear! Fred's been feelin' the same way—an' here he gets all shot up by some damn bounder, in the dark!"

At noon, Nickerson went ashore again and took the electric tram along to Jardine, Matheson & Co.'s *go-downs*

at East Point. He'd been talking with the resident manager but a few moments when a clerk told him there was a man in the outer office who wanted to ship as mate, if there was a vacancy. At a nod from the manager, the man was sent for. He was a thick-set fellow of twenty-eight or thirty, with a heavy beard and mustache, inclined to curl at the ends—and there was something about him which seemed vaguely familiar to Nickerson. He couldn't remember to have ever seen the man—and yet, the eyes and nose were like those of some one he'd known. The voice was hoarse, as if he'd taken cold from the dampness—but now and then a tone crept into it which reminded Nickerson of a voice he'd heard before. Such resemblances are common enough, and he put the matter out of his mind as of no importance. To Mr. Dickson, however, it seemed a little suspicious that the man should have known the *Oranola's* need of a mate so quickly.

"Who told you Cap'n Nickerson was looking for an officer?"

The man pulled from his pocket a copy of the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, which had been on the streets less than two hours, and pointed to a half-column describing the shooting of Wayne, upon the previous evening, and his official position on the *Oranola*.

"I come up from Manila yestiddy on the *Zafiro*, sir, because I thought the chances o' gittin' a berth was better here than in them Philippines—an' o' course I tackled the newspapers right away, before goin' 'round to the shippin' offices."

It was a reasonable and satisfactory explanation—but Mr. Dickson was a man who liked to be sure about anyone for whom he might be held responsible.

"How does it happen you're out of a berth—if you're quite competent?"

"Ship was sold to Jap buyers, sir—with delivery at Manila. They still keep some English masters on their boats, an' a few Scotch engineers—but they're weedin' out even them."

"Have you your ticket—handy?"

"Aye, sir. . . . O' course you'd be wishin' to see that."

The paper bore evidence of having been carried about in a pocket for some

time—having been handled considerably—which made certain substitutions of name and dates less conspicuous than they would have been upon cleaner paper. In fact, neither Dickson nor the Captain did more than glance at it carelessly to make sure the name written upon it was the same the man had given. And with a mate's certificate before them, it would have been ridiculous to question his nautical experience. Nickerson handed it back.

"I'm not looking for a mate, but I'll sign you on as second—Hong Kong to Liverpool—if you care about taking the berth."

"Then ye've already found a man, Cap'n? Tough luck! I thought I was on the job early enough to land it! What would ye be willin' to pay a second, if I signed-on that way?"

"Why—my owners, the Bancimans, never give over nine p'und. But I think the Service Guild rate is fair enough for a man with a mate's ticket. Call it ten pounds. Wouldn't give a mate but twelve."

"Very good, sir—I'll take it. My old owners is Liverpool folks—so I'll prob'ly strike somethin' when we git in. When d'ye want me aboard?"

"Oh, Friday night'll be time enough. We'll pull out Saturday morning, I hope—and I wont really need you until then." When the man had left the office, Mr. Dickson turned to the Captain in mild surprise.

"If you permit him to float about Hong Kong through the week, how can you be sure he'll not disappoint you when there's no time to look for another man?"

"Hmph! Dunno's I'd care much if he did! He seems a well enough spoken chap—understands his business, no doubt. But I don't quite like him, somehow. Feel as if I'd seen him before, somewhere, and yet, I'm quite sure I've not. Reckon it's this damned sou'-wes' monsoon, Dickson—but I've been nervous as a cat ever since we anchored, and things have gone crossways as deliberately as if some one was putting a hoodoo on us. Don't feel like having a soul on my boat that I don't know about until I clear! That's about the size of it. You might keep an eye out for some

other man in case this one turns up missing—hey?"

While they were talking, one of the book-keepers came in with the answer to Nickerson's cable of the previous day—giving the amount of his balance in the Boston bank—which he placed in his pocket after a brief glance. During the next four days, he was busy with the loading and getting ready to clear—and was leaving the Custom House with his papers on Friday afternoon when he was stopped on the street by Mr. Canning, the bank manager.

"Captain, I've some bad news for you, I fear. We've just had a cable that your bank in Boston has closed its doors—for the present, at least. Of course it looks deuced bad, but we can't believe they'll not be able to settle for a reasonable percentage—eventually."

Nickerson calmly lighted a cigar. "I don't understand this, Mr. Canning. That bank was supposed to be as good as wheat. What's the trouble—bad investments? Hmph! Lucky for me I needed to use most of my money, wasn't it!"

"But, deuce take it, man—that's what I regret havin' to say to you! Payment will be stopped on the draft you gave us! We must awsk you to refund at once, don't you know!"

The Captain took a few deliberate puffs. "One moment, Mr. Canning. Here's a cable I received on Tuesday morning, showing twenty-two thousand to my credit in that bank over and above the amount of my draft which you cashed. My money is there! If you had cabled on Monday, as was your privilege, you might have had the money transferred to you then—in fact, I can't understand your not having done so. You act as the Hong Kong branch of that bank, cashing drafts upon it as if you were the same institution. I didn't even draw the full amounts of what I had on deposit in both your and the other bank—but what I did draw, I'll keep! Do you get that?"

"Oh, come now, Nickerson—I didn't think you'd take that tone with us at all! The fifty thousand pounds in our own concern of course we say nothing about—though it was a rawther large draft in cash—but the odd twenty

thousand we must insist upon havin' returned to us at once! Or else we must put the case in the hands of our solicitors."

"Go ahead, if you want to. I know a King's counsel here, myself, and I reckon he'll take my view of it. Which do you think should lose the money—the bank, or the innocent depositor? Oh, there's no sense in our wrangling over it—let the Courts decide."

When they parted, the Captain went to the office of the admiralty solicitors who had so well handled his salvage claims, and placed the case, with proofs of deposit in both banks, in their hands—leaving sworn affidavits, witnessed by two gentlemen whom he summoned by telephone from the office of his shipping agents. Then, hunting up a pilot, he hurried over to Kowloon just before sunset and, in half an hour, was steaming out past Green Island Light through the West Lamma Channel. In the gathering darkness, they were not particularly noticed from the Victoria side, and didn't bother to report themselves when passing Lloyd's signal station.

In the morning, they were fairly on their course for Singapore and the Malacca Straits—S. by W., to pass between the Parcel Reefs and Macclesfield Bank—and nearly everyone on board felt a sense of relief. But Nickerson still had a number of causes for reflection, and was by no means certain as to how he was coming out in the end. The odd twenty-eight thousand dollars in the Boston bank, he regarded as lost. He might eventually recover a small percentage, but he preferred wiping the slate clean and getting it off his mind. Concerning his deposits with the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation, he had an idea that payments on them might be stopped pending a decision in the other bank's suit—if Canning should learn of them. This seemed unlikely, but he felt that, could he reach London and transfer the account to some other bank there, he would be fairly secure. As far as he could see, he'd been entirely justified in transferring the accounts as he had, but the less experience a man has had with the law in various countries, the more apprehensive he feels as to its possi-

bilities for injuring him, one way or another.

Beyond all this was Nickerson's uncertainty as to how he stood with Dolores Murchieson—a realization of how ridiculous his aspirations would appear to those in the social world, particularly, if he had the misfortune to lose his little capital. And to cap it all had come the shooting of Fred Wayne—one of the best-liked members of his mess ever since the *Oranola* went into commission. Presently, however, he congratulated himself upon being again on deep water in that seaworthy and profitable craft—to which he'd become greatly attached, and in which he was half-owner. Sayles, the new second mate, proved of a taciturn nature, but he seemed to be a good navigator and, as he didn't mess with the Captain, their relations were not unpleasant.

Matters drifted along with increasing cheerfulness, on board, until they ran into a typhoon between Palawan and Saigon—but, having ample sea-room in that locality, they rode it out with little damage beyond the washing away of some deck stuff. As an after effect, however, the terrific handling they'd received—or the atmosphere, surcharged with electricity, some influence for which no one could account—left their nerves in a more jumpy condition than usual and brought back some of the apprehensive feeling they'd been ashamed to admit in Hong Kong. The south-west monsoon soaked them with rain, hour after hour—permitting an occasional glimpse of sunshine only to shut down again with moist, hot vapor, pelting showers and uncanny electrical disturbances, until the strain of watching and listening every moment for other craft in the thick weather—examining a dropping glass for indications of approaching typhoons—began to tell upon them.

Sayles was taking his watch below, one night, and Ned Farley had the bridge while the Captain and Tom Peynington smoked in bamboo chairs under the awning—the Engineer taking an unusually pessimistic tone, for him.

"D'ye know, Cap'n, I'd the most ex-
t'ord'n'ry feelin', a while back, that I

ever had in my life! Wasn't asleep, you know—just standin' by the turbine gears that got heated up in the typhoon, an' watchin' 'em. An' as plainly as I see you sittin' there, I saw Fred Wayne standin' on the other side of the low pressure. His mouth was goin', as if he were shoutin' something to me—but though turbines are a lot quieter than reciprocatin' engines, I couldn't make out a word he said. He was facin' the bow, an' kep' pointin' ahead as if somethin' were comin'—or we were runnin' into it. Well, I pinched myself—thought I must have fallen asleep, standin'—an' walked around port side, by the low pressure. But he got away—an' the oilers told me no one had been near the spot for half an hour. Mebbe I've been drinkin' too much coffee. Mebbe it's the pea soup an' electricity of this damned monsoon. But I wish I'd one of the rabbit's-foot things your Southern niggers carry about with 'em—or any old-wives' charm from the Cornish country that's death on a banshee. Really, you know, I'm gettin' dotty!"

When Sayles, the new second mate, took the bridge that night, anyone observing him closely might have noticed a peculiar expression upon his face at times—the expression a vindictive man has when something he hates is at his mercy. When talking with the Captain or Farley, his face was expressionless—moody, if anything. Nobody remembered having seen him smile—and one of the crew voiced a general impression when he said:

"I wouldn't want that second greaser to have no score ag'in' me—hanged if I would! He aint abusin' anyone, 'cause he knows the old man wouldn't stand for it—but if he meant to git even for anything, I reckon a chap would fall overboard some dark night! It's his eyes what give him away—make you think of a dead fish's!"

It was admitted by all, however, that Sayles was a good navigator—so the man at the wheel thought it nothing out of the way for the second mate to come into the wheel-house frequently, that night, and stand by his side, watching the compass—particularly, as it seemed difficult to keep the ship on her course. Every few moments, he noticed that the

"lubber's mark" on the white inside of the compass-bowl had a tendency to creep perceptibly to starboard of the S. W. by S., $\frac{1}{2}$ S. point on his compass-card—and he was obliged frequently to whirl his wheel over to keep the mark and point in line. In a heavy sea, this would have been natural enough, as the waves throw a steamer's head off when she twists over a big crest—but as the water happened to be comparatively smooth, he supposed it must be the amount of electricity in the air.

Several times during the middle watch, Sayles came into the wheel-house and stood watching the compass. Once or twice, he took out one of the binnacle-lamps—presumably to see if a piece of iron could have gotten into it—and the helmsman saw him make an entry in the log concerning the difficulty in keeping the course.

When the Captain and Ned Farley took the noon observation next day, the altitude—as it figured out from the verniers on their sextants—didn't strike them as being out of the way, because there had been little deviation in their "southing." But when the quartermaster struck eight-bells and they looked at the chronometers, the time worked out a full degree further east than it should have been on their regular course after passing the Macclesfield Bank—370 miles S. by W. from Hong Kong. The vernier-degrees on both sextants tallied to a hair's breadth. The two chronometers were not three seconds apart. But there was no getting around the fact that they were almost seventy knots closer to the dangerous banks off the N. W. coast of Borneo than they had any business to be. As it was Sayles' watch below, they looked over the log and found his entry concerning the difficulty of keeping a course through the night. Had it not been for the dangerous navigating on their lee, Nickerson would have experimented a little by shifting the compass magnets—but it appeared safer to change the course a few points further west, keep the patent log over the stern, and get afternoon observations.

That night, with two different helmsmen, Sayles had the first watch—from eight to midnight—and again they

found it difficult to hold the course true with the compass. But as it was less noticeable than during the previous night, the men paid little attention to it—shifting the wheel automatically to meet the vacillating card—and he made no mention of it in the log. At noon, however, when they came to mark the course on the chart, it appeared they had passed between the Prince of Wales and Vanguard Banks during the night, so nearly in line with them that it was a miracle they hadn't scraped the coral—and were headed straight for the east end of Natuna Island. In order to make sure of getting into open water and giving Pulo Laut a wide berth, Nickerson at once changed the course to S. W. by W. He and Farley were a good deal more disturbed than they cared to admit—and went over the compass-magnets very carefully. But during the day, the helmsmen reported no difficulty in keeping the point on the "lubber's mark," and they hoped that with the prospect of twenty-four hours clear weather, there would be no recurrence of the trouble.

That night, there was a full moon in an almost cloudless sky. Again Sayles had the middle watch—from midnight to four in the morning—and again the compass-card refused to stay on the mark for more than a few moments at a time. The variation was not sufficiently rapid for the helmsman to notice it until he found mark and point three or four degrees apart—and then, having his mind filled with the saloons and girls of Liverpool, after the manner of sailors, he shifted his wheel automatically and scarcely gave it a thought. At six-bells, the sky clouded over; the glass began to drop a little—not rapidly enough to indicate a hurricane, but just thick rainy weather. When Ned Farley came on the bridge at eight-bells to relieve Sayles, he needed his oilskins to keep off the driving rain and the air was so thick that the steaming-light on the fore-stay was scarcely more than a luminous blur. In clear weather, it would have been light by five o'clock—but it was nearer six before he could see a ship's length ahead. He noticed a low, murmuring sound, however, when the wind freshened a little—a sound

which grew perceptibly louder as the minutes passed—and watched the glass, expecting to see a drop indicating the rapid approach of a typhoon. But the mercury didn't budge.

Then, for half an hour, the wind shifted freakishly and the sound was less distinct—but with a sudden change back to the regular S. W. quarter, there came an unmistakable roar of surf—so close ahead that Farley sprang to the engine-room telegraph and shoved the pointer around to full-speed astern. But the shifting wind had muffled and confused the sound of the breakers just about five minutes too long. Even as the engines stopped and reversed, the momentum of the *Oranola's* eight thousand tons carried her among the jagged outlying coral-reefs of Pulo Laut. There came a deadly grinding shudder along her bottom-plates; the next roller lifted her, carried her forward a little—and dropped her with a horrible crunching sound upon sharp projections of the reef—after which, she settled over slightly on her port side and the succeeding rollers swept her poop clear. As the screw, racing astern, only seemed to be shaking her more firmly into the coral, the mate signaled Peynington to stop his engines—and proceeded to sound the water along the lee side to get some idea as to the configuration of the bottom.

In the murk and confusion, neither he nor anyone else on deck happened to notice a hand which came out of the second mate's port, just below Nickerson's cabin, and dropped three large horseshoe magnets into the water. But the Captain had appeared on the upper-deck in his pajamas at the first stoppage of the engines, and he saw the action distinctly—even to noticing a seal ring on the third finger of the hand.

As soon as Nickerson got into his clothes, he joined the mate on the bridge—just as that despondent officer had taken his certificate from an inside pocket and was about to tear it up.

"Hold on, Ned! You haven't dirtied that ticket! This isn't your fault! There's been something wrong with our compasses for more than forty-eight hours—and the weather's been too thick to navigate by anything else. She ap-

pears to be resting firmly in spite of those rollers—we'll look into the situation later, when there's a better light! Tell Peynington to start his bilge-pumps from Number One hold—I don't think she's punched through anywhere else—and have 'Chips' sound the wells. I'll tell the steward to give us something in the way of breakfast right away—put us in better shape to tackle the job!"

A moment before, Ned Farley wouldn't have given a half-dollar, "Mex," for any chance of saving the ship or even salvaging any appreciable part of her cargo, but so contagious is the example of one masterful, resourceful man in an emergency, that he began to think something might be done after all. He remembered having heard the Captain say at mess, one evening, that a fire or other disaster is rarely as bad as it first seems.

"Aye, aye, sir! . . . I've just sent 'Chips' below. Better call Sayles, hadn't I, sir?"

"No—let him sleep—if he can! There's nothing he can do for the ship at present."

Peynington and Drake, the engineers—and Farley, also—were inclined to be rather glum as they sat down at the mess-table—but "Cap'n Sam" began joking them out of it until they caught the infection of his resiliency and began to laugh over certain aspects of the situation.

"Kinda reminds me, boys, of the way the Italian put it when some one asked him how business was: 'Hella! Alla mon' Io maka on peanutta, Io losa on damn banan'!' Looks as if the salvage we raked in on the *Myrtona*, down in Banda Sea, was mostly going into some other owner's pocket for pulling us out of this mess! Of course it wont affect your shares any—but it'll pretty nearly wipe out mine, because I'm half-owner in her. Poor old *Oranola!* She's too blamed fine a boat to leave bleaching her bones on this reef! Been earning double her up-keep ever since she left the Clyde—and you saw how much that typhoon bothered her. In open water, I'd take her through any storm that ever blew—unless the turbines laid down on me, unexpectedly. Where do you figure we are, Ned?"

"I don't think we can be as far in as the big Natuna, sir. Must be Pulo Laut."

"Did you notice how the tide was?"

"Very close to the ebb, sir—it'll turn in about an hour."

"Then, as soon as the swell eases down a bit, I think you'd better get two anchors out, astern, in deep water. If she starts to float on the flood-tide, it's likely to carry her further in and punch a lot more holes in the bottom-plates. If the monsoon holds pretty steady, we'll not get much over six or eight feet rise—but if a typhoon happens along to the nor'east'ard of us, it's likely to back up, here, and give us ten or twelve feet. I'm going to see what boats I can pick up by wireless—but I'll not call for assistance unless the situation looks considerably worse than it does now. Luckily, we've got a high-powered installation which gives us at least a thousand miles radius. Go below and start up the dynamo, Tom—so I'll have all the current I need."

The first steamer he picked up was the big Messageries liner, *Paul Lecat*—twenty-four hours out of Saigon. After exchanging positions and chronometer-time with her operator, he caught one of the Norddeutscher Lloyd boats coming down from Bangkok to Singapore with an ambassador and his suite—then he tuned-down to a faint whisper on his diaphragms which proved to come from the Burns, Philp liner, *Mataram*, just north of Banka, on her way up from Batavia. As he knew the Burns, Philp people in Australian ports very well, Nickerson made up his mind that he could probably secure better terms from them than from lines belonging to other nationalities, and commenced talking with the *Mataram's* operator with the view of getting pleasantly acquainted in case he was obliged to call for assistance.

"Just up from Darwin and Batavia?"

"O. K. . . . Full passenger-list, Singapore."

"Hear anything of man named Satterlee, on North Coast?"

"Jack Satterlee? . . . Sure! Left him at 'Thursday.' Think he was after pearls—but no evidence. Satterlee's a bird!"

"Anything new—down Australia way?"

"They've traced that escaped convict to 'China Navigation' boat—probably got away to Hong Kong or Amoy."

"What convict?"

"Mate. Attempted poison master *Oran*—By Jove! . . . That must have been your ship—*Oranola*. Sentenced twenty years in Brisbane. Escaped, second week in prison. Was your master in command, then?"

"O. K. I was commanding—Nickerson . . . First I'd heard of mate's escape. Was it in the papers?"

"No. Authorities kept quiet, hoping recapture. Newspapers spotted detectives at steamers, and story leaked out last week. Said to be owner's nephew, but desperate character. Knifed two keepers getting away. One died."

When they stopped talking, Nickerson began to see the explanation of several mysterious occurrences, all at once—even the shooting of Fred Wayne in Hong Kong. And yet, the change in the man's appearance would have fooled anyone under the circumstances. When Lambton had first come aboard, in San Francisco, his clothes and personality were foppish in the extreme. He was slightly built—smoothly-shaven—with light brown hair—and spoke with an affected Cambridge accent. The man Sayles apparently weighed at least two stone heavier, though of about the same height. His heavy beard was a few shades darker than Lambton's had been—yet of the same general tone, so that a darker dye would have been scarcely noticeable at the roots of the hair. The clothes were ill-kept and of much cheaper material—not over-well fitting—and Sayles' language was that of a partly illiterate man. The change, and his acting, deceived messmates who had lived aboard the same ship with him for over a month—but he'd never been intimate with any of them and, with his life and liberty at stake, had excellent reasons for a finished bit of acting.

When Nickerson had finally pieced together all the evidence, in his mind, he thoughtfully slipped a revolver of heavy caliber into his coat pocket and went down the bridge ladder to the spar-deck. It was not safe to leave the second mate

at liberty another hour. Farley and Tom Peynington were trying to measure the rising tide from the lee rail when the Captain appeared, and he called them aside—where none of the crew could overhear him.

"Ned, I wish you'd go turn Sayles out of his bunk and ask him to come on deck. When he does, I want you boys to step away, one side. I've got a few things I want to say to him—and I'll need plenty of sea-room. Understand?"

They didn't understand in the least—beyond the fact that the old man evidently proposed to mix it with Sayles for some breach of duty, and meant to do it thoroughly. Such a thing as a mutinous attack upon him never entered their heads—and when Sayles came out of the deck-house toward the fore-hatch, they carelessly stepped over to the rail, leaving a clear space around the two men—and several of the crew, instinctively sensing a row in the air, edged out under the hood of the fo'c's'le-head. The Captain was leaning carelessly against the pin-rail of the foremast, with his hands in his coat-pockets, as Sayles approached him.

"You sent for me, Cap'n?" Then—apparently noticing the position of the ship for the first time: "Hell! Are we ashore? How did it happen?"

"That's what I'd like to have you explain—*Lambton!*"

"I don't get you! What in blazes—?"

"You should have taken that ring off your finger when you threw those magnets out of your port just as we struck!" The Captain's voice cut like steel—every word was distinct. A spark of fury came into the second mate's eyes—and before the other officers realized his intention, he whipped an automatic pistol from somewhere under his coat and fired, point-blank, at Nickerson.

"Captain Sam" moved his head slightly to one side, and a ringing "ping" was heard, as a jacketed bullet went through one thickness of the hollow-steel foremast. Then there came a flash from his side pocket and, with a scream of pain, the second mate dropped his pistol to the deck—blood dripping from his fingers.

"Thank you, Lambton—you had your chance with the first shot, and that's all

the excuse I need for what I'm going to do! In the first place, you're an escaped convict with a fresh murder on your hands. You shot Fred Wayne from behind, in Hong Kong, like the coward you are—so there would be a vacancy on the *Oranola* which you meant to get! You've stood by the binnacle in the wheel-house, night after night, with three big magnets in your pockets—deflecting the needles until you've put us ashore, here, just out of scoundrelly revenge for your conviction in Brisbane, I suppose. And now you mutiny—fire upon the master of your ship! I wouldn't bother much about that hand, if I were you—because, after five minutes, you wont notice it. I'd put in the time doing some pretty solemn thinking, if I were you."

"Ah—go chase yourself—you great big stiff! You've not the nerve to kill me, and you know it! Why—say, Cap'n, you can't be in earnest! You'll hang for it! Say, Cap'n—you don't mean it! I don't know nothin' about no magnets—an' I was only tryin' to scare you a bit when I fired! Say, Cap'n—fer Gawd's sake—"

Expressions of disgust came into the faces of the officers and even of the crew, forward. It seemed to some of them horrible to stand by and see the thing done—without making an effort to stop it; then they thought of the second mate's fiendish actions during the past months . . . And when it seemed as if, in spite of cold-blooded justice, they *must* prevent what they saw coming—the shot rang out. Lambton slowly turned his head from one side to the other—looking wonderingly, stupidly, at the circle of faces, as if unable to account for something which had happened. Then—he swayed a little and pitched heavily forward upon the deck—a dark stream trickling across the white planking into the scuppers.

Nickerson wiped the barrel of his revolver and dropped it into his pocket—pinching out a few sparks that were smouldering in the cloth where he'd fired through it. Then he went over to the motionless form on the hatch, felt of the pulse, and dragged a piece of tarpaulin over it.

"I'm sorry a thing like this had to

be done, men—but a master can't shirk his duty even if it's a trying one. This scoundrel was guilty of at least one brutal murder and three attempted ones. He put the ship where she is—and if he'd seen any chance of our getting her off, he'd have knifed some of us in our sleep and, setting the rest adrift, would have gone ashore in one of the boats. Here's his automatic—you remember he fired but one shot at me. Yet there are three shells missing from the magazine—and the bullets are identical with the one taken out of Fred Wayne by the surgeon! I have it—you may compare them. The horse-shoe magnets are down there under water, but I'll get them presently—and I saw Lambton's hand drop them out of his port. I shall state the case to the authorities at first opportunity, and you'll be called upon for your evidence. Farley, you may have him sewed up with a couple of fire-bars for weights—then row half a mile off in one of the boats before you drop him over. We don't want any sharks around the steamer."

Most of them were not unaccustomed to occasional scenes of violence—such things are the chance features in a seafaring life—but an execution is neither an easy nor a pleasant thing to watch, and the gloom of a drizzling monsoon rain—intensifying the precarious situation of an eight thousand ton steamer on the rocks just outside a line of furiously pounding breakers—was reflected in every face. Farley, Peynington and Drake—loyal friends of Nickerson's though they were—felt sick with the tragedy of it, and began to wonder if they had credited him with a decency he really didn't possess. They spoke to each other in whispers and moved about as silently as possible. When Nickerson went up to his room, Drake voiced the thing which lay heaviest on their minds.

"If he'd only killed Lambton with his first shot—instead of smashing his hand! Then it would have been a perfectly fair duel. But to shoot down a defenseless man—even if he was a murderer and convict—"

Peynington interrupted, as a new aspect of the affair occurred to him:

"Hold on, boys—we're gettin' altogether the wrong twist on this! . . .

An' if we're not jolly careful, we'll let it prejudice us against the bravest, nerviest man we know. Just stop an' consider these facts, will you! The old man sent for Sayles, or Lambton, as he really was—I recognized that ring, myself, when my attention was called to it, and he must have worn the stone inside most of the time—he knew that Lambton would attempt to kill him the minute he saw he was identified! Yet Nickerson deliberately stood there and let that scoundrel fire the first shot—takin' more than even chances of bein' killed by it! Would either of us three have the nerve to do a thing like that? I'm jolly well sure I'd not! Then he fires from his hip an' smashes the bounder's hand instead of killin' him—for why? Because, for the effect upon the crew, an' even us, it was necessary to explain who the man was—what he'd done—an' the danger of keepin' him alive on this wreck when it's a toss-up whether any of us will ever get ashore! No boat can get through those breakers without upsettin'—an' if a typhoon breaks on us, here, that'll settle us anyhow! If we've all got to go, Lambton was the murderer who deliberately killed us by puttin' the ship where she is!"

"But, hang it all—that seems to me the weak point in the whole affair! What man would deliberately put his boat ashore when it would endanger his own life as well as all the rest?"

"A convict escaping from justice would do exactly that! And it was a mighty clever move! Who in the world would ever look for Lambton as an officer on the ship of the very master he tried to poison! As a survivor, picked off a wreck like this by some rescuing ship, his alibi an' position before the world are beyond question! It took nerve to kill him as the Cap'n did—the sort of nerve that only a brave man has! An' I'll wager he steps right up an' faces the courts the minute we make port—see if he doesn't!"

The more they thought it over, the more thoroughly justifiable the Captain's action seemed. It was an ugly thing—the picture would lie on their minds for the rest of their lives—but it was an act from which there could have

been no shirking. To have kept the man in irons until he could have been lodged in prison, ashore, would have been practically an impossibility, situated as they were—and should he escape a second time from justice, he had shown himself capable of tracking down each man in succession—shooting him from behind, as he had shot Fred Wayne. At this point in their discussion, the Captain appeared in the doorway of his cabin—lugging the diving-suit in which he'd gone down into the flooded engine-room of the yacht *Myrtona*, in the Banda Sea.

"What you goin' to do with that, Cap'n?"

"Go down over the side and see exactly what she's resting on—then we'll know better what our chances are."

"But—for the love of Mike, sir! This undertow will foul your air-hose, an' may bring the ship down on top of you any minute! She's got quite a list now—suppose a big roller lays her clear over!"

Nickerson calmly lighted a cigar and began carefully examining the suit for leaks. "Reckon that's so, boys—but some one's got to take the risk. I'm not asking anyone to do what I'm afraid to do myself. You know that, don't you?"

Glances of stunned understanding passed between them: "My word! . . . *Rather!*"

Nickerson was not under water more than twenty minutes—though, a dozen times, they feared the powerful surge of the undertow would snap both life-line and air-hose. Then they hauled him up—and when the face-glass was unscrewed from his copper helmet, he took from one of the big pockets under his arm three large horse-shoe magnets, which he tossed upon the deck for all hands to see.

"There are the things which put us where we are, men! They were just under the second mate's port, where he dropped 'em—and if you'll do a little figuring among yourselves, you'll find there was no difficulty in keeping the ship on her course when it was his watch below! It only happened when he had the first, or the middle watch! Now I'll explain what I'm going to attempt. She's wedged in between a couple of

big round brain-coral rocks, on her port bow, and three others on her starboard side, nearly amidships—but for the after-half of her length, the reef goes down, steep-to, so that she's hanging over a thirty-foot depth at the stern. There's a split in her bilge-plates about ten feet long, on the edge of Number One tank—not over five inches wide. If we can get her loose without punching any more of 'em, I'll calk that with oakum and wedges from the under side."

"But how in jolly blazes are we goin' to float her, Cap'n?"

"I'm coming to that. We've a dozen or more large and very strong teak cases in the cargo—among the last things that were stowed. There are expensive models of Chinese temples for some exhibition at Earl's Court, I think, inside of 'em—but the cases struck me as being thick and tight. We'll get 'em all on deck right away—stow whatever's inside of 'em in the empty 'tween-deck, aft—and have 'Chips' calk 'em with oakum and pitch so they'll be water-tight. Have 'em ready for the next low-tide and float six on each bow—with wire-cables running from one set to the other under her bottom. Then we'll kedge the stern-anchors way out and move all the weight aft that we can possibly shift. As the tide rises, those pontoons will give a good deal of lift to the bow—the extra weight will lower her, aft—the donkey-engines will be hauling on the kedge-cables—and Peynington will have the screw pulling asterr, full-speed. If we can be ready by the next low-tide, I think we can get her off—especiall; if it's a bit higher than usual. Now turn to and get busy! Every hour we stay here lessens our chances!"

The scheme had been planned by a man who would have made an exceptional engineer, had he not chosen the sea instead. And it worked so perfectly that when the *Oranola* floated off the coral-ledge, it seemed difficult to realize their almost hopeless position of a few hours before. When she was anchored off-shore in deep water, Nickerson was again lowered over the side in his diving-suit upon a loop of cable which passed under the bottom and enabled

him to work his way along to the split in the bilge-plates. Then wedges and bunches of hemp-fiber were made fast to a line which he pulled down and, after losing three of them, succeeded in stuffing into the crack so firmly that nothing was likely to dislodge them until the ship reached port—though the bilge and circulating-pumps could have kept the water down unless they ran through another typhoon. Luck favored them, however. They made Singapore in safety—getting her into the Albert Dock at Tanjong Pagar by a narrow margin—her length along the bottom being 440 feet, and that of the dock a scant 485, along the keel-blocks.

By that time, wireless and the shore-lines had spread her story up and down the Orient. It was a weirdly improbable one, difficult to credit, at first, but—as corroborative evidence began to pile up from Brisbane, from the master of the China Navigation steamer which had brought Lambton to Hong Kong, from Wayne, in the Hong Kong hospital, who had caught a glimpse of his would-be murderer's bearded face, as he fell upon the parade ground; from the automatic pistol, the magnets and the sworn evidence of the *Oranola's* crew—"Fighting Sam Nickerson's" name and picture again found prominent space in the world's newspapers, and there was much discussion as to the defensibility of his action in executing Lambton as he had done. As far as British law was concerned, the Singapore courts settled the matter in a single day's sitting—completely exonerating Nickerson, with a complimentary appreciation of his nerve. Ethically, however, there were occasional differing opinions—and he feared that Dolores Murchieson, not being able to visualize the real conditions on the wreck, might consider his action indefensible. He felt that he would do exactly the same thing again under like conditions, however, and put her possible opinion out of his mind as something really irrelevant. One occurrence which helped to relieve his nervous tension was the receipt of a cablegram from his Hong Kong solicitors:

Capt. Samuel Nickerson,
S. S. *Oranola*—Singapore.
Bank withdraws suit. Chief Justice in-

timates their position indefensible under circumstances, they being actually ranch of Boston bank to all intents. Congratulations.

BLENKINS, WINKLE & DODD.

Upon the following day, Mr. John B. Murchieson and family, of New York, came ashore from the *Nankin*, of the P. & O.—upon which they were sailing to Egypt, from Yokohama—and hunted up Tom Peynington at Tanjong Pagar. Taking him back to dine with them at the Raffles, the millionaire cross-questioned him as to the *Oranola's* voyage from Hong Kong to the reefs of Pula Laut, until Lambton's devilry stood out clearly in all its hideousness. Then they telephoned for Nickerson, who spent the rest of the day in their company. As the *Nankin* was about to pull out for Colombo, that evening, Dolores stood with the Captain upon a secluded part of the after-deck, pinning a rose in the button-hole of his pongee coat.

"Sam, I'm only beginning to realize how much you've had to worry you in the last six weeks! Daddy's awfully pleased at the way you saved your money from that insolvent bank—that sort of thing appeals to him. He says the drawing all you could get in Bank of England notes instead of by drafts was the only possible way in which you could have saved it—and most people wouldn't have figured that out in time to act upon Mr. Satterlee's hint. About that horrible affair on the reef—ah, how little women know of the fearful duties a man is sometimes called upon to perform! It takes a strong man to do that sort of thing—a weak one would dodge it, and jeopardize many other lives by his lack of nerve. You're not a weak man, Sam—whatever else you may be. What is it I've heard they call you—'Fighting Sam?' It's appropriate, I think. You don't know when you're licked—yet. Perhaps you'll learn—in time. Very few men would have thought it possible to get an eight-thousand-ton ship off that reef and navigate her to Singapore—they'd have probably died in an open boat. Hark! There goes the bugle. . . . You ask if I've made up my mind? Well—I—I guess so, Sam."

Her arms crept about his neck—and their lips met.



The Cost of Loving

Wherein a girl finds that she will have to give up
a whole lot if she is to have the man for whom
she cares most; in the end she finds her
happiness is well worth the cost.

By W. CAREY WONDERLY

SADIE KIRBY had been born with that elusive quality which for want of a better definition we characterize as charm. She wasn't beautiful—few New York women of her class are. But where Nature had failed her, Sadie had called upon Art to help her out, and mankind seemed perfectly satisfied with the result.

Again, she possessed that happy facility of always appearing well groomed; after you had seen her in a shirtwaist and skirt, your eyes ached to behold her slender figure in something from Paquin or Doucet. But no one ever has. Her salary, this fine October morning, was exactly fifteen dollars a week—and seldom was it ever paid in full. However, had you reminded her of this, and suggested the desirability of looking about for another position, it is highly probable that she would have shrugged her shoulders and given vent to her favorite "I should worry!" And there you have Sadie.

It was a little after nine o'clock one Monday morning that she turned west on Twenty-third Street and entered a huge, once-fashionable dwelling on that thoroughfare just off Broadway. On

the second floor of this house was a door with a neat silver plate which said

COROLIUS—PALMIST

It was here that Sadie stopped, fished down in her chatelaine, extracted a key, and fitted it in the lock. But before she could turn it, the door flew open and a young man looked out in the corridor.

Miss Kirby stepped back, startled; then she laughed.

"Lord love us!" said she. "I thought it was a spook at first! Whatever are you doing down so early, Coro?"

"Business," muttered the man briefly, and went back into the room.

Sadie followed closely at his heels, humming a snatch of song, but if one had observed her face in repose they would have discovered a queer, haunted expression lurking in her eyes.

"Talk about your swell times!" she cried, tossing aside her hat and bag. Corolius hadn't been, but his face seemed to brighten, or at least to become less tense, as he watched her fluff her hair and listened to her mad, merry chatter. "Last night, Coro," she said, with a nod and a wink, "I was at the Winter Garden—some show! And then we

went to Louis Martin's for supper—some spread! And everybody pointed out yours truly and whispered 'There goes *la belle Gaby*'—get the French, Coro? . . . Ah, it's a wonder I'm alive this morning to tell the tale! For last night I almost died o' joy!"

This time Corolius smiled.

"Was it Beardsley?" he asked.

"It was—in the most beautiful clothes, Coro!"

But his interest had fled. Turning on his heel, he disappeared through the purple velvet curtains, leaving Sadie in the middle of her story. And Sadie's under lip quivered; she clenched her hands.

"Oh!" she half-moaned, all her pretty gaiety gone. "It's come at last—I *know!*"

For a minute or two she stood in the middle of the room, her figure rigid, her nails digging into her palms. Then she began to set the place to rights, arranging the chairs, dusting her own table, and tying back the curtains at the window. The pale New York sun drifted in and fell directly on a worn place in the purple velvet carpet, and Sadie saw it, made an impatient little gesture, and dragged a Mission rocker over the spot. Then she sat down in the chair and listened and waited.

In the room beyond, the room where he received his patrons, she could hear a man moving about. He was pacing the floor, nervously, from the window to the door and back again—how unlike Corolius! Sadie stood it for as long as she could without shrieking; then she jumped up and went to the door of the other apartment.

"Coro!" she said, tossing back the curtains.

For a little they stood looking intently at each other, neither one of them saying a word; then, still in silence, she went to him.

He was a tall man with the figure of an athlete and the grace of a professional dancer. He had dark hair, slightly inclined to curl, gray eyes, and a short under-lip which gave him a curious, not unpleasant, boyish appearance. The Blarney morning suit he wore unmistakably bore the stamp of a Fifth Avenue tailor and contrasted strangely with

the red fez which he had clapped on his head. On Broadway, the women would have noticed him for his height and shoulders, and the other men would have set him down at once for an actor.

"Coro," said Sadie, "something has happened. I know! Can I help? You know there is nothing I—"

He looked at her, shook his head, and began to drum idly on the table with his fingers, his little ones ringed to the knuckles so that they wouldn't bend with their fellows.

"Keep out!" he advised tersely.

Her lips curled with scorn.

"As if I would—and you in trouble!" she cried. "No, better out with it, Coro. Is it—headquarters?"

He nodded; then:

"It's move on, Sadie. . . . Of course, I didn't expect to go on here forever, with the police department thirsty for somebody's gore, but— And I've been at the one stand for two years now; and two years is a long time—in New York. Recently an edict went forth against all charlatans, and last night the word was passed to me. I'm—sorry."

"Sorry! Charlatans!" she echoed, with something like a snarl. "You're in a much worse way than I thought, Coro."

"Sadie, you know," he said.

"Know what?" she demanded.

"I—Corolius *is* a fake."

She flung out both hands in a wild, scornful gesture.

"New York is a fake! And New Yorkers want to be faked!" she cried passionately.

"What a little pessimist it is!" said he, regarding her almost tenderly.

"Say, rather, what a little New Yorker," Sadie muttered. "Will you—will anybody!—please tell me what harm has been done humanity by Corolius, the palmist? You don't knock people down and drag them in here! No, they come of their own accord, and you always tell them pleasant, cheerful things so that they want to come again—soon! Of course it's all—all bosh; but isn't *everything?*"

"No, everything isn't," said Corolius gravely.

She caught him up quickly, savagely: "Well, what isn't?"

He shook his head.

"I don't know," he said.

Sadie looked helplessly around the tiny purple room.

"I know it's an outrage," she pouted.

The man sat down on the table, one long leg dangling, the foot in a black suede pump with a huge rosette kicking gently to and fro.

"I'm going to clear out to-day, Sadie," he said. "I'm sorry—I wish you had a job, but the department didn't await my convenience."

"Never mind me," she muttered *sotto voce*.

"I'll try to sell these chairs and hangings and things over in Sixth Avenue," he went on, "and then I'll settle with you—in full."

"Oh-h, rubbish!"

"It is, I'm afraid,"—with a rueful smile. "Still, I'll do my best, Sadie.

. . . Have you any plans?"

"Plans!" She shook herself like a wet kitten. "Lord, give me a chance to get used to it all first, wont you? Of course, I'll get along all right—sure to land on both feet. But—last night, it was milk and honey and now it looks suspiciously like milk and water. But never mind about *me*."

Corolius jumped down from the table and crossed over to the window. It looked out in a shabby areaway and the view was far from pleasant, but all the same he kept his face turned that way for the next five minutes. And as Sadie watched him, his broad shoulders now a little drooped, like a bird with wet plumage, she thought, her heart began to thump madly while the queer, haunted expression returned to her eyes.

"Coro," she said gently, at last, "you know you're about as much suited for work as—as a *matinée* idol."

"I was thinking I might pull a bell on a cross-town car," he said, half seriously.

"And—Miss Lovett?" asked Sadie.

This time Corolius turned round.

"Oh—" he began, when she cut him short with many vehement gestures. Her Irish eyes blazed with the passion of Italy.

"She'd marry you to-morrow, Coro!" she cried.

"Her kinsfolk would not allow her to," he said quietly.

"Her kins—bunk! You've settled *that*," nodded Sadie.

Corolius moved uneasily.

"Nothing doing," he said drily.

"You're not a good match-maker, Sadie. Miss Lovett would not marry me; you don't know. And I sha'n't ask her, besides. I guess I wont exactly starve,"—he laughed unpleasantly,—“in spite of headquarters and its notice to move on. By the way, how about you and—Beardsley?"

She laughed a short, ugly chuckle.

"I'm holding to that good old motto which says 'Don't give up the ship.' But my game 's harder to play than yours. It's a pretty difficult thing for a girl to slip her finger through some man's Tiffany. Yes, I'm hoping though, Coro."

He looked at her for several minutes without speaking, but finally he said:

"Be sure of the ring, Sadie. Oh, I know, but— And now, let's get ready to move on."

They worked steadily until noon. Once Corolius slipped out and came back with a dealer from Sixth Avenue who gave him a mere song—and a pretty bad one, at that!—for the chairs and the tables, together with the purple velvet curtains and carpet. It tore Sadie's heartstrings to see the old familiar objects go, but this was as nothing to what was to follow. For, a little later, she came upon Coro himself down on his knees, unscrewing the neat silver door-plate which bore his name and profession. Then she crept back to the audience room and held her hands tight over her mouth. It wasn't a dream; it was real!

"I think," said the man, coming in presently, and, man-like, noticing nothing, "I think we'd better destroy those reference books—burn 'em, Sadie; and I'll just tear up this secret wire connecting your desk with mine. No use letting 'em get too wise."

"But, Coro," she protested, hugging a huge, thick book of finely typewritten pages to her breast, "we—we might need this—later?"

He shook his head, his lips drawn in a thin, straight line.

"We'll never need it again," he told her. "Better burn it."

After a short silence she said:

"I'll—take it home with me; there's an open grate, you know. And we've no fire here."

The day wore on. At twelve o'clock he went out and returned with some coffee and sandwiches, but the very sight of the food, recalling other and happier days in the studio, sickened Sadie and she refused it fretfully. Corolius saw this and he said, with a grimace:

"Pretty poor stuff after Louis Martin's, eh, Sadie?"

He was unjust; her lips quivered, but before she could answer him, the electric bell rang out sharply, and when he hurried to open the door, a woman crossed the threshold. It was Miss Lovett; and Sadie, tried beyond endurance, fled the place by a back way.

When she reached the street, her long, dark lashes were fringed with tears; when she reached the corner, which was Broadway, she had wiped away the tears, but she held in her arms a big, brown book which looked like a ledger. And she was still carrying it, almost tenderly, when she arrived at her lodging house.

She felt better with her shoes off and her kimono on, lying flat on her bed. She wondered what Corolius would do. He had no money—he never had any money. And of the pittance he had received from the Sixth Avenue dealer, he had insisted upon her taking ten dollars—more than half of all he had got, and yet not half of what he owed her for salary! Sadie tossed and sighed. Of course, the one and true solution to his trouble was for him to marry Josephine Lovett.

Long ago Sadie had made up her mind to marry a man with money—if such a thing were possible. Unfortunately, most of Corolius' patrons were of the other sex, but Beardsley did happen along, and coming out of the audience room he had stopped at the pretty secretary's desk to pay for the reading. It must be said of Sadie that she never missed a trick, and Arthur Beardsley looked like a full house to her experienced eyes the very first time she saw

him. And so he came again to Twenty-third Street, came so often that at first Corolius was suspicious and wondered if he belonged at headquarters. But shortly he forgot to take his turn in the audience room, never, somehow, getting beyond Miss Kirby's desk; and then Coro teased Sadie and thought no more about Beardsley.

But Sadie did. He had shown her a good time for six months now, six months of theatres and suppers and taxicabs, and she believed, deep in her heart, that he meant business. No man, decided wise Sadie, would run a girl so long, and so beautifully, if he didn't expect to marry her some day. When Sadie was very tired of an evening, or when Coro's creditors were more persistent than usual, she used to declare that she didn't care how soon that day dawned.

Beardsley wasn't to see her to-night, but certainly she had never felt so blue before in all her life; so, at five o'clock, she telephoned to him at his bachelor's apartment in Madison Avenue.

"I'm home; something terrible has happened," she told him over the wire. "I thought—I thought you might like to know."

"Why, what is it?" he asked.

"I can't tell you here, now," said Sadie.

"I'll come right around," declared Beardsley.

"No-o, don't. I'm just going to have my supper—"

"Get your hat and coat on and go to dinner with me," said he then. "Now, no excuses. I'll be at the house in ten minutes."

There was a gleam of triumph in Sadie's eyes as she hung up the telephone.

"I believe," she said to herself, as she raced upstairs to dress, "I believe you brought that old reference book home for nothing, after all, Sade!"

Beardsley didn't know much about clothes, but he noticed that Miss Kirby always looked charming, just charming enough to make him wish that her furs were sable and her frock graced with a famous Paris label. And clasped around her throat he liked to imagine a string of pearls.

They went to world-famous restaurant, for Sadie's New York heart loved the gay places, and it seemed Beardsley's sole desire to please her in everything. And it was there, across a flower-decked cloth, that she told him of all that had occurred since last they met.

"They've closed up Corolius," she said, with a sigh, "and of course that means I'm out of a job. Isn't it too much? And the shops full of winter styles!"

"So they've closed Corolius," he said slowly. "Well, you know he was merely a fraud, Sadie."

"Yes, but such a fraud!" she cried. "He was magnificent! I tell you, if he could have gotten a studio on Fifth Avenue and charged ten dollars a reading he would have had the town falling over itself coming to him. That was his dream—Fifth Avenue. And maybe he wouldn't have been the rage too! But instead, the bulls make him move on. It's a shame!"

Beardsley glanced at her shrewdly from under his thick lashes.

"You're not fond of the fellow, surely?" he ventured.

"Fond of Coro!" cried Sadie, throwing back her head. "Well, you'd better bet I am! He's always treated me like his favorite meerschaum, and no man's love can go that one better!"

The frown lifted and he laughed silently.

"You funny child!" he said. "Of course you're not bothering too much about another position?"

"No, not too much," she smiled. "I've got ten dollars between me and the old women's home. Oh-h!"—as he started to speak—"a smart little typist like yours truly can always land something—sooner or later. My spelling's not perfect and my method of expressing myself not always in accordance with the little red schoolhouse, but still—oh, I'll get along somehow or other, even in this city of sin."

"Hush!" he cautioned, yet laughing in spite of himself. "Some one may hear you and think you mean it."

"I do!" she insisted.

He stretched his hand across the table until it just escaped touching hers, which rested there small and pink and

ringless on the cloth; then he withdrew his and raised his glass to his lips.

"Sadie," he asked, a moment later, "will you marry me?"

"Yes," she answered calmly. "When?"

"Why—soon, of course."

"All right."

Slowly the blood mounted to his cheeks until they matched in color the roses in the centerpiece.

"You're not very—enthusiastic, are you, Sadie?" he said.

"Why, I like you a whole lot—if that's what you mean," she returned. "Certainly I've never known another man who's shown me so good a time! I guess my enthusiasm matches yours."

He looked at her for a brief second without speaking.

"I didn't intend to ask you to marry me when I brought you here to-night," he said then.

"But I did," nodded Sadie frankly.

His mouth twitched in an effort to smile.

"You positively refuse to leave me a shred of vanity," he remarked. "So you did, eh? Then—Corolius isn't closed?"

"Oh, but he is! That's why I *did*."

Beardsley paid his check, gave their waiter his tip, and followed Sadie toward the cloak-room door.

"You make a chap feel knee high to a grasshopper," he declared.

"Now that's going some," she smiled. Then, in a whisper: "Do give the poor kid a Casey. To be cooped up here like this! Hello, Pearl!" she greeted the girl in charge. "Always standing just where you can catch a peep of Rudolph, aren't you?"

"Oh, Miss Sadie!" murmured the girl, striving her hardest to blush.

Beardsley slipped her a folded dollar bill.

"Thank you, sir. You're looking so well to-night, you know, Miss Sadie," she said, standing off a little way and surveying her, hands on hips. "Isn't she, sir?"

"Yes," said Beardsley. "Good-night."

"Good-night, sir. Good-night, Miss Sadie—and thank you kindly," salaamed Pearl.

It was the sort of homage Sadie liked best: to address head-waiters by their first names and have hotel folk remember hers, and her face was wreathed in smiles all the way out to their waiting taxicab.

"Where shall it be?" he asked now, following her into the cab.

"I don't know," said Sadie. "Suppose you tell him to drive us slowly up through the Park and round the reservoir. I want some air and I want to talk."

Her long silence, as the machine sped merrily up the Avenue, got upon Beardsley's nerves, for it was unlike Sadie to keep quiet for any length of time.

"Are you sure you wouldn't rather go to a show?" he asked once, trying to rouse her.

"Very well," she said, but without enthusiasm.

"Where?"

"Oh-h, it's all the same to me."

"Nonsense! It isn't all the same to you at all," he declared. "Suppose I'd pick out Faversham and 'Julius Cæsar?'"

"I love sad pieces," she murmured.

In spite of himself, he burst out laughing.

"I think we'd better try the Casino," he told her. "And, Sadie, what is the matter? Is the very thought of marrying me so—so terrible to you?"

She turned toward him then.

"I'm not sure if I want to marry you after all, Arthur," she said. "Don't ask me why—I don't know why. And you've certainly shown me a good time. Maybe it's that I've tried so hard to bring you to your knees. For, from the time I was as large as a kitten, I've been determined to marry a rich man or die a lily." She glanced at him out of the corners of her eyes with something of her old-time gaiety and charm. "Yet even in my wildest dreams I didn't really, truly believe I should do—either. Art, you've been so sweet to me and all it doesn't seem fair to treat you this way, old chappy."

There came a tender expression in Beardsley's face as he watched her. She seemed so tired, so small, so feminine!

"Sadie," said he, "if this is a time for

'fessing up, well—I never intended to ask you to be my wife. I have a cousin who was picked from childhood for that proud position. But—you—oh, you! . . . Up to the minute I met you at your boarding house to-night I was telling myself that I wouldn't, simply *wouldn't* ask you to marry me. I recalled that I had found you in Corolius' waiting-room—"

"Coro is a white man, Artie," she interposed gently.

Beardsley made an expressive gesture with his hands.

"If Coro was the worst man in this world, Arthur, well, the recording angel would sure get a chance to get in forty winks once every twenty-four hours without missing any earthly sensation for the front page of the *Jordan Times*."

"What a staunch little person you are!" he smiled.

"I mean it," she nodded.

Their taxicab fell into line with the other vehicles before the entrance to the theatre. In the lights and noise, Sadie's spirits seemed to return, for she leaned from the window and watched the crowds that peopled Broadway. A moment only, and then the doorman flew to open their car, and Sadie and Beardsley descended to the sidewalk.

Directly another motor took the place of theirs and a party of four hurried on ahead of them into the lobby. Sadie just caught a glimpse of one of the women, and she shivered as from the cold.

"Do you know her?" asked Beardsley.

"No," lied Sadie, pushing on.

"That lady," said he then, "is my cousin I told you of—Josephine Lovett."

Sadie felt the color creep from her neck to her brow. If Miss Lovett was Beardsley's cousin, then, of course, he must know of her visits to Coro's studio in Twenty-third Street. She felt that it was a trap.

"Why did you ask me that?" she flared. "You know that I have seen Miss Lovett—and where. You do those mean little tricks with me—as if you couldn't make up your mind to trust me wholly!"

He stopped to examine his tickets, then escorted her toward the doors, his thin lips curved in a smile.

"Don't get angry or jealous," he begged lightly. "I don't care two straws what Josephine does any longer. She may go to all the palmists in creation without further interference from me. And do you know why?"

She shook her head.

"Because there's you," he said, and his voice trembled a little. "Sadie, I first came to Corolius' place because I had heard that Miss Lovett was a frequent visitor there. And from what I saw, I thought—am I right?—that she had taken a fancy to the fellow."

"I'm sure I don't know anything about it," said Sadie stiffly, as he hesitated.

"Well, I did think so, and it made my blood boil. Joe was never very wild about me." He smiled significantly, but she refused to meet his glance. "As I've said, I followed her to Twenty-third Street, and there I saw you, and then I didn't care very much after that whether she was in love with the fellow or not."

This time Sadie raised her eyes, met his riveted upon her, and grinned in spite of her attempt at dignified demeanor.

"Bull, Artie," said she.

"Sadie," he returned, "I love you very dearly."

The curtain was up, and during the rest of the act Sadie sat staring thoughtfully at the stage. Beardsley fancied she was enjoying herself—it was just the sort of show that she liked best, all music and frocks and dancing. All the same, when it was over, she could not have told you for the life of her whether the prima donna wore French blonde hair with her mauve gown and Titian red with her green, or vice versa. And when Sadie didn't know this, you may be sure there was something radically wrong somewhere.

The fact was, Sadie had a growing idea, the seed of which Mr. Arthur Beardsley himself had sown. And the more she pondered over it, the stronger her conviction grew, until at last she was positive.

"Well, where shall it be now?" asked the man, rising and stretching as the company came out for the finale.

"Home for mine," nodded Sadie.

"You mean it? . . . There's that new palais du danse—"

"I'm weary for the hay, Artie," she insisted.

He glanced at her keenly; she looked it—tired and spiritless.

"Come along then, *ma cherie*," said he, tucking her arm through his.

She went gladly enough, saying, with a last feeble attempt at her own brand of humor:

"If you insult me again, I'll call a copper. You can't get fresh wit' muh—see?"

They waited ten minutes or more before their carriage number was called, the public taxicab looking unusually shabby in that stream of splendid vehicles.

"By and by you will have your own car with the Beardsley crest on the door," whispered Arthur.

Sadie's eyes sparkled greedily for a second; then the light went out, leaving her face duller and grayer than ever.

"This ark's good enough for Coro's secretary, I guess," she threw back. "At least, it's as good as a cross-town trolley—and that's my size."

"Sadie, you're not yourself. You ought to spend the winter in the South!"

"All right. Come and take me down to the Battery some cold Sunday."

"Listen to me. Wont you be serious?" he pleaded.

"Yes." All at once the mocking note left her voice and her face grew strangely tragic. "It just came to me a while ago, Arthur, but it was you who sent the men from headquarters after Corolius—and shut him up. It was despicable! You used your money and your influence to dig up an old law so ancient it was moss-covered. . . . against charlatans. Coro isn't a fortune teller! But you were so afraid that he would marry your rich cousin—Lord, neither of us suspected she was your cousin! If we had—"

"Never mind Miss Lovett!" he cut in grimly. "Do you think for one minute she would have anything to do with such a gorgeous humbug as your palmist?"

"She's got a case on Coro all right," nodded Sadie.

"'Case!' Don't be vulgar!"

"Don't be—what?" she shrilled. "I tell you, she threw herself at Coro's head! I advised him to marry her—all the more strongly since you took his living away from him! But he wouldn't have her—even with her millions,—because—because—"

"Well? . . . Because why?"

She placed both hands over her breast.

"Because he loves me: that's why!" she flung at him defiantly.

Beardsley sneered.

"Do you mean to tell me that a man in Corolius' shoes would throw away the chance to live a life of luxury for—"

"For love of me? Yes!" she cried, with a ring of triumph in her voice. "And that's where he is made of finer stuff than I am, for loving him as I do, I still prefer your money—your 'life of luxury.' I want money. I've worked and slaved since I was eight years old. I want a car with 'the Beardsley crest on the door.' Oh, don't make any mistake; it's not a question of men, Artie!"

"I have never flattered myself that it was I you cared for, Sadie," he said, with a crooked smile. "I've always known it was—that chap. But I guess I care so much that I'm willing to take a chance."

She was silent for several minutes then.

"You knew—about Coro?" she gasped.

He nodded.

"Yes, from the first. But then I didn't care. I had come to watch Josephine."

Sadie leaned back against the cushion.

"I believe," she said, almost in a whisper, "that you made Coro move on because of me."

He only looked at her without speaking.

"Did you?" she insisted.

"I wasn't thinking of Josephine," he answered in a low voice.

She uttered a little cry.

"And now because of me he'll never have his studio in Fifth Avenue—and a negro page in gold and scarlet! . . . It is hard!"

The cab stopped at her lodging house,

and Beardsley went with her up the steps, standing in the shadow of the doorway while she fumbled with her latch-key. Finally the door swung open and she turned to him with her forefinger on her lips.

"Don't make a noise and wake 'em or you'll have the household at you like a pack of hungry wolves."

"Sadie, I'll do anything in the world for you. I'm not such a bad sort, am I?"

"No, you're not," she told him. "Please go now; good-night."

He kissed her twice, whispered something about a ring, promised to see her early in the morning, went back to the cab and was whirled away.

Sadie turned to go indoors when she heard her name called in a hoarse whisper:

"Sadie!"

She stopped and Corolius came out of the shadow of a building on the opposite side of the street.

"I've been waiting for you," he said. "I'm going away. I came to say good-by, but Mrs. Hipple told me you had gone out with Beardsley, so I've been sitting there on the club steps for the last two hours, I guess."

Again Sadie laid her finger on her lips.

"Not too loud, Coro," she cautioned. "At night the parlor is turned into a bed room, and they're light sleepers there."

"Oh-h, bless 'em!" he ejaculated piously.

"Willingly. . . . Where are you going, Coro?"

He smiled the old, familiar boyish smile.

"Just away," he said. "New York's too small for a Twenty-third Street palmist. I'll let you know when I get there—send you beautiful two-for-five post cards. . . . If Beardsley doesn't object, of course!"

"Of course," she echoed gravely.

"At least I'll send you one—so you'll know I've taken root somewhere."

"Do. . . . I wish you could find some nice business to take hold of, Coro," she sighed. "Do you know of anything? Later—I might be able to—to—"

He shook his head.

"No, no, you don't, Sadie. It wouldn't be fair to him—nor to me. But don't fret; I always land on both feet."

"Coro," she said presently, "it was Arthur who put the bulls onto your job."

"Oh, I knew that all along," he laughed.

"You knew! . . . And you didn't tell me?"

"I didn't want to put him in bad with you, Sadie. I saw how things were drifting. He's a pretty decent sort, you know."

"Yes. . . . Who told you that he—did it?"

"Miss Lovett let something slip today. She's Beardsley's cousin."

"So he said."

"From what Josephine let fall, I gathered that she and Beardsley some time ago came to the conclusion it would be better for them if you and I were separated," he said. "So they set out to—"

"To do the dirty work," snapped Sadie.

"Exactly. . . . It cost them just five thousand iron men to send headquarters after me. I don't mean graft—altogether. But there were lawyers' fees and—all the other things the rich do with their money. Well, it was wealth well spent, it seems."

Sadie was silent for a minute or two.

"Coro," she said presently, "it costs a lot to love."

"It does that, girlie."

"And, Coro, I love you 'most to death!"

The lines around his mouth tightened, but when he spoke his voice was calm.

"Then you're a very foolish little person," he declared. "Think of Beardsley! And then of me—an adventurer, with never a dollar ahead of the game, living anywhere, by my wits! And he is a good chap. And fond of you. He'll give you everything money can buy."

"Yes, he said he would," she nodded softly. "My own car, with the Beardsley crest on the door. But I think I couldn't stand that crest, Coro. Up at Sing Sing, the prisoners have numbers; here in New York I'd have my crest.

Every time I saw it I'd realize what it meant. I *hate* Artie!"

"Don't go too far, little girl!" he said in a low, hoarse voice.

"I shall never marry him, never! I wasn't born to ride in motors with crests on the doors. I first opened my eyes in Division Street—and that's going some, Coro. My father and mother—I haven't heard of 'em, not for a month, but for a *year* of Sundays! And you talk to me about motors and crests! Have I ever been a dollar ahead of the game? Don't I live by my wits? Oh, Coro, you precious fool—"

"Stop! This is madness," he cried.

"Was it madness when you spurned the chance to marry Miss Lovett?"

"That was different—if I ever had the chance—and I didn't; it existed solely in your imagination, Sadie."

Sadie was still.

"What could I do?" he demanded, after a silence. "I've got to get out of New York—or else try a new line of business. Would you advise me to have a try at the subway? Or I might open carriage doors—with crests on 'em!—at some lobster palace? Girlie, you know I'm a ne'er-do-well."

Sadie, standing one step above him, rested her elbow on his shoulder, and leaned down so that her mouth came just to his ear.

"Listen, Coro," she whispered, "how about those towns out West? There's Frisco. I've always thought of Frisco with my heart in my mouth. I'm sure we'd love each other! We must be alike in many ways."

"You would leave New York? Go to California?" he asked.

"Anywhere under the sun!"

"But, Sadie—"

He was weakening, and yet protesting—for her own good. So she clapped one rosy hand over his mouth and with the other gave him a gentle shove down the steps.

"You know I've got the big brown book, Coro," she cooed.

"And I kept the silver door plate," he laughed back.

"Then it's all settled," she cried happily. "Oh, Coro, I can scarcely wait for to-morrow and Frisco!"



The Letter of the Law

Another remarkable case of legal legerdemain
is here described by the author of
"The Right of the Accused,"
"The Trackless Jungle," etc.

By GUY C. BAKER

PUNCTUALLY at 5:30 P. M., Colonel Jeremiah Fawsett, senior member of that distinguished law firm, Fawsett, Dale, Buxton and Fawsett, turned in at his club and joined a circle of congenial spirits gathered about a big round table.

The Colonel had just glanced in the direction of the waiting steward and raised his white, bushy eyebrows in a significant message, when Demmic heralded across the table:

"Just in time, Colonel—we're having an argument—about law."

"Then change the subject."

"Durbin—here—but pardon me, have you met Mr. Durbin?"

Fawsett turned to discover, for the first time, a young stranger sitting at his right.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Durbin," greeted the Colonel heartily. Then, mysteriously: "But you are in a den of 'loud, loquacious, vulgar egotists.' Don't argue with them—it's useless."

The young man laughed.

"I wasn't—they were doing that."

"What!" came from half a dozen indignant voices.

"I simply made an assertion," smiled the young stranger, "and the whole crowd jumped me rough-shod."

"He said," wheezed old, asthmatic Phillips, "he said that there were instances when a fellow is justified in deliberately breaking the law. Now—"

"He's right," calmly announced the Colonel.

"There!" croaked Hartly with exaggerated dismay. "I've said for some time that Fawsett was failing."

"You fellows keep up a chicken-house cackle that's nerve-racking," declared the Colonel with mock severity. "Durbin, you must simply ignore these chattering inebriates; tell me—on what do you base your seditious propaganda?"

"My views are the result of several years of close observation." He paused for a moment reflectively; then: "One instance in particular comes to my mind—an episode in which local persons were the actors."

"Let's have it!" demanded Phillips in his thick, wheezy voice. "But first—here, Jimmy, call on the boys."

Durbin waited until the steward had "called on the boys," then, slowly, as though weighing each word, began:

"The young chap around whom the story hinges is a personal friend of mine—we were classmates at college. He belonged to a most excellent family.

They lived on an old family homestead about ten miles west of here. There were, besides the young man, a mother and a sister. The farm belonged to the mother.

"The spring we finished up at Princeton—"

"What year?" broke in the Colonel.

"'09."

"Did you know—"

"Your son?" the young man chuckled reminiscently. "Bob was one of my closest friends. He came west with us on the occasion that I was just now referring to.

"Well, when my young friend returned home, he was dumfounded to find that his mother and sister were practically living on the charity of friends. The old homestead had passed into the hands of strangers.

"Not a single word had my friend had of any financial difficulties at home. His mother and sister had borne their loss without a murmur. My friend had worked his way through college, and the mother and sister had concluded to keep him in ignorance of their calamity for fear of imperiling the successful completion of his course."

"But how in—how did they lose the farm?" demanded Hartly.

"They were plucked—plucked good and proper. Do any of you gentlemen happen to know Hoopingarner? Samuel Rossiter Hoopingarner?"

"We all do!" declared Hartly with sudden hostility. "Everybody knows that old pelican."

"That's all right—we all know him, Durbin," echoed Phillips bitterly. "Go the limit."

"Yes, we know him," agreed Colonel Fawsett, with a significant nod of his head. "I've known him forty years. He was a Justice of the Peace when I first began to practice law. He always reminded me of the Texas case where a corpse on which were found forty dollars and a pistol, was fined forty dollars for carrying concealed weapons."

"I see that you gentlemen have some slight acquaintance with Hoopingarner," agreed Durbin grimly. "Well, Hoopingarner got the old homestead."

"Roped them in on that dratted Electric Railway swindle?"

"Exactly. They fell for that just like the rest—only harder. The mother and sister were so thoroughly convinced that everything was gospel that that oily hypocrite told them, and they were so eager to hand my friend an agreeable surprise, that they concluded to keep the matter a secret. They mortgaged the farm for fifteen thousand dollars and put it all in the steal. Hoopingarner took the mortgage, and, when the bubble burst, took the farm. They tell me that he made a cool half-million out of that fiasco."

"He did," growled Colonel Fawsett as he brushed his fingers savagely back through his long, white hair. "And the devil of it is that the crafty old codger was smooth enough to keep just inside the law."

"The old geezer ought to be tarred, feathered and chased around the block," growled Hartly.

"A—h!—there you have it," exclaimed Durbin triumphantly. "Now we are back to the original question. The law held out nothing to my young friend. Who of you here will say that he was not justified in violating the law in order to get even with Hoopingarner?"

Durbin swept the circle of faces challengingly.

"Well, that's what he did," he finally announced soberly.

"What did he do?" quizzed Hartly "Blackmailed him."

"Blackmailed him!" exclaimed Hartly and Demmie in incredulous unison. Colonel Fawsett whistled softly, and Phillips nearly dropped the glass which he was carrying to his lips.

"Yes—deliberately blackmailed him. At first my young friend was too stunned to think clearly. Gradually, however, he regained his composure. First of all he hustled for a couple of years in order to make his mother and sister once more comfortable.

"All the while he was figuring how to get even with Hoopingarner. He learned that he had no legal remedy, and determined to make the old crook pay in some other way. It may sound puerile and silly to you gentlemen, but the longing for retaliation became an absolute obsession with him. He determined

to get even with the old hell-hound even though he had to commit a crime to do it. He did—both.

"He studied Hoopingarner's habits and made careful inquiry regarding him. He learned that his man was a coward—an abject coward. That settled the matter. He determined to torture him with suspense—to blackmail him. Of course he never intended carrying it to the point of actually taking any of Hoopingarner's money—but only to make the old pirate think so.

"He called Hoopingarner on the 'phone without revealing his identity, and demanded that a large sum of money be left at a certain place at a certain time under penalty of bodily harm. He could detect the quaver of fear in Hoopingarner's voice, and it was like music in his ears.

"In about a week my friend called up again—his demands were more insistent and his threats more incisive. Hoopingarner whined and haggled for terms. My friend refused to make any.

"Another week passed. Again my friend called up. Hoopingarner was ready for him—he had laid a trap. He had had an extra receiver placed in his house, and never answered the 'phone that a detective was not also on the wire listening. The detective overheard everything that my friend said.

"My friend had called up that day from the home of a friend near New Paris—Martin is his name, I believe—and the detective at once learned from the exchange that my friend had talked over farm line Number 1161-G—Martin's number.

"Having no knowledge of the nature of my friend's telephone colloquy, Martin innocently disclosed his identity to the detective the following day. Now—"

A steward at that moment summoned Durbin to the 'phone. His departure precipitated an animated discussion of the story. Colonel Fawsett had just turned heatedly upon Demmic, when the steward reappeared with a request for Colonel Fawsett's immediate presence in the reading-room.

The Colonel gave Demmic a parting fling, and reluctantly left the circle.

Entering the reading-room, he was surprised to find Durbin pacing the floor nervously.

"It wasn't you who sent for me, was it, Durbin?"

"Yes. I dislike to bother you with my personal difficulties, but the truth is, I am in an ugly mess. I want your advice."

"That's all right, Durbin—fire ahead. I can dawdle with that bunch of antediluvians out there any time, but I do not often have a chance to be of service to one of Bob's friends."

"Thank you. The real reason that I am here is that I expected to find Bob. In fact, I came to Dayton especially to see him."

"He is in South America."

"So I learned on my arrival." For a moment he hesitated uncertainly; then:

"I need the services of an attorney—and quickly."

"The devil you say. What's the trouble?"

"I am about to be arrested."

"You!"

"Yes. It's about that yarn I was telling in there a moment ago. My friend is a myth—I am the person who did the blackmailing."

The Colonel stared at Durbin for a moment in wordless surprise; then, taking a long breath, he gasped:

"The dickens you say!"

"It was an egregious blunder, I'll admit. But the rest of the story was true. I was blinded by hatred for—"

"How do you know you are in danger of arrest?"

"A friend just tipped it off to me over the telephone from the court house. The Sheriff has a warrant for me."

"You boys! Lord, you boys! Durbin, you should have known better. Notwithstanding your provocation and motive, you should have known better. Now you've the very devil to pay." He shook his head gravely. "You say that you telephoned from—"

"Martin's—Silas Martin's place."

"Not Silas Martin, the stockman?"

"Yes—do you know him?"

The Colonel did not answer. His eyes suddenly sparkled with some unspoken thought. For just a fleeting mo-

ment his thoughts flashed back to the many pleasurable visits he had made to Silas Martin's hospitable home. A whimsical smile played about his mouth.

"Now see here, Durbin," he said, "I am going to try to get you out of this muddle; but it is not going to be any picnic. However justifiable your actions may have been in your own estimation, it is serious in the eyes of the law."

For a short space the Colonel remained reflectively silent. At last he turned towards Durbin resolutely.

"Will you do exactly as I direct?"

"Certainly I will."

"Good. First of all, then, you must make a bee-line jump for Indiana. Go to Indianapolis, or Kokomo, or any old Hoosier town. Once located, make yourself noisy enough so that the Dayton officers will at once learn your whereabouts. Then--"

"You are not serious about that, are you, Colonel?"

"Of course I am. I'm not a funny-man—I am a lawyer. Then, when they arrest you, refuse to come back—make them extradite you. When they come with the requisition papers, continue to object. Strenuously oppose being brought back—understand? Make 'em carry you, drag you, chloroform you—but don't come willingly."

Young Durbin searched the older man's face quizzically.

The Colonel gently pushed Durbin towards the cloak-room.

"That's all—now. Slip out quietly and catch an inter-urban car for Union City—that's on the line. The police will be watching the railway stations."

"But—"

"You have no time to lose. I'll see you through. Good-night."

For several days the Colonel watched the papers anxiously. At last he was rewarded. The papers featured the startling story of Durbin's arrest with front-paged scare-heads. The blackmailing story was at last given the public—Hoopingartner's version of it. The spectacular arrest of Durbin and his sensational resistance of the officers who went to bring him back were told with all the usual frills.

Colonel Fawsett read the accounts and chuckled to himself.

On the day that Durbin was finally landed in the county jail at Dayton, Colonel Fawsett paid one of his desultory visits to the imposing offices of Fawsett, Dale, Buxton & Fawsett. Entering his private room, he sent for Buxton.

Buxton was the trial-lawyer of the firm. He was of the oratorical, fire-cracker variety, and was quicker than greased-lightning and craftier than a fox in the trial of a case.

"Heard anything about the Hoopingartner blackmail matter, Buxton?"

"Yes, a little. They've got the fellow in jail, I believe, Colonel."

"I want you to defend him."

"Me?—why, I don't even know him!"

"I do. His name is Durbin—a friend of Bob's. We've got to help him out."

Then, carefully, the Colonel detailed the facts to his law-partner.

The day of the Durbin trial arrived.

Pale and troubled, Durbin sat close behind Colonel Fawsett and Buxton. Durbin's mother and sister kept him anxious company.

McKerchen, the big, unsentimental prosecutor, plunged into the case with the cold, matter-of-fact inflexibility for which he was so well known. Hoopingartner, sour-visaged and vindictive, sat on the prosecutor's side of the table.

The evidence produced by the State was short and clear-cut. It was shown by indisputable, convincing testimony, that Durbin had, on a certain day, attempted to blackmail Hoopingartner by threats made over farm line Number 1161-G.

Buxton, sallow-faced and alert, and with eyes snapping, asked not a single question of the State's witnesses on cross-examination until Silas Martin, from whose house Durbin had talked, took the stand.

Martin reluctantly admitted that Durbin had been at his home on the day in question, that he had called Hoopingartner on the 'phone, and, while he had paid but slight attention to what Durbin had said, that he remembered that Durbin had made some reference to a payment of a sum of money. He admitted, further, that his 'phone was known as farm line Number 1161-G.

McKerchen turned the star-witness over for cross-examination with a grandiloquent flourish of his hand. He could not conceal his elation.

A flutter of excitement swept the courtroom. A universal conviction seemed to fill the air that there was not one chance in a thousand for the prisoner, notwithstanding the invincible Fawsett was defending him.

Buxton stirred uneasily in his chair, and glanced inquiringly around at his senior partner.

Smiling and composed, the Colonel leaned forward and breathed a single sentence in his partner's ear. The effect was electrical. Buxton was on his feet on the instant.

"Where do you live, Mr. Martin?" he asked.

"In the country—just west of New Paris."

"Farmer?"

"Yes—my farm is on the line between Ohio and Indiana."

"Where is your house located with reference to the State line?"

"It is directly on the line."

"You have a telephone?"

"Yes—farm line 1161-G."

"Where is the telephone instrument located in your house?"

"In the kitchen."

"And with reference to the State line, where is the kitchen located?"

"In Indiana."

Buxton turned smilingly towards the prosecutor.

"We have no further questions."

For a moment the court-room was perfectly still. Then a wave of excitement surged over the crowd. Hoopin-garner clutched at the prosecutor's sleeve anxiously, while McKerchen, red-faced and bewildered, stammeringly rose to his feet, then sat helplessly down again.

With his characteristic courtliness and confidence, Colonel Fawsett arose and faced the Judge.

"Your Honor, at this time I wish to move the Court to direct the jury to return a verdict of acquittal, for the reason that the prisoner stands charged with having committed an offense in Ohio, and the testimony discloses that

it was committed in Indiana. The State has therefore failed."

McKerchen, helplessly embarrassed, made a denunciatory, ineffectual reply.

With quiet, judicial impartiality, the Judge, at the conclusion of the argument, stated that the position of the defense was undoubtedly correct. The jury was accordingly instructed to acquit.

The crowd began to jostle chatteringly from the court-room. Several members of the Bicycle Club pushed forward toward Durbin with beaming faces. Hoopingarner fidgeted scowlingly back of the prosecutor.

McKerchen stepped forward and addressed the Colonel with an uncompromising bitterness.

"The evil day is simply deferred, Colonel. Your young friend will have to face the music in Indiana; you can just bet your life on that!"

"My young friend does not intend putting the Indiana courts to that inconvenience," purred the imperturbable Colonel. "He doesn't intend going over there."

"Huh!" burst out McKerchen derisively. "He didn't intend coming to Ohio, either, but he came just the same. He will go back the same way."

"I"—the Colonel bit the end off a cigar with studied deliberation—"I don't think so."

"Do you mean to say that we can't extradite him?" fumed McKerchen irascibly.

"Certainly I do. There is a vast difference, my friend, between Durbin in Indiana then and Durbin in Ohio now."

"I'd like to know why!"

"Pleased to tell you, McKerchen. You see, when Durbin skipped over into Hoosierdom, he was a fugitive from justice. He was accordingly extraditable under the constitution. *But*, when Durbin came back into Ohio, he was *not* a fugitive from justice. He came involuntarily, was lugged back by force. There can be no extradition for such a case."

For a moment McKerchen stared at the Colonel in silence; then, grinning feebly, he took a deep breath.

"Colonel—you're smooth."

"Same to you, McKerchen."

Complete Résumé of Previous Installments

TO JOHN HENRY KENNARD, a prominent young New York corporation lawyer on a vacation in Japan, comes an adventurer named Branson with a strange request: will Kennard, as a favor to a fellow-American, escort Branson's daughter Helen aboard the San Francisco-bound steamer *Lyce Moon*? Kennard accepts the task, and in Helen Branson finds a girl of rare beauty and exceptional charm. Just before sailing time, the two board the *Lyce Moon*. They find that Branson has slipped aboard ahead of them, and when the ship is well out in the bay the adventurer tells Kennard his extraordinary story.

Branson, it seems, had penetrated to the mountain fastnesses at the head-waters of the Meinam River in northern China, where dwell the remnant of a strange prehistoric race, the Kymers. These people are governed by twelve patriarchs or "Shans," men of incredible age, who possess that secret which has been sought for so many vain centuries—a secret which enables them to defy time and to live indefinitely, immune to disease. The essence of this power lies in their possession of the Blue Lizard, a bit of stone impregnated with some tremendously potent substance akin to radium: each of the Shans wears the Blue Lizard on his forehead for one month of the year; and they live on and on, grim, living fossils of human antiquity. Branson has stolen this priceless bit of stone—has it with him! And the Shans are pursuing him. He tells this amazing tale with every evidence of the deepest sincerity; and Kennard believes him.

Three days out from Yokohama, the *Lyce Moon* is seized in the grip of a powerful and hitherto unknown ocean current. The ship is whirled off from her course, and passengers and crew alike become panic-stricken. It is explained that the strange current is probably caused by a volcanic disturbance of the ocean-floor,—such things had been known to occur,—and that it would probably be followed by a tidal wave. And sure enough, after a night of terror, an enormous tidal wave rushes upon the doomed ship and overwhelms it. Helen Branson clings to Kennard, and a moment later he finds himself in the water, fighting for his life and hers. Kennard comes upon a spar, and by its aid the two contrive to keep afloat, and at length drift to land.

It is evident that the island upon which Kennard and Helen find themselves is of recent volcanic origin, for it is covered with strange deep-sea growths; indeed, a mass of gigantic crabs, scrambling back to their ocean home, all but overwhelm the castaways. Presently they discover that Helen's father and some others of the *Lyce Moon's* company have also reached the island. And then a weird, unearthly cry is heard, and through the fog they see the pursuing Shans; the enemy have won their way to the island also!

The castaways contrive to dodge the Shans for the time being, however. A little later they discover that a gigantic orang-outang which had been carried in a cage on the *Lyce Moon*, has in some fashion reached the island alive. With dawn they perceive that the island is a huge mountain of rock three thousand feet high. And they also perceive that it is sinking rapidly back into the sea! They calculate that in three days it will be entirely submerged; and they therefore start immediately to climb to the higher levels. All at once a boulder comes rolling down upon them from a ledge above; they dodge it; another follows—and they see regarding them over the ledge the withered, sinister face of one of the Shans!

The rock-bombardment continues; they seek shelter under a ledge but realize it will soon be battered down. Kennard and Branson undertake a desperate flank movement, and have contrived to crawl up within striking distance of the five Shans unobserved, when a rock hurled from still farther up the peak bounds among the Shans themselves, killing one of them. The Shans flee; and then Kennard and Branson see that Baldy, the orang-outang, has imitatively rolled down the boulder which has driven their enemies away. Freed of immediate danger, the castaways resume their journey toward the top of the sinking peak. Kennard declares his love for Helen and she confesses that his feeling is returned.



The Blue Lizard

The sixth installment of this striking and colorful narrative of romantic adventure in the North Pacific: the island continues to sink; the Shans renew their attack; the peril of the castaways comes to a tragic crisis.

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

XV

THE STRUGGLE IN THE DARK

BRANSON located a three-cornered cleft in the rock as the night came down upon them, and here the six crouched together. They were very tired and hungry; and, with three of them at least, the day had not improved their hope of rescue. Ada Merrington and the little school mistress had lost hope, and Townsley too was inclined to be despondent as the night closed in. With Kennard and Helen Branson, the happenings of the day had brought an outlook that was altogether different from that which they possessed as they started to climb the peak. The two sat close together, the girl's hand clasped in the hand of the man she loved. If death was approaching they had a desire to make the best of the few hours which remained to them, and they murmured sweet words of consolation and cheer to each other. They were a pair of lovers who refused to let fear overpower the joy which had come to them.

Branson decided that a sentry would be necessary, and he offered to take first watch, agreeing to awaken Kennard before midnight, and book Townsley for the watch immediately before the dawn. They had carefully computed the distance they were from the water, and they were certain that they would have an undisturbed night unless the peak started to disappear at a gait much faster than that which they had noted throughout the day. They were fully five hundred feet above the water, and this elevation would give them ten hours of rest before the snarling waters would be once more at their heels.

Helen Branson, Ada Merrington, and the little school mistress fell asleep at last, but the three men found themselves unable to woo slumber. They crouched together at the opening of the cleft in which the three women were sleeping, and they spoke in whispers.

"We're in a tight fix," said Townsley.

"Yes, we are," said Branson. "A mighty tight fix."

"And there is a danger of the peak

going down with a rush at any moment," said the tea merchant.

"Let's hope it wont," said Branson coolly. "I have been noting the rate of subsidence closely through the day, and I have found that it varied little. Of course, a sudden plunge might take place, but there is a chance that it will continue to settle slowly. Of course we have a big hope that it may stop at any moment."

"It will never be our luck," said the tea merchant. "I read four or five years back that three small islands appeared in the China Sea, and they disappeared in exactly the same manner as this infernal place is fading out of sight."

Branson did not answer, and the three sat together straining the noises of the night. The possessor of the Blue Lizard urged Kennard and Townsley to obtain some sleep, but it was impossible for them to doze with their minds filled with the dangers that menaced them. Kennard tried hard to shut out the fears which troubled him, but he was unable to do so. Once or twice he managed to drop into a doze, but terrifying dreams brought him back to sudden wakefulness. In those dreams he thought that the peak had taken a sudden plunge beneath the waters, and that he, with Helen Branson in his arms, was swimming away into a great darkness, pursued by a score or more of bloodthirsty Shans who were intent upon the capture of the girl.

Branson handed over the post of sentinel some time near midnight, and Kennard, sitting at the opening of the cave, stared into the thick darkness. A thousand strange noises came to him as he kept watch. From the ocean down below came the gurgling of the water, and the sounds made by the giant crabs, lobsters and crayfish who were seeking a meal upon the rock. From above him on the heights came other noises, strange little sounds made by the crumbling rock, where the heat of the day had loosened the strata. They were not sounds that were soothing to the nerves, and although Kennard tried to think of nothing but the face of the girl he loved, it required much effort to steel his nerves to the noises which came to his ears.

John Henry had been on the watch some two hours when his ears detected a sound that was altogether new. It was the regular *pat pat* of feet upon the rock, and Kennard crouched as he listened. Some one was coming down the slope from the higher levels!

Kennard had a curious feeling at that moment. He wished to test his own courage. The five were asleep. Branson, with the wisdom of the true adventurer, had flung himself down the moment he relinquished his post to the lawyer, and knowing that there was before him a strenuous day, he endeavored to forget everything in slumber. Townsley, also tired out by the struggle of the day, was sound asleep; so Kennard was the solitary sentinel to guard the five against any danger that might approach. And John Henry, feeling certain that only one man was coming down the slope, had a strong desire to combat the prowler alone.

The sound of footsteps ceased, and Kennard listened with every nerve alert. He felt that the approaching person had sensed the whereabouts of the camp, and that the prowler was endeavoring to crawl quietly towards the little party without attracting attention. Kennard knew that the person who had come down the slope was crawling towards him on hands and knees, and he held his breath as he listened intently. He was sure that the other was approaching. His mind gathered in the information in a score of ways. The tinkle of a pebble upon a rock, the soft squish of the mud, and the scuttling of crawling things, told him that the foe was approaching with great care.

Kennard's throat became dry as he waited. There could be only one kind of a visitor. The *pat pat* which had come to him told him that the approaching person was barefooted, and in the few moments that he and Branson had looked at the five Shans upon the ledge of the rock, he had seen that the five were barefooted. Kennard wondered at himself at that moment. He had never in his life yearned for physical combat. He remembered as he waited, that on two or three different occasions when he had been threatened by persons of an aggressive nature, that he had imme-

diately sought the protection of the law; but now, as he crouched at the opening to the cleft where the five were resting, he felt that he would not seek for worlds the help of Branson and Townsley.

Kennard forgot everything but his approaching antagonist. He knew that it was a Shan who was creeping noiselessly towards him. He fixed his eyes upon a spot in the darkness about eight feet from his position, and although he could see nothing, he felt certain that the prowler was at the particular point. He sensed it, and he also felt that the Shan, possessed of the superior hearing and sight of a native, was also aware of the fact that he was awake and awaiting the attack.

Another little pebble tinkled down the slope, and Kennard knew that the man was moving cautiously and quietly upon him, wriggling forward with the skill and cunning of a tiger that is getting ready to pounce upon a hill deer. And the attack came as the lawyer had expected. Out of the darkness was hurled a half naked body that fell upon Kennard with terrific force, and John Henry was knocked backwards by the shock. But it was lucky for him that he had been knocked backwards. The knife of the would-be assassin ripped harmlessly through Kennard's shirt as he was knocked from the spot he occupied, and the white man had a chance to get his arms around the native before the knife could be again lifted.

And then ensued a terrific struggle. The Shan had no desire to make a noise, and Kennard had a longing to settle the matter without disturbing Branson or Townsley. It was a foolish longing, considering the fact that there were three other murderous mates of his antagonist upon the peak, but Kennard felt certain that only the one that he gripped within his arms was close to the camp. He felt that the native was alone, and he had a mad desire to battle by himself to protect the little party. Helen was asleep, and he felt that he was capable of protecting her while she slumbered. He had whispered to her that he would stay awake and guard her, and now he would make good his promise.

Branson had assured Kennard that the Shans, although of great age, were possessed of all the activity and power of younger men, and Kennard was willing to agree to the assertions of the adventurer as he fought with the man who had sprung upon him. Down the slope they rolled, locked in each other's arms. An upward blow which John Henry had given had knocked the knife out of the hand of the native, and this stroke of luck had placed them on an equal footing. It was a matter for bare hands, and to Kennard came a great flood of strength as he struggled. He felt for the first time in his life that he was doing something worth while. He was protecting life, protecting others from a murderous devil, who, although in the shadow of death, wished to kill those who were facing the same horrible end.

The two rolled farther away from the cleft, so that the noise of the struggle did not arouse Branson or Townsley. The Shan realized that he was fighting for life, and he struggled fiercely, while the American fought madly against the overpowering feeling of nausea which oppressed him the moment they gripped each other. He felt deathly sick as he struggled, and as he fought to keep the fingers of the Shan from his throat, he realized that a prolonged fight would leave him at the mercy of his antagonist. His strength was being sapped by the horrible sick feeling which was produced by the age of the man with whom he struggled. He tried to fight it off but he could not. His imagination was working upon his feelings, and in spite of the darkness which prevented him from seeing the horrible face that had chilled him on three different occasions, he pictured it as being like those he had seen in Yokohama, and on the *Lye Moon*.

Kennard found relief in the fact that Branson had informed him that the Blue Lizard could only ward off disease. He felt that his fingers carried a death that the strange piece of mineral could not ward off. His fingers that fought for Helen could not be barred by the strange power which came from the treasure of the Kymer tribe. He gloried in the strength that came to him.

He wrenched himself free from the Shan as the other struggled to hold him down, and with a terrific effort he got on top. Along the naked chest of the Shan his hands were working for the native's throat. His fingers were stiff and sore after the climb when Branson and he executed the flank movement upon the five, but Kennard forgot the pain as he felt the muscular throat of the brown man in his grip. He threw every ounce of strength into the struggle. He felt that he was weakening, and he nerved himself to greater efforts by throwing up before his mental eyes a picture of Helen in the grip of the four. He damned himself for not calling upon Townsley and Branson at the moment when the Shan was prowling towards the camp, but the very fact that he had not apprised them of the danger that threatened made him fight with a determination and strength that surprised himself. His fingers were driven into the throat of the native till he heard the quick, gasping breath that thrilled him as he realized that he was choking the life out of the would-be murderer. The Shan's grip relaxed; his breath came in great sobs that told a tale to Kennard's ears, and the lawyer drove the head of the native into the soft-mud bed upon which they fought.

The Shan loosened his grip and lay quiet, and Kennard made an effort to rise to his feet. But the effort was beyond him. He tried again and again to crawl up the slope towards the cleft in the rock where the five were sleeping, but he lacked the necessary strength. He fell back upon the soft mud each time he attempted to climb, and a terrible fear came to him that a companion of the man he had throttled might then be moving on the sleeping camp.

John Henry wet his dry lips and shouted into the darkness, above him. "Branson?" he called. "Branson! Wake up! Wake up!"

XVI

THE BIG BARRIER

It was Helen Branson who nursed Kennard back to consciousness. Bran-

son had heard the faint call of the lawyer and had stumbled down the slope and dragged him up to the camp. The big adventurer had gone back to the spot where he found Kennard, and after a long hunt in the darkness, he found the body of the Shan, who was lying face downward, his head thrust deep into the ooze. There was still a faint heart-beat in the night prowler, but Branson left him as he found him and hurried back to the others.

"We'll leave the devil where he is," he growled in answer to a query put by Townsley. "The waters will be on him in a few minutes and he'll get the death that is due him."

And Branson spoke the truth when he stated that the waters would soon be upon the unconscious man with whom Kennard had struggled fiercely. The speed at which the peak was disappearing had evidently increased during the night, and when Kennard came to his senses, although it was not then three o'clock, there was hardly a fifty-foot margin between the camp and the rising tide. The great cone was showing a decided hurry to get beneath the waves, and it was necessary for them to push on immediately up the slope.

Kennard, when he recovered consciousness, found that it was Helen who was bathing his aching brow, and he gasped out a question.

"Did they—did they get him?" he asked. "He wasn't dead when I lost my senses."

"We'll leave God to settle with him," growled Branson. "The water is close to the brute now, and we'll let it finish the job that you started."

Kennard tried to struggle to his feet when he heard that the water was close, but Branson stopped him.

"Rest a moment," said the big man. "We have a few minutes to spare before we are actually forced to move. Get your strength back, because you will surely need it for the climb."

Helen's cool fingers bathed John Henry's face, which was scratched and torn by the finger nails of the Shan, and Kennard felt that he would gladly battle with a thousand brown men if his reward would be the thrill he felt when her fingers touched his forehead.

Fame or fortune was nothing to him at that moment. The girl he loved was speaking loving words to him which thrilled him through and through. She was praising him for the struggle which he had made to protect her and the others who were sleeping, although John Henry felt that he had brought the struggle upon himself through his stupidity in not arousing Branson and Townsley.

Branson interrupted Kennard's dreams by asking if he felt strong enough to go forward, and with the big man on one side, and Helen upon the other, John Henry staggered up through the darkness of the early morning. The water showed faintly below them, and Kennard understood that there was at that moment a need for greater speed. The death which had followed them slowly on the previous day was now reaching for them at a gallop.

Townsley, moving carefully, led the way, and, as they had come across three or four deep crevices on the previous day, the tea merchant took especial pains to test the ground over which they walked. A misstep might send the whole party into one of the great fissures which had formed, now that the rays of the sun had dried up the moisture which bound the strata together.

John Henry regained his strength quickly. He felt that it was more the feeling of nausea which he experienced while struggling with the Shan, than actual injury which made him lose consciousness. Before he had covered a hundred yards he was himself again, and he intimated to Branson and the girl that he was able to walk without help.

"I am all right," he whispered to Helen. "I am able to get along now, thanks."

"But you are still weak," stammered the girl.

"Then I'll hold your hand if I may," said Kennard. "And if I stagger you will be able to hold me up."

And so, walking hand in hand, the two saw the dawn of the second day on the peak. Once more they watched the chrome wash steal into the eastern sky, and together they looked upon the crimson flood which made the golden path

across the sleeping ocean. The cleft in which they had rested through the night was already under water, and the girl shuddered as she looked back towards the spot where Kennard had struggled with the Shan. If John Henry had been unable to call out at the moment before he had lost consciousness, he, as well as the throttled native, might have lain upon the bed of mud till the sneaking ocean had covered them.

The morning sun apprised them of the fact that they were close to the big obstacle in their upward climb. They had noted this obstruction on the previous day, but with the belief that the troubles which were immediately in front of them were quite enough to contend with, they had viewed it without speaking of any plans by which they could surmount it. But at sunrise on that second morning it was close enough to demand immediate attention. It was a great wall of rock which barred their path to the higher slopes, and when the sun came up out of the ocean it was directly in their path. And as they started to circle the peak they found that the wall of rock extended at the same unvarying height on the northern and western sides. It was like a huge collar of solid rock placed around the upper portion of the peak, and which served to separate the higher slope from the lower. It was apparent that the top portion of the great cone had been driven up with much more violence than the lower, and the disruption had brought about the great collar of rock which now loomed up as a barrier, blocking the party from the summit. They eyed it with much concern as they came nearer and nearer. It reared above them a perpendicular cliff that was fully thirty feet high in its lowest portion, and its sides offered absolutely no foothold by which it could be scaled.

The six stared at it, making no comment till they felt certain there was no way by which they could reach the upper slope.

It was Branson who put their position into words.

"If there is no opening on the south side we'll be in a bad way," said the big man slowly. "Let's hope that there is, but before we go any farther, we had

better rest a moment to recover our breath."

They rested on a flat rock and breakfasted on the shell fish which they hurriedly collected. It was no time for delay. The speed with which the peak was disappearing seemed to be increasing with each hour, and they found they had to move rapidly to keep a margin between them and the hurrying waves. And the dread with which they viewed the great wall of rock did not increase their flow of good spirits.

When the hurried meal had been consumed, and they had drunk from a pool of rain-water which Branson found in a hollow of the rocks, the six started forward, climbing higher and higher till they reached the base of the wall which barred their progress. It was a barrier that made further progress appear impossible, and as they stared at it they wondered whether death would meet them here at the foot of the great wall instead of upon the pinnacle towards which they were aiming.

There was no trace of the Shans or the ourang as Branson led the little party hurriedly along beneath the great wall. And the six wondered how the three surviving natives and the ourang had been able to scale the height. They felt sure that the Shans were not upon the lower level, as it would be impossible for them to remain unseen now that the waves were close to the barrier, and the fact that they were not there brought to the little party a faint ray of hope. If the three Shans had found a path to the upper heights, it was possible for the six to find it before the waters were upon them. But time was precious. The speed with which the peak was disappearing was such that it made it imperative for them to find a path without delay, and Branson hurried the tired women as they rushed along beneath the wall.

"There must be a way," he repeated, over and over again. "I am sure there is. The three Kymers have got up there, and we must get there."

"Is it possible that they climbed the wall?" murmured Ada Merrington.

"No, they couldn't," answered Branson. "It would be impossible. They have found an opening somewhere."

Terror seized them and they started to run, staggering along with tired limbs. The ocean was ruffled by a breeze that had sprung up, and the waves that sucked hungrily at the peak appeared to be chanting a death song. Foot by foot the ocean crept up to the bottom of the wall, and to the six it looked as if a cruel fate had, by means of the rocky wall, shortened the space of time which would have been theirs if they could reach the higher level.

A score of times they stopped at places where a faint hope stirred within them the chance of obtaining a foothold in the perpendicular wall, but, after a hurried trial was made by one of the men, they would be forced to relinquish their efforts and rush on in hope that a more scalable path might be discovered at any moment. Hope was dying fast within their breasts as they staggered forward. They had circled three-fourths of the peak, and as they turned towards the southern slope, they knew that their only chance lay in finding an opening in the stretch of wall which flanked that side of the island. And every yard they covered lessened their chance of escape.

"There must be a path," whispered Helen, as Kennard, with his arm supporting her, hurried her forward. "There must be a path. I know there is! I am sure of it!"

Branson was carrying the little school mistress, who had collapsed as she realized that they were cornered by the waves, while Townsley supported Ada Merrington, who was a nervous wreck. It was a race with death. Nearer and nearer came the waters till it looked as if the six would not have time to explore the remaining portion of the wall before them. And they had to examine that wall before the tide stopped their efforts. Branson felt that he could not give up while one inch of ground beneath the rocky wall was left unexplored.

With the little spinster in his arms, Branson was leading the four others. The big man knew that every moment was precious. The waves were rushing up within ten feet of the base of the great cliff around which the six were running, and it was only a matter of

minutes before the last few feet of the slope below the barrier would be entirely covered.

The possibility of finding an opening became more remote as they ran. Not more than a hundred yards were left to be explored. They knew this by the position of a pinnacle of rock which acted as a landmark to tell them where they had first started to focus their eyes upon the cliff in search of an opening, and if this small section that was still to be explored was insurmountable, they were doomed.

Helen Branson whispered to Kennard as they rushed around an angle of rock and faced the last stretch of unexplored cliff.

"We will—we will find a way up," she cried. "I know we will!"

"Sure," gasped Kennard, his face drawn and white as he watched the big figure of Branson running in the lead. "We'll find one! We'll find the one that the Shans and the—"

Kennard's words were interrupted by a shout which came from Branson, and the shout made the little spark of hope that was left within the hearts of the five others blaze as it came to their ears. They knew that it contained a note of triumph. They knew that the big man had seen some way by which they could circumvent the pursuing waters, and although the upper portion of the peak would only give them a few hours' respite from the death that menaced them, they were anxious to get those few hours. Life was sweet and they wished to live.

They forgot the Shans in the delight which came to them at that moment. Branson's cry proved that he had solved the great difficulty that immediately confronted them, and they were satisfied to know that their doom was delayed a few hours by the discovery.

A glorious smile swept over the face of Helen Branson as she turned to Kennard.

"I knew we would find one," she gasped. "I knew! I knew!"

Ada Merrington and Townsley caught up with the big man, and they echoed Branson's cry as Kennard and Helen stumbled up to the spot where the adventurer had halted. Branson had

found the passage. A huge, tunnel-like opening showed in the wall, and the tunnel sloped upward, suggesting an opening high above the cliff.

The mouth of the tunnel was fully fourteen feet in diameter, and as the six stared into the half gloom, they felt certain that this peculiar passage wound up through the heart of the peak and gave access to the summit. They felt this before Branson dropped upon his knees and pointed to the footprints in the soft mud at the mouth of the tunnel.

"This is the way!" cried the big man. "Look here!"

He pointed out to the others the prints of the bare feet of the Shans, and also the marks made by Baldy, the ourang, who had also found the opening before the little party.

"We nearly missed it," growled Branson. "It was a narrow escape, but all's well that ends well. Now we'll hurry on."

XVII

THE LIZARD CHANGES OWNERSHIP

The six lost no time in moving into the opening which had been found at the moment when hope was nearly extinguished. The waves, as if aware that their prey was escaping, made a rush forward as the peak trembled beneath the little party. For a moment they felt that the great mass of rock would disappear in a sudden plunge. A rumbling noise which seemed to presage another eruption came to the ears of the six, and the three women stared at the men as Kennard, Townsley and Branson looked upward as if convinced that the end was close.

A big wave lurched forward and swept the mouth of the tunnel. It wet the dresses of the three women, and made Ada Merrington give a scream of terror.

"We'll drown! We'll drown!" she cried. "Hurry! Hurry!"

And whether the tunnel was a blind opening or not, they felt that it was the one spot which would give them shelter at that moment, and the six stumbled up the moist floor of the peculiar pas-

sage. It gave them their only chance of escape, and they knew it. The fact that the Shans and the ourang had gone on in front of them and had not returned by the same route, made them feel that there surely was an opening on the upper slope, and they forgot their tired limbs as they pushed on.

"They would have come back if there was no opening," cried Branson. "Keep up your spirits and we'll win out."

Branson still led as the party rushed up the sloping floor of the cavern. It was a particularly eerie passage but they had no time to notice the strange sea growths and the scurrying crabs that backed into the rocky crevices as the six ran on. Whether it would offer them a path to safety or not was a matter of conjecture, but they were determined to test it. If the tunnel proved to be nothing but a blind cavern, death would be a little more terrible because they would have to face it in the darkness which met them before they had moved fifty feet from the entrance.

Helen Branson, who refused to give up her hopes of rescue, again whispered confidently to Kennard as the darkness encompassed them.

"There is an opening from above to this place," she whispered. "I am sure of it! I have a feeling that I was in this place before in a—in a dream of long ago."

Slipping and sliding, the five followed the big man into the darkness. And now the danger of a hidden abyss in their track became greater. Anything was possible in that strange tunnel which led upward and which seemed to be providentially formed so as to enable them to escape from the lower level. They had to move cautiously, and Branson felt his way along the uneven floor. He called out directions to the five, and they followed his directions implicitly. And Hope fluttered her wings as the little party climbed behind the leader. The floor sloped upward, and they knew that they were rising above the wall of rock.

Branson turned an angle in the passage, and he raised the hopes of the little party by voicing his opinion regarding an opening.

"There is an entrance to this place on

the higher level," he cried. "A breeze is blowing down here that is strong enough to blow your hat off."

The five felt the rush of cold air upon their faces as they turned the angle and reached the spot where the big man was standing. It was pure air which came down the passage with great force.

"The wind is blowing from the west," said Branson. "And I will wager that this route will lead us out on the western side of the peak."

And although the higher level would not give them more than twelve hours more of life if the peak still kept on its downward course, that twelve hours seemed a prize that was worth any amount of fighting for as they stumbled up the rocky floor of the dark tunnel. Twelve hours was a period in which anything might happen. A Frisco-bound boat might at any moment sail into that lonely plain of water which surrounded them, and the despair that clutched them would be turned into great joy.

Helen Branson was now the most hopeful one of the little party. Kennard was amazed at the manner in which she pinned her faith to an ultimate rescue, and as he listened to her words, he thought of the shock which would be hers if they found themselves huddled on the last inch of rock with a bare plain of water around them. His mind sprang forward and pictured that scene upon the great peak when their last few moments would be spent in fighting vainly for a footing as the big rock sank beneath the waves.

At a point some fifty yards from the opening of the passage, a thin crack far up in the roof allowed a little light to filter through, and this faint glimmer of light brought about a happening which proved to them that the Shans were still active. They were passing beneath the little crack in the high roof, when a wail like that which had come out of the fog on that first morning upon the peak came to their ears. And that wail was ten times more uncanny in that tunnel. It seemed to be the wail of a soul in agony, and the six halted. They tried to pierce the gloom ahead, but they could see nothing. The cry came from the darkness immediately before them, and the members of the

little party knew that the three surviving Shans were close to them. And they had not long to wait before they received proof that the brown men were still planning to recover the Lizard.

Another wail came from out of the darkness and there was a rattle of rolling rocks on the floor of the tunnel immediately ahead.

"Look out!" cried Branson. "They're rushing us!"

A fusillade of small rocks came down upon the six, and from out of the darkness into the faint light which came from the crevice in the roof sprang the three Shans, wailing like lost spirits as they rushed the six. And luck was against the little party at that moment. A rock thrown by one of the three struck Branson on the forehead, and the big man went down in a heap as the half nude brown men flung themselves down the rocky slope.

With Branson out of the fight, the battle was left to Townsley and Kennard, the cries of the Shans terrifying the three women so that they could do nothing to help the two men who were left to protect them.

And Townsley and Kennard acquitted themselves well at that moment. Thrusting the three women behind them, they rushed the charging devils who attacked, and a battle ensued which would have delighted the heart of the big adventurer if he had been able to witness it. But the rock which put Branson for the time being out of the conflict had been flung with some force. He was knocked unconscious by the missile, and nothing could have happened which could have been more to the liking of the three men who had sprung out of the darkness. It gave them the chance for which they had been following the big man for the preceding seven weeks. It gave them the opportunity which they had vainly sought as they hung upon his trail.

Kennard and Townsley, struggling for their lives with their respective antagonists, had no thought at that moment of the opportunity which Branson's condition gave to the third Shan. The big adventurer carried the precious Blue Lizard in a chamois bag slung from a leather thong tied around his

neck, and the pursuers were evidently possessed of this knowledge. The third Shan, who lacked an antagonist, was not slow to take the opportunity afforded him of regaining the treasure of the Kymer tribe.

As Kennard and Townsley fought madly to throw off the clutch of the two who had sprung at them, the remaining Shan stooped swiftly and tore from the neck of the stunned Branson the wonderful Blue Lizard which had led Marco Polo, Okhar, Ghengis Khan, Tamerlane, Baber, and Vassaloff the Devil to search in vain for the Valley of Laloi, near the head-waters of the Meinam.

Helen Branson saw the move of the third Shan, and dropping O San, she rushed forward to save the treasure which she knew her father carried around his neck. But her brave rush to help him was frustrated by the activity of the Shan. The plucky girl caught the arm of the brown man, but he struck her brutally as she clung to him.

Kennard caught a glimpse of the girl's struggle as he fought with the man who clung tenaciously to him. With a sudden surge of strength the lawyer brought a rock down upon the head of the man he was wrestling with, and hurling the fellow from him, he dashed after the Shan who had robbed Branson of his priceless treasure.

But the wizened man who held within his right hand the Lizard of Life had no wish for further combat. He had in his possession all that he desired, and with a howl of joy, he fled up the dark passage. And that howl told his mate who fought with Townsley that the great treasure, for the possession of which they had relentlessly trailed the big adventurer, was again in their hands. Townsley's foeman flung off the grip of the tea merchant and dashed after the man who held the Blue Lizard, leaving upon the battle-field the native whose skull Kennard had fractured, and the stunned Branson, who had lost the prize for which he had braved a thousand dangers.

For some distance up the tunnel, Kennard followed the flying Shan who had appropriated the Lizard, but finding pursuit useless, he returned to the spot

where he had left the little party. Branson was recovering from the effects of the blow, but he was speechless with anger when he discovered that the Lizard had been taken from him while he was upon the ground. He was a madman at that moment. He realized that his months of labor had been lost, and he flung off the restraining hands and staggered on up the passage after the two Shans.

"I'll get it back," he cried. "I must get it back! I spent months in searching for it. Don't hold me! Let me go! Let me go!"

And it was impossible to hold the big man. The Lizard was a treasure that could not be bought with all the wealth of the world, and during the seven weeks that it had been in his possession, the great power of the curiously shaped piece of mineral impressed him more each day. His imagination had pictured the astonishment which American and European scientists would exhibit when they were shown the wonderful Lizard and told of the marvelous power which the thing possessed. Branson had dreamed during those weeks of the sensation he would cause by the exhibition of his prize in the big cities of the world. Scientists would be astonished to hear of the strange tribe in the Valley of Laloi, and the incredible happenings which had taken place there.

"Come on!" cried Townsley. "Follow him! Follow him! Those two devils are in the darkness ahead of us."

The danger from the Shans made the little party momentarily forget the pursuing waters. Kennard, Townsley and the three women raced after the half crazed adventurer. Branson forgot everything about the disappearing peak at that moment. He did not seem to realize that they had only a few hours of life left to them. He thought only of regaining the wonderful treasure which the Shans had taken possession of at a moment when he was unable to guard it.

Kennard, holding Helen and carrying the meowing O San, stumbled on after the yelling Branson. The girl was calm in spite of the awful happenings through which they were passing, and Kennard was amazed at her coolness as he ran beside her.

"You must soothe him," he whispered. "You must tell him that the loss of the Lizard is nothing when the position in which we are placed is taken into account. We must stop him and make him see it in the right light."

Branson tripped and fell upon the stone floor of the passage, and before he could rush forward, Kennard caught him by one arm and Helen by the other.

"Stop, Father! Stop!" cried the girl. "What does it matter if you have lost it? We—we have only a few hours of life left to us, and it isn't right that you should be so much concerned by this thing at such a time. Let me bind up your wound."

And Branson, although inclined to struggle against the ministrations of the girl, permitted her to bind up the wound which he had received from the rock thrown by one of the three Shans. It was so dark at that particular place that they could not see each other's faces, but Helen managed deftly to bind the head of the big man, and her soft words cooled his temper while doing so. Branson's love for his daughter was great, and in that little halt during which Kennard held him by the arm, the girl managed to make the adventurer realize that the loss of the Lizard was a matter that should not receive all his attention.

"They cannot swim away with it!" she cried. "Daddy, please don't let it trouble you now."

Branson, breathing heavily, did not answer, and Kennard spoke in an effort to help the words of the girl.

"If we are rescued, we can get it back from them without any trouble," he said. "We should go quietly lest there may be a fissure in the bottom of this passage through which we might drop."

Branson, somewhat subdued, moved forward with the rest of the party. They felt certain now that they would gain the slopes above the great barricade of rock round which they had run during the hours of the early morning. Up and up they hurried through the dark passage, their feet sinking deep into the ooze. They were indifferent to all discomforts, and the three women took no notice of the fact that they were trampling upon innumerable crawling things

as they ran. The floor of the cavern, like the rocky slopes of the island, was alive with mollusks and shell-fish, but they took no notice of it. They wanted to see the sunlight, and nothing else mattered.

The party reached a point where the passage was divided by a wall and at this particular point the breeze was so slight that it was impossible for them to tell which path they should follow. Another crack, far up in the roof of the place, afforded them sufficient light to see where one opening led to the right and the other to the left, and the six stood together, wondering which would be the one that would lead them to safety.

"I wonder which way the Shans went," cried Kennard.

Branson, upon his knees and with his face close to the mud floor, was endeavoring to find in the half darkness of the place a trace of the footprints of the two, but the faint glimmer that came from above was not sufficient to let him see any signs upon the tunnel floor. Whichever way the Shans and the orang had gone, the little party had to make their own choice.

"I wish I knew which way they went," growled Branson. "That would be my path, whether it led to an opening or not."

"It wouldn't be mine," said Townsley quietly. "I want to see the sunlight."

"Well, which opening will we take?" asked Kennard. "The right or left?"

They stood for a moment in silence, wondering which of the two openings would lead them to safety, and it was at that moment that Helen Branson startled the others with a strange cry which made them turn in her direction. It was not a cry of fear; neither was it an expression of joy. It was more a cry of astonishment which led the others to believe that she had seen or heard something of which they had not been cognizant.

"What is it?" cried Kennard. "What is wrong?"

The girl did not answer for a moment; then in a faltering tone she whispered: "The light! The light!"

Her low whisper sent a little chill through the party, and Kennard had a horrible thought that the sufferings

through which the girl had gone had affected her mind. He knew that she had passed through enough to wreck the reason of a strong man, and now as she whispered the strange words into the stillness, he sprang towards her.

"What light, Helen?" he gasped. "What light are you speaking of?"

"The light at the mouth of the tunnel," whispered the girl. "I see it!"

Kennard gave a muttered exclamation, and the others clustered around, a creepy sensation stealing over them. In the wall of the darkness which surrounded them there was not the slightest break which would lead them to believe that they were close to an opening of any kind. Yet, the words uttered by Helen Branson were such as to make them feel certain that she had actually seen an opening, or had been the victim of an optical illusion. There was an under-note of wonder in her voice which startled them, and they were unable to speak for a few moments after the girl had uttered the strange words.

It was Kennard who broke the silence.

"Tell me what you really see, Helen," he stammered. "Tell me where the opening is."

A fear seized him and he took the hands of the girl as if he would awaken her from the half trance in which she seemed to be. And that little shake which Kennard gave her seemed to have the desired effect.

"Oh!" she gasped, her voice changing from the whispered note to one of alarm. "Oh! What—what happened to me?"

"You said something about a light," said Kennard, speaking softly in an endeavor to soothe the girl, who appeared to be on the verge of hysteria. "What did you see?"

"I thought I saw a light!" cried Helen. "I thought I saw a light to the right!"

Once again a little silence fell upon the group, and then Branson spoke. And the hoarse voice of the adventurer was subdued at that moment.

"I think we shall take that as a hint from Providence as to the way we should go," he said quietly. "We will take the path to the right."

"We surely will!" cried Kennard. "At least I will."

"And I also," said Townsley quickly. "I am thinking just as Branson that Miss Helen had a vision to direct us on our way."

The little school teacher and Ada Merrington also signified their wish to take the opening to the right. The words uttered by Helen Branson brought to them a feeling of awe, and they were inclined to believe at that moment that the young girl, keyed up to a tremendous pitch of nervous excitement, had in some unexplainable way been given a glimpse of the opening which they were seeking.

In silence they moved forward up the rocky slope to the right, and their courage did not falter as the darkness seemed to grow greater instead of diminishing with each step they took. They were revolving in their minds the peculiar little happening at the spot where the passage had divided. The five felt that there had been some strange quality in the voice of the girl which made them feel certain that she was not quite normal when she uttered the words. They understood that her great desire to see the mouth of the passage might have worked upon her mind, but they felt that there was something about the happening which brought to them a confidence they had not felt before.

And Helen was as much troubled as the others over what had taken place. She asked Kennard in a whisper to repeat to her the words that she had uttered, and the lawyer did so.

"And I think you saw it," whispered John Henry. "I am sure you saw the light."

"Oh, I think—I think I was mistaken," cried the girl. "I saw something but—but if I am wrong! Oh, if I am wrong!"

"We'll go back and try the other way," said Kennard. "Don't worry, little girl. We'll try them both. But I feel sure that you have picked the right one."

And the feeling which was upon Kennard was also noticeable in the conversation of the rest of the party. It brought confidence to them, and they moved along at a greater speed. Once again Branson became careless of hidden pitfalls and hurried them forward.

And it was Branson who made the discovery which confirmed the words which the girl had uttered. The big man, rushing along at the head of the others, gave a great shout of joy, and the five behind him knew that he had caught a glimpse of the opening which would bring them out upon the higher slope.

"Here it is!" he cried. "Now I'll get my treasure back, or I'll dump those two brutes into the water."

The concluding installment of "The Blue Lizard" will appear in the February issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale at all news-stands, January 1st, 1914.



Operator 911

Against the bustling background of the telephone exchange, this realistic picture of life and love is portrayed. Both as an appealing story and as a human document, it is of the deepest interest and significance.

B Y C O U R T N E Y R Y L E Y C O O P E R

IT WAS at the morning call for the fifteen-minute rest that Number Nine-eleven turned at the sound of a voice and looked into the freckled, kindly face of Number Seventy-four, her companion to the left. It was their first real meeting,—at least their first friendly greeting,—for Miss Nine-eleven had only been a number four days. And now that the greeting had come, she welcomed it. Number Seventy-four was smiling at her as she laid her apron on the board by the long rows of drops and stood aside that the relief operator might take her place. Number Seventy-four had stepped forward and touched her on the arm.

"Say kid, I want to see you," she whispered, "in the rest-room."

She led the way to the farthest corner of the big room, with its divan seats and its cot or two and its matron, where the *click-click* of the drops and the snap of the plugs in the main room sounded droning and distant; then she turned.

"I don't know your name, kid, but mine's Sadie Jordan," she began, and there seemed a wistful something in the eyes, a wondering, guessing something that made Number Nine-eleven feel ill at ease. "I've been looking at you out of the corner of my eye since they put you on the board, and trying to make

up my mind to do this." She hesitated a second and then with a burst of impulsiveness she caught her companion by the arm and drew her toward her. "Look here, kid, suppose we sit here where nobody can listen to us and have a good talk. Are you on?"

"A talk?" A bit of white came into Miss Nine-eleven's face. "What about? I don't—"

"Yes you do." That twinkle was again in Sadie Jordan's eyes. "You're wise to just what I'm trying to lead up to. You see, it's this way, kid," she said as she seated herself and drew the other woman close beside her: "I aint one of these people that can let a thing go right past without getting next to it. I've been jumbled around a lot in this world and I've learned a thing or two. A girl don't start out making flowers in a snide factory at seven, sell papers at the Busy Corner stand when she's ten, feed a binder in a print shop when she's fifteen and sit on the hello board when she's twenty-four, without getting wise to a bunch of the twists in this world. She knows what trouble is and she don't have to be telegraphed when somebody else is in bad. So, loosen up. What's eating on you?"

Operator Nine-eleven looked at her queerly for just a second, then rose and

walked to the window. Far below in the streets she could see the crowds of Christmas shoppers, the vendors of holly and mistletoe and pepper berries, the toy fakirs, the decorations of the stores, the jangling, swinging surface cars—and it all brought a choking, an overwhelming something which caused her lips to quiver and the diamonds to show in the corners of her eyes. She struggled there a moment, silently, while Sadie Jordan watched. Her hands folded, then slowly unclasped. At last she whirled and sank, a broken, sobbing, trembling form, in Sadie Jordan's encircling arms.

"I'm—I'm so unhappy!" came falteringly, and a sympathetic face was pressed against hers.

"Then let it out, kid; tell me," the girl of the drop-board was whispering. "A hurting shoe don't stop stinging till you take it off, so maybe if you'd loosen up and—"

"I don't know what good it'll do, Sadie," came at last. "I can't see anything but blackness—just blackness. When one person has trusted another and just given him everything in the world, then found out how different, how false everything has been—it doesn't seem like there is any remedy; I—"

"It's a man then, is it?" said Sadie slowly. "I might have lamped that. It usually is. Who was he, your steady?"

A long pause.

"My husband." Sadie started a bit. She drew the little woman closer into her arms.

"Then all the more reason we ought to get to the bottom of the thing. This Reno bunk's all right for the funny papers, but there aint much joke in it when you come to stowing skeletons in your own closets. Did he mistreat you or—or was it the other thing? You know—" She ceased, for the gates had been opened.

"I—I didn't think I'd ever tell anybody," came slowly; and Sadie, in spite of the sympathy in her heart, almost smiled at the childishness of her who sat there, at the girlish appeal in the big eyes, at the wave of the brownish, chestnut hair, at the clinging, fearful posture of the little form—for all the world

like the little girl whom Sadie in her day dreams saw herself some day holding in her arms. "I had just made up my mind to fight it out—to try to forget; and then—I don't know what I was going to do after that. It—it was the other thing. I—"

"I guess we both mean the same thing—another woman," Sadie interjected. "Go on."

A clasp of the hand that meant understanding and Nine-eleven bent her head just a bit more.

"We'd been married seven years, Fred and I," she began. "I don't look it, do I?" She raised her eyes to the frank, motherly ones of Sadie. "But then, you see, it happened when I was seventeen. I've got a little girl too—Marie. She's six years old. That is,"—there the sob broke again—"I did have her before I went away. I'd been downtown buying Christmas presents for her and—"

"Is that the start of it?" Sadie's voice was crooning. "If it aint, just go back to the beginning—it'll come easier. When did you start to find out?"

There was something in her voice that was impelling, in spite of its softness. Nine-eleven's lips quivered a bit. Then she went on:

"Just about anniversary time. You see, Fred and I didn't have so much—he's just getting his start in real estate. I was always so proud of him for working up from just a job to something he could do for himself," she added in a trailing voice. "So, when this anniversary began to come near we made, oh, just lots of plans for it. We were going to have a big dinner downtown, the three of us, and I was going to have a new dress—and just lots of things. Then, about a week before the time, some one telephoned for him. It was a woman. She wouldn't leave any name or any message. She called him again the same day and asked when he would be home. That night, she called again. He talked to her—in sentences I couldn't understand—and asked her something I couldn't hear. He told me it was about business, but there wasn't any of the enthusiasm of truth about it. But I didn't mistrust him, Sadie—I just wondered, as a wife will do.

"The next night at supper I spoke

about the anniversary. He looked at me a little queerly and told me that we couldn't have it, that we couldn't afford to spend the money. I didn't say anything more about it to him, but that wondering just grew in me. After the meal he left and told me he was going to the office. I telephoned him there three times that night. The 'phone didn't answer. I'm afraid my wondering began to turn to something else. The anniversary came, and it was just a simple little home dinner with some carnations on the table. Fred had brought them. There had been two other times too, when he had told me he was going to his office and when I had telephoned without an answer. There'd been a change in him, some way. He didn't seem to notice the little things that I did for him; sometimes he'd eat a whole meal without speaking to me. I began to know then—the wondering all left me. I was almost sure now. Then I went shopping one day and found out.

"I needed a little money for something and went to his office. He wasn't there. As I left his desk the torn pieces of a note in the wastebasket caught my attention. The stenographer's back was turned. I reached down quickly and pulled some of them out. It was a woman's writing—I couldn't find the name, but I could catch a word or two here and there. There was the name of a café. But still I didn't give up hope. It all might be explained—I tried to tell myself this in spite of everything. One doesn't like to have their delusions broken, you know, Sadie. I started home, but I wasn't thinking much about what I was doing. Before I knew it, I was on the wrong car, and away over in the West Side district. I hurried off at a transfer corner thinking that I might go across town on the Twelfth Street line and make better time. Then I found out.

"The cars and wagons had jammed on the crossing and the policeman was working them out one by one. I watched him as he swung his arms and whistled; then I started as a taxicab came near me. It was nearly dusk but I could see the man inside as he leaned forward to look out of the opposite window. It was Fred. I hid myself behind a light pole

and looked hard again. A woman was with him, some woman I never had seen before, and an arm was about his shoulders. I guess everything went black then, for a minute, because it seemed that the taxicab had gone far down the street without my seeing it. But I did see it stop and I did see Fred leave it and give both his arms to the woman to help her out, and I did see them go up the steps of one of the houses.

"Then something came into me that just made me shake and tremble all over. I waited for the taxi and stopped it. I asked the driver if he knew the fare he had just carried. He laughed and shook his head. 'Just a couple of rounders, I guess,' he said, 'judgin' from where they went. Besides, I picked them up at the Red Fox.'"

She paused. "It doesn't make any difference about Marie to you, I guess. Nobody but me would understand that anyway—what it cost me to give her up, and how I held her and swayed with her in my arms and told her I was going away for a little while and that some day I'd come and get her, just as soon as I could have the money to care for the two of us. I—"

A buzzer rang in the big room and Sadie Jordan started to her feet.

"Back to the drops, kid," she said, but there was a huskiness in her voice that belied the vivacity of it. Then she paused and gripped hard the arm of the woman beside her. "Look here, it aint me that's saying you didn't do right. Any woman'd done just what you did, but"—then she too looked far down into the street, with its throngs and its happiness and hurry—"I'm hoping, kid, I'm hoping a lot of things. Hurry on now, kid, before the overseer bawls you out." And she affectionately pushed Nine-eleven forward toward the door of the main room. Then, in spite of her advice just given, she remained at the window a long, long time, past the second buzzer and far over the three minutes' grace.

"Christmas," she said to herself at last, "aint what it's cracked up to be—for everybody. I don't guess she wanted to tell me her name—that is, her real one." The call of a vendor as he sold his toys and blew his horn on the cor-

ner below was wafted faintly to her through the tightly closed window. She gripped her hands a bit. "Christmas two days off," she murmured, "and *this* going on. Sadie, I don't know how you're going to do it or what you're going to do, but you've got to fix it somehow."

But night came, and morning and the fifteen minutes rest of the forenoon, with Sadie of the switchboard still wondering, still planning, still hoping—with nothing to hope on. Her eyes were a bit dull and tired and without their smile as she walked slowly into the restroom and approached Nine-eleven. Silently she laid a hand on the little woman's shoulder.

"I'm sorry," she said slowly. "I wanted to think of a way out last night—but I couldn't. I didn't have any more chance than a rabbit. It was me for the heavy last night, kid—sick-bed stuff and doctor and undertaker and all that sort of stuff. It wasn't any deathbed of mine, but I got snagged in on it. Jennie's all right on lots of stuff—she's my sister, out at Mercy Hospital, you know; she can stand operations and all that junk, but when there's a death-bed thing coming on and she knows it, I've got to traipse along and stick it out with her. It roughs me up just as much as it does her but—" She ceased and looked suddenly downward. Nine-eleven was crying. "Fine, cheerful line of gab I'm handing out, aint it?" she asked deprecatingly. "I didn't mean to. I was just trying to explain why—"

Nine-eleven had raised a hand.

"It isn't that, Sadie," she demurred. "Besides, there isn't anything you can do. That part of it's all—all past now. I've got to stop thinking about that—I've got to try to, anyway. There's something else now. Making a living."

"Making a living?" Sadie Jordan leaned forward quickly. "What is the row?"

The overseer passed the door. Nine-eleven pointed to her.

"She says I'm not handling the board right—and I know what that means. Something'll happen, some mistake, and then I'll be gone. I can see just how—"

"Now stop that sort of thing," came the voice of Sadie Jordan, and her tone

was that of a command. "Suppose you do get kicked over and put on the shelf with the preserves. That aint going to mean any starving act. I've got a room and a bed that's big enough for two—and you're needing company anyway. No," she continued, and there was a plaintive something in her voice, "you're just trying to fool yourself, kid, into being mournful about something that aint anything at all. When we're right jam bang faced up against a stone wall we might as well look at it, and try to find out what kind of mortar it's put together with. You're on the bum today because to-morrow's Christmas and the only thing you're going to get in your stockings's a fine bunch of worries. I'm wise, kid. I've been there. Aint that it?"

She waited a moment and watched the slow nod of the little woman beside her. Then she sank to the big cushioned seat and grasped Nine-eleven's hand.

"There's something else about it all too," she began slowly, "that's been coming into my mind ever since—well, ever since I saw that girl go over the Mountains last night. Honey, the way things get all balled up, sometimes, it just looks like we ought to trust everybody in the world, like we ought not to come to a conclusion until we've just been slapped in the face with it and told about it and denied it until there isn't any more denying possible. That—"

"Didn't I deny it?" Nine-eleven's voice carried a half wail with it. "Didn't I try to think of every possible thing it might have been? Didn't I catch him in one piece of deceit after another until—"

"And that's just what I'm going to talk about," said Sadie. "Of course, there's no similarity to these things; I know that; but just the same last night taught me something. This girl—well, she was a full grown woman and well full grown at that—hadn't been everything that a woman ought to have been. She'd gotten to that point where she went by another name from the regular one that her family had, and what was left of the family had gotten to that point where they forgot to mention her to anybody—even the fact that she'd ever existed. I guess she'd seen about all the

high places there were to be seen. Well, a person can take off the brakes and forget about the speed limit for a while, but there's a time when something bobs up at the bottom of the road and there is a fine young smash-up. That's the way it was with this Lucy Williams. This little old town's good enough for her until the smash comes and the money gives out and she's forgotten by everybody. Then she comes roaming back and fastens herself on her brother. And he took care of her on the sly without anybody knowing it, and gave her money, and dragged her away from places where she shouldn't have been, and paid her hospital bill—and now I guess he'll pay for her undertaker.

"But don't you see, Honey—suppose he should have been married; he couldn't have told his wife about all this; she wouldn't have understood why he hadn't told her in the beginning, before they were married—and—well, she couldn't have understood lots of things, because that's the way a lot of women are built. And if she'd found it out—that is, found out the things he was doing—*bing!* Just like that the axe would have dropped and husband would have been on the hummer. I know, kid; I've seen it work. That's why I've been thinking about it. Are you sure, kid, honest sure, there wasn't any chance for a mistake?"

"Sure?" Nine-eleven spread her hands—and they trembled a bit. "Sadie," she begged, "can't you see that I didn't want it to be true, that I didn't want to be convinced of it all? Didn't I let things go by that were almost confessions? Didn't I give up my little anniversary and my new dress without a murmur, just hoping that what he was telling me was true? Didn't I read that note and see the name of the Red Fox—and you know what the Red Fox is—and still try to believe him innocent? And even after I had seen him in the taxicab and heard what the driver said, still I tried not to believe. But that night after he'd telephoned and told me that he had been called over to Rossvale on a deal there and had been delayed in getting back—then it all came over me. I was just making a fool of myself. I

could see now—there was only one thing for me to do: leave and make myself self-supporting so that I could get Marie and—"

"You hadn't told me that last part about the telephone business," Sadie had broken in. "Maybe you're right, but gee, I hate to see it. Someway, this divorce thing doesn't go with me at all. I guess if I'd get married my husband would make an idiot out of me. I'd have to have a lot of testimony before I'd give him the axe. Maybe," she grinned, "that's why I'm going to stay single and have a parrot and a cat when I get old. But kid," she ended, "everybody for their own way of looking at things. Maybe you're the wise guy and I'm the dippy one. Look here—are you honest worrying about that job?"

Nine-eleven looked up with a qucer little smile on her face.

"It's—it's the other thing that really hurts," she answered, "but I've got to make a living. I've—"

"Wait a minute." Sadie Jordan had left the rest-room, to tiptoe into the place of switchboards and drops and to whisper to the overseer. And there was a pleading, a direct something in the voice that won. When she returned, there was something of the old smile on her face.

"No wonder you were getting in bad, with that bunch of junk you had to take care of," she said as she entered. "You're going on a lighter board where you can handle things better. And look here," she said, "to-night's Christmas Eve. I don't know how I'm going to handle it or anything about it—but when we get through work to-night, suppose you tell me where you used to live and everything about the place and maybe I can sneak the kid out for a little while, just long enough for you to see her and for the three of us to have a little Christmas. It won't be much; I'll take some oranges and candy and gew-gaws up to my room and—nix on that stuff," she whispered as she sought to stay the sobs of the other woman. "There's the buzzer and the overseer's a bug about not wanting any of us to have red eyes. Clear up, kid, clear up—there's your board, Number Four. Go to it."

And then, as Nine-eleven walked to

her new place, Sadie Jordan climbed her stool and talked softly to herself.

"If I'd just gotten that name and then pulled this other thing without letting her know," she chided herself, "that'd been—well, I should worry and get a lot of sense," she finished. And then the drops, massing themselves in a regiment of calls took her attention to her board.

But across the room, it was not the positions of a maze of new numbers that had caused Mrs. Fred Miller, Number Nine-eleven of the telephone service, to stare and to gasp as she looked at the board before her. For all the numbers had vanished, all except one, that stood forth doubled, trebled in size to her distorted gaze, which seemed to speak, to shout to her! Above and below, the drops fell and the little globes of white showed their glare, again and again, but not a plug was lifted. Slowly she reached forward, as though to assure herself by the touch of her fingers that this was real, that it was not a dream. Then came the realization.

"Home," she half murmured. "Home—and I'll hear him—and her. I'll—"

She started as though from a blow. There had come a slight click on the board and the drop had tumbled. The little light was gleaming. Long she watched it, half fascinated; then haltingly she reached for the plug.

"Number—please," she asked, and there was a huskiness, a strangeness in her voice that sent it past all chance of recognition.

"This is Marie Miller," had come the answer to the quivering brain of the woman at the receiver. "Papa told me if I would just call up, you'd connect me with Santa Claus."

A little look of anguish crossed the operator's face. She pressed close to the mouthpiece that her words might not be heard within the room.

"Santa Claus?" she half-crooned. "I can't connect you—but I can take your message."

"Well, that'll do. I'm six years old, and I've tried to be a good little girl, and I treat my dolls nice and don't hurt them—and I want something for Christmas."

Nine-eleven felt the warmth of tears

on her face. She did not attempt to brush them away.

"What—what is it you want?" she asked. "Candy and a new doll and—"

"No, I just want my mamma. She's gone away. I've tried to ask Papa where she's gone but he can't tell me. He just cries every time I ask him, so I thought I'd ask Santa Claus. Do you think he'll bring her back for me? I don't want any candy or oranges if he will. Will you ask him if he will—"

Nine-eleven felt that her hands were twitching, that her eyes were wild and that a fever of terrored anguish was coursing through her brain. She trembled a bit. She tried to answer—she sought for words. Then hopelessly she dragged forth the plug and sank forward against the board.

For a long moment she remained there, praying against the torture of it all; then with one great effort she straightened, gripped herself in every tendon, in every nerve. Then, one by one, she resolutely answered the calls of the other numbers as they came in. A wait. Then again a start. The light of home was showing in the globe before her. Torture again. But she answered. She waited. "Number, please?" she asked again, and her hand trembled where she still held it on the plug. "Two eight two South?"

Then for a moment she stopped and all that had gone through her heart in the last month surged up again. Two eight two was familiar. Two eight two—two eight two. She repeated the number again and again. Her face went white. Memory had come and with it a pang that was keen and cutting. "Two eight two," she repeated to herself. "Dr. Gordon's." There was a hoarse little laugh. "He married us. I wonder—"

"Can't you catch those calls there?" It was the voice of the overseer behind her, and dully she responded. One by one she made the connections and then as the overseer moved on, she allowed the calls to come unnoticed. She had plugged in and was listening. The minister and her husband were talking. At first it all was jumbled, a disconnected something which she could not understand, and then she leaned forward quickly, wonderment on her face.

"All I want is just a simple little prayer, Doctor, something you can say and say it honestly and truly. There won't be anyone there—just myself. But when they start to throw in the clods"—there had come a break in Fred Miller's voice—"I don't think I'm going to be able to stand it unless you're there with me—to help me and to—"

"I understand—fully," the sympathetic tones of Dr. Gordon responded. "I'll be there, Fred. I guess we'd better be starting if we're going to get there by three. Have you heard anything from Agnes?"

The woman at the switchboard straightened, then bent forward again.

"Not a word," had come the answer. "I—"

"Before I forget," the minister's voice had broken in, "you didn't tell me the name of the other—"

Instinctively fire had come into the eyes of Agnes Miller. The conversation about death she had not fathomed. But by this last sentence she knew—that her husband and Dr. Gordon understood, that her husband had told of what had gone before. As if the word had been spoken, she knew that Dr. Gordon had meant the other woman. She pressed the receiver close to her ear that she might have the answer. A long wait; then:

"She didn't use the family name, you know. For some reason she dropped the name of Miller and took that of Williams. Just Lucy Williams—that was the way she asked me to mark it on the headstone and—"

With a jerk the plug had been pulled out, and Agnes Miller, Number Nine-eleven of the telephone board, was no longer listening. Lucy Williams—Lucy Williams! She had heard the name; somewhere she knew it. Lucy—she started; the red diffused her face. She knew now; she understood—Lucy Williams, Lucy of the story of Sadie Jordan, Lucy who had sought her brother, who—

She leaned forward; she shot the plug to its place and pulled feverishly at the lever that would ring the telephone in her home. A moment of anxious waiting. At last came the click of the receiver as it was taken from the

hook. Number Nine-eleven's face was ashen with anxiety.

"Fred—" she called. "Fred!"

"Who do you want?" The voice was that of a child, and Agnes Miller felt a thrill as of electricity shoot through her.

"Marie—is your father there? Hurry, honey."

"Is this you, Mamma?" The voice had querulous anxiety in it. "He's just gone out. He won't be back until five o'clock, he said. He's gone somewhere out to a graveyard. Where've you been, Mamma? I just asked Santa Claus to—"

A sob from the operator of board Number Four caused the overseer to turn and to hurry forward. Her eyes were anxious; her face bore the appearance of worry.

"What's the matter, girl—sick?" she asked. "Go on to the rest-room and I'll get a relief. Why—"

For Number Nine-eleven was standing radiant before her, radiant in spite of the tears, in spite of her quivering lips and trembling hands.

"No," she answered, "—not sick. I'm well—well!" She turned and hurried across the room. She grasped the arm of Sadie Jordan as it reached toward the board and swung her about in her swivel chair. "Sadie," she called in spite of the silence rules, "I'm going home—I'm going home! I've found out. He was the brother—don't you see? The brother of Lucy Williams that you told me about? I found out over the wire—that board had my number on it. I'm going home! I'm going home!"

And ten minutes later, when Sadie Jordan came back to her board, she smiled happily as she re-read for the twentieth time an address on a scrap of paper! She swung her head as she looked at the falling drops, and hummed—hummed as she had not done for days. At last she ceased and waved a plug idly before her.

"Some way," she mused, "I just felt I was going to be an instrument in that thing. Guess I was too—a sort of telephone instrument," she ended with a little laugh. "Number please? Huh? Well I've rung 'em five times already!"



The Secret of the Radium Maker

Magnum, the scientific consultant, becomes involved in one of the most amazing mysteries of his career. The solution of the problem, moreover, proves as unexpected as it is remarkable.

By MAX RITTENBERG

MAGNUM returned from his laboratories to the office, holding a tiny sealed glass tube. In it were a few grains of white crystals.

"It's radium chloride right enough," he announced to his visitor.

"What is it worth?"

"The market price. About £25,000 a gramme."

"My man can produce it for £5000 a gramme."

"At that figure, I should advise buying it," returned Magnum drily. A tinge of a smile curled around his shrewd eyes, arched by bushy reddish eyebrows. As the acknowledged head of his profession of scientific consultant in London, he was entitled to his scepticism.

His visitor, Mr. J. Warren Fennimore, was a man of leisure and means. That was unmistakably conveyed by his manner and his careful dressing. The morning coat and top hat, the white slip to his vest, the immaculately-creased trousers and the gray spats exhaled the atmosphere of a club window in Piccadilly overlooking the Green Park, the *Times* and a morning glass of sherry.

Magnum, with his bushy eyebrows and straggly reddish beard, his great knobby bald head and his baggy, shapeless working clothes, made a striking contrast with him.

"You don't believe it?" asked Fennimore, stiffening.

"When I see proof, I believe."

"That brings me to my point. This fellow I've come across tells me that he has discovered an entirely new process for extracting radium from pitchblende. I don't know much about the matter, but I understand that the high cost of radium is mostly due to the present very expensive process of extraction."

"Quite right."

"Then, on the face of it, his claim is not unreasonable?"

"It is not impossible," amended Magnum.

"If he can do what he claims, I am prepared to finance him and float a company. It would be more valuable than a gold mine."

"And you want me to examine into his process?"

"Exactly."

Magnum, who was a shrewd business man as well as a scientist, pushed some notepaper and a pen towards his visitor. "I should want an option on ten per cent of the issued shares at half their par value, and of course my usual consulting fee in any circumstances."

"But why should I give you this option?"

"As an insurance that I would do my utmost to protect your interests," returned Magnum briskly.

"Then you suspect a fraud?"

"I've lived for twenty-five years in the City," was the dry answer.

"He seems a decent fellow. I should like to help him as well as make money myself over the discovery."

Magnum emphasized that there was pen and ink handy.

The next day, Fennimore's speckless motor drew up at Magnum's laboratories. The scientist entered the car with Ivor Meredith in his wake. This young Welsh boy was his right-hand man—a genius amongst the crucibles and beakers of the laboratory, but raw, shy and painfully self-conscious in the world of men and women. Fennimore shook hands graciously, though privately he was wondering why on earth the raw youth should be brought into the affair.

Magnum, scenting that, put Fennimore into his place. "Of course you know that Meredith is the finest analyst in England?" said he challengingly.

"Indeed!" answered Fennimore, startled and turning to view the boy once again.

Meredith colored like a ripening tomato.

"I wouldn't part with him for a fortune," snapped Magnum.

The car purred out of Upper Thames Street, snatched up pace on the Embankment with a glad relief at being away from the grime, and quickly sped them to a cottage in a back lane of Chiswick.

On their arrival followed an elaborate unbolting of the front door. The thin, meager face which showed in the doorway was framed in bandages.

"They broke in last night, Mr. Fennimore," complained the damaged inventor.

"Who?"

"I don't know who they were, because they'd got masks on, but I'm pretty certain who set them on to me—Hartley, that City man I told about my discovery before I came to you. That's who it was—Hartley!"

Hartley and Company were an important firm of manufacturing and wholesale chemists, with head offices in Moorgate Street. They practically controlled the English market for radium, buying from the producing firms and selling to scientists, doctors and hospitals, as well as to wholesale druggists.

While Fennimore plied questions about the night attack, Magnum was closely observing the inventor.

He might have been anything from thirty to thirty-five. The long, streaky, untidy hair was fading from brown to a nondescript yellowish. The carelessly-shaven face was long and thin and meager—clever but hungry might sum up the expression. The voice had a decided tinge of Cockney in it. Magnum placed him as the product of a London Polytechnic School.

In the background lurked the inventor's wife, a woman of a faded prettiness, but with decided strength of character. Evidently the two had had a hard struggle for a livelihood.

"What did these men find out?" Fennimore was asking.

"They found out what the business end of a poker feels like," replied the inventor with relish.

Fennimore proceeded to introduce: "Mr. Bertram Kimbell, Mrs. Kimbell—Mr. Magnum, the analytical consultant—Mr. Meredith, his assistant. They are going to examine into your process."

But the inventor, suspicious of all the world after recent experiences, made an instinctive movement to protect the passage leading to his workshop-laboratory.

"I don't think!" he retorted.

"Come, come!" protested Fennimore. "I vouch for these gentlemen. Their standing is unquestioned. Anything they may see they will regard as absolutely confidential."

"That's all very well," returned the suspicious inventor, "but if my process gets known, I'm left on the doorstep."

You know I mustn't patent it. It has to be kept secret and worked secret. Then there's tons of money in it. But if everyone could go and make radium my way—!"

Mrs. Kimbell nodded agreement.

They were up against the old, old problem of the inventor and the capitalist. Who should trust the other? What kind of guarantees should be given?

"Show the gentlemen your other inventions," suggested Mrs. Kimbell, and her husband, acting promptly on her idea, produced from a bureau a sheaf of printed patent specifications which he handed to Magnum to examine.

They formed in a way a *dossier* of his life since he had left the Polytechnic. He had evidently become a professional inventor—his creations covering an astonishingly wide range of industries. The Patent Office had granted to Bertram Kimbell, Esq., B.Sc., of Laburnum Cottage, Chiswick, protection for non-refillable bottles, diabolo-spools, fire-screens, garters, safety-scaffolds, jumping-jacks, boot-fasteners, penny puzzles, non-puncturable tires, and a score of other ingenious but mostly unsalable devices.

"I see no patents on chemical processes," was Magnum's pointed comment.

"I'm a B.Sc, London," retorted Kimbell. "I did five years as works-chemist for the United Drug Company, Battersea. Ask them."

Evidently he was willing to have his whole life examined into.

The argument was interrupted by the sound of another motor drawing up before the cottage. Hartley, the radium dealer, stepped out and knocked briskly at the front door.

"Like his confounded cheek!" said Kimbell. "Shall I let him in?"

"Yes," decided Magnum.

So Hartley was brought into the parlor conference—a brisk, capable, moneyed City man, probably not overburdened with scruples. He nodded agreeably to the introductions.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "I suppose we're all here for the same object—to decide how much money there is in Kimbell's process."

"There's a fortune in it!" stated Mrs. Kimbell defiantly.

"Possibly, ma'am, but none of us are going to buy a pig in a poke."

In his cool way, he seemed to identify himself with the interests of Fennimore and Magnum.

"Let's have a demonstration," he continued. "If the process is sound, we might pool capital and float a company together."

Magnum did not relish the suggestion. "Put we in the singular," he snapped.

"It's done," agreed Hartley. "Kimbell, will you give me a private demonstration?"

For once in his life the down-trodden inventor was master of the situation. Rival capitalists were contending for his favor. He swelled visibly. "How much will you pay me to show you?" he asked.

"I'll gamble a hundred pounds," said the brisk Hartley.

"Two hundred," offered Fennimore.

"Three," raised Hartley.

"Four."

"Five."

"I also offer five hundred,"—from Fennimore.

"I stand pat,"—from Hartley.

Kimbell looked at his wife, who signed to him to come and talk it over in private. They withdrew to another room.

When they returned, the inventor attempted the Napoleonic touch. "I want five thousand pounds in cash before I give up my secret," he announced, "and one thousand pounds on every gramme of radium produced by my process."

"Good-by," said the brisk Hartley, reaching for his silk hat.

"Your suggestion is ridiculous!" protested Fennimore, distinctly ruffled. "I've been trying to help you, but now you can fend for yourself!"

The capitalists left in their respective motors.

In the mysterious fashion of the press, which seems to scent out news almost as soon as the news begins to scent, Kimbell's discovery got into the daily papers. The *Daily Mirror*, for instance, took and published portraits of the inventor, the inventor's wife, the inventor's wife's cat, and the inventor's

wife's cat's kitten. Another paper stated that Mr. Magnum, the well known consultant, had been investigating the process and considered it held great possibilities. All featured the point that Kimbell had demanded five thousand pounds in cash before he would disclose his secret to anyone.

Fennimore phoned to Magnum: "What do you advise?"

"Doing nothing!" snapped Magnum, irritated by the newspaper inaccuracies. "Sit still and let Kimbell come to you."

It was sound advice. A fortnight later, the inventor was waiting hat in hand on J. Warren Fennimore, humbled and prepared to demonstrate without any cash payment at all.

Fennimore, Magnum and Meredith repaired once again to Laburnum Cottage, Chiswick. This time, they were taken straight into the workshop-laboratory, a room with heavily-barred window and stout locks to the door. It was a hodge-podge of lathe, tools, chemical apparatus, and odds and ends of invention material.

Kimbell, after swearing them to secrecy, plunged enthusiastically into a description of his process, his wife standing by to help in the practical demonstration. He showed some pitchblende ore; another sample ground to a flour-like state of attrition; another test-tube sample partly dissolved up according to a process he described; another test-tube containing a crystallization product; and then he came to the crux of the matter.

"That apparatus, as you'll see at once"—the inventor showed with pride a complete arrangement of specially-shaped X-ray bulbs harnessed up to a secondary electric coil—"is to ionise the radium away from the barium and other useless stuff. Everything depends on the new-shaped bulbs I've made and the composition of the cathode. But first we've got to do a special separation by osmotic pressure. Florrie, just reach me down—"

But as Mrs. Kimbell reached to a shelf above, her elbow brushed against a flask of liquid; it fell, smashing itself—exploded with a ferocious bang, and reduced the precious X-ray bulbs to scrap-glass.

The scene that followed was heart-rending. While Magnum, whipping out a brown silk handkerchief, rushed to wipe away from the white-faced Mrs. Kimbell the liquid that had spurted onto her dress, the inventor broke down and wept and cursed in pitiful alternation.

"My poor fellow, don't despair!" said Fennimore, trying to console. "You'll be able to replace it. Be thankful no one was injured."

"Three months' work destroyed!" wailed Kimbell. "Just my luck!"

"I'll see that you don't lose by it," offered Fennimore generously, reaching for his pocket-book.

"No!" answered the inventor's wife, white-faced but determined. "We won't take your money for nothing. We've got our pride left, thank goodness!"

And in spite of Fennimore's protests, she proved adamant.

As the visitors left the cottage, a press photographer, waiting for them, snapped a shutter and then took off his tweed cap as a combination of asking permission and saying thank you. Magnum, by way of indicating his opinion of this cool action, thwacked a walking-stick into the vitals of the camera.

"Here, I say!" protested the indignant photographer. "What d'you mean by doing that?"

"Tells its own story," snapped Magnum, and strode straight on to the waiting motor.

In the car, Fennimore began to express regrets at the unfortunate accident. "It will mean waiting a couple of months at least, until Kimbell can make a fresh piece of apparatus. Then we must take up the matter again. You believe the fellow's genuine, don't you?"

"Quite genuine," admitted Magnum frankly.

"Not a trickster?"

"No."

"And his process?"

Magnum left the answer to Meredith, who replied diffidently that the new process for extracting radium sounded quite possible on the scientific side, but of course one had to be careful to verify all his points one by one.

"I believe in the fellow, and I shall

finance him," decided Fennimore. "We mustn't let Hartley slip in ahead of us."

Magnum remained very silent during the drive.

Back in their laboratories at Upper Thames Street, Magnum flipped a sudden question at the Welsh boy: "What caused that explosion?"

"I don't know," confessed Meredith. "I was too startled to think out the matter."

"Did you smell chlorine from it?"

"No, I was thinking how lucky it was no one was injured."

"Booby! When are you going to learn to observe outside your own laboratory?"

"What does it matter what caused the explosion?" said Meredith, stung to retort.

"It may matter everything! I suspect chlorate and sulphuric acid. That's why I wiped the splashes off Mrs. Kimbell's dress with my silk handkerchief instead of a duster. Take this handkerchief and analyze it."

It was not long before Meredith was able to report that his chief's guess was perfectly accurate. The explosion had been caused by the action of concentrated sulphuric acid on potassium chlorate.

"That's very significant," was Magnum's comment.

"I don't see why!" said the Welsh boy in bewilderment.

"Intended to explode. . . . Now listen carefully to my directions. I want Kimbell brought to me here without his wife knowing it. I want to sound him, away from his wife. You are to return to Chiswick and hang about the neighborhood of Laburnum Cottage until one or the other comes out. If he leaves first, tackle him; if she leaves first, wait until she's out of sight, then knock at the door and get Kimbell alone. Bring him straight to me."

"What reason shall I give him?"

"Say that I'll make him a direct cash offer for an option on his process. Now streak off, and don't bungle the affair."

Meredith sped away. Later in the day, he returned with the inventor in tow, distinctly pleased and proud at

having carried out a diplomatic task so successfully.

Magnum put his test without waste of circumlocution. "Will you take one hundred pounds cash for a fortnight's option on your process?"

"What does the option mean?"

"That if at the end of the fortnight, I decide to buy, I pay you the five thousand pounds you ask and a royalty of one thousand pounds on every gramme of radium produced."

"Done!" answered Kimbell with unconcealed delight, and at once signed the necessary form of receipt.

"When you get home," said Magnum grimly, "tell your wife."

"Of course," returned the inventor. Then something in Magnum's look made him ask hurriedly: "Here, what's your game? Is this a trap?"

He fished the notes out of his pocket and pushed them back at Magnum. "I won't take them until I have consulted my wife!"

"I have your signed receipt for them," replied Magnum, refusing to take up the notes. "Better leave her to conduct the rest of the negotiations."

"I don't understand you, and that's flat!" shouted the angry Kimbell, and went off.

Magnum was now completely satisfied, from the inventor's demeanor, that he was no party to any trick or fraud that might center around the radium discovery.

Within an hour, Mrs. Kimbell was ringing up the scientist on the telephone. "There's some mistake about that option," said she. "Bert ought not to have taken your money."

"Exactly," returned Magnum. "But he has. And now, if you want to avoid a prosecution for criminal conspiracy, you'd better come to me here and make a clean breast of the affair."

"How dare you!"

"I do dare. Better come along and see me. It may save unpleasantness." And with that he rung off.

The Mrs. Kimbell who appeared at Magnum's office was an angrily defiant woman.

"What do you mean by threatening to prosecute for criminal conspiracy?" she demanded.

"I mean this: your husband is genuine enough, and there may possibly be something in his process. But why did you deliberately wreck his apparatus?"

"It was an accident!"

"An arranged accident!" snapped Magnum. "I know the explosion was intentional. I analyzed the handkerchief with which I wiped away the splashes on your dress. People don't keep a mixture of chlorate and strong sulphuric acid in a flask unless they intend to cause an explosion. . . . The inference is fraud. Now that I have your husband's receipt for my hundred pounds, I can prosecute him. I'll certainly do so, unless you make a clean breast of the affair."

"Here's your hundred pounds back!" She threw the notes on the desk.

"I refuse to take them."

For some moments Mrs. Kimbell stood eyeing the scientist defiantly.

"I want to know," said Magnum very slowly and deliberately, "why you planned a fraud on me—*me*, Magnum?"

"There was no fraud meant on you!"

"Ah—then you admit a fraud of some kind?"

"I never wanted to take your money, or Mr. Fennimore's either. Twice I stopped Bert from taking it."

"For some very good reason of your own. What was the reason?"

"I didn't want your money or Mr. Fennimore's at all," repeated Mrs. Kimbell obstinately.

"Then you were deliberately wasting our time—valuable time. Why?"

"Please take back the money," pleaded Mrs. Kimbell with a sudden change of front.

"Pleadings won't move me. The truth may. Try the truth. Otherwise, I shall certainly prosecute."

Her defiance had broken down before Magnum's implacable insistence. She sank into a chair.

"If I tell you the truth, will you promise not to prosecute Bert?"

"I make no promises. It depends on what you have to tell me."

"It was like this," she explained falteringly. "For years and years Bert has been inventing and inventing and

scarcely making enough money to keep us from hand to mouth. You've seen all the patents he's taken out?"

"Yes, yes."

"Most of them were unsalable; and as for the others, when he did sell them, he was done out of his profits by those City men. For the last twelve months Bert has been trying to find a process for making cheap radium, and he thought he'd found it. He took it to Mr. Hartley, and Mr. Hartley told him it was no use. Bert didn't believe it; he doesn't believe it yet; he thinks he has a gold mine."

"Yes, I summed up your husband as genuine enough," admitted Magnum.

"So I thought I'd try myself to get money for us. There's not much money in making real discoveries, but I fancied I saw a way to make it out of a sham discovery. I went in private to Mr. Hartley—"

"So he's at the bottom of this affair?" interrupted Magnum.

"Yes, he arranged it all. He promised me one thousand pounds if I could make a public stir about the new process and keep it going for two months. He told me how to approach Mr. Fennimore and the reporters, and wreck Bert's apparatus, and so on."

"The object being to juggle with the radium market?"

"Yes. People would get afraid, and sell their present stock of radium to him cheaply. In two months he could make a lot of money. . . . But I assure you on my word of honor that I didn't intend to take money, or let Bert take it, from Mr. Fennimore and yourself. You saw how I stopped him twice. That *would* have been fraud. And I assure you Bert knows nothing whatever of my arrangement with Mr. Hartley."

"I believe that," admitted Magnum. "He's not the man to be able to act a lie convincingly."

"Please don't prosecute Bert!" begged Mrs. Kimbell earnestly. "Here is your hundred pounds. If you *must* prosecute some one, take *me*!"

"Oh, run away!" answered the mollified Magnum, returning to her the inventor's signed paper. "I don't fight with women. Run away—and keep straight for the future."



The Corporal of the Port

The man from Florida is captured by Filipino insurgents, but he shows them a trick or two: a tremendously exciting story of army life in the Philippines, told by a man who knows whereof he writes.

B Y H A P S B U R G L I E B E

THE first sergeant walked heavily across the upstairs floor of the old Spanish Government building in which the enlisted men of Company "L" had their quarters, and halted at young Corporal Dicky Redding's blanket. Redding lay stretched out, peacefully sleeping; it was decidedly dull that afternoon in Romblon, and a quiet nap was surely no worse than the *beno* some of the other fellows were drinking as the only specific for half a day of ennui.

"Report to the captain, Redding," ordered Sergeant Wight, shaking the young "non-com's" whole body by one shoulder.

He repeated it—both by the words and the shaking. Redding sat up, staring blankly; it was such a prosaic and uncomfortable awakening from his dream of orange blossoms and night-blooming jessamine and sweetheart talk—for Dicky Redding had been back in good old Florida.

Once more the first sergeant repeated his order; then he went about other business. Redding rose, straightened his thatch of brown hair, put on his hat and his khaki blouse, and was soon making his way along the Calle de la Concepcion, Romblon's principal snake-

track of a street. He climbed the short ladder that led from the ground to the floor of the officer's quarters, which were in a fairly commodious house of *nipa* and bamboo, and raised his right hand to the rim of his hat in a quite soldierly salute to the commander of the company.

Captain Pollock was a Yankee from Maine. He was gruff and to the point, but by no means was he a hard man to serve. After eyeing Redding for a few seconds, he spoke; and as the words came, his soldierly attributes became so little in evidence that the corporal knew his sympathies were working.

"We've got to have a corporal of the port, Redding," he said. "We've chosen you."

The truth of the matter was that Dicky Redding had been given a corporalship upon his enlistment in the regiment, a green volunteer outfit, solely because he had been to a military school and knew the manual of arms perfectly. Now that they were in the Philippines, he seemed of all corporals the most unfit for marching and field service because of his youth and slight build.

Redding knew the captain's reason

for choosing him as corporal of the port. And, being in spite of his size and his youth a full-blooded American, of course Redding took the news very gloomily—while the company was out in the jungle, perhaps fighting its way to honors, *he* would be searching the few tubby native sailing vessels that called at the port, a life that promised about as much glory as a cottonfield on his father's plantation back in Florida!

Captain Pollock saw on Redding's face signs of disappointment.

"Remember that a good loser is better than a poor winner," he remarked consolingly. "Watch out for *beno* and arms—"

He went into lengthy detail. Half an hour later, Redding began with the best grace he could muster his duties at the water-front. A small hut of *nipa* and bamboo had been moved to a point convenient to the landing-place, a hut that had a doorway facing the bay and a window facing the west. The furnishings consisted of a shelf and a chair, both of which had been made of discarded potato crates. Redding sat down in the chair, and began to stare out across the shimmering waters, his mind naturally reverting to orange blossoms and night-blooming jessamine and sweetheart talk. He was discouraged, rather than homesick.

It was a very small island they were on, small and mountainous toward the center, and so far it had seemed most unimportant. The company had hiked over every square mile of it, never seeing the faintest sign of an insurgent. But Dicky Redding had never given up believing that some day the insurgents would materialize; and oh, it would be hard, hard to have to miss it!

Came two weeks of inactivity, and then the captain ordered a thorough scouring of the island—which might have been largely due to the fact that men in idleness seek to revel. Reveling in the Orient is not good for Americans, and the captain knew it. The scouring was to begin on the morrow.

It was late in the afternoon when the news reached the ears of the corporal of the port. The hut at the water-front suddenly changed into a coop; the

mingled odors of copra and *abaca* began to be like the scent of burning brimstone. Redding was absolutely certain that he was the most unlucky chap that ever slapped the face of old mother earth with a shoe-bottom.

"*Señor Cabo Chiquito!*" came a voice interrupting his musings.

"Little corporal," Redding translated in a whisper. He looked up. Before him stood a stockily built native, a Visayan, who was grinning amiably and thereby exposing two rows of betel-stained teeth; he was about half dressed, and the muscles of his brown-skinned arms and legs lumped out like knots in a wire cable.

"*Cabo Chiquito!*" the Visayan repeated, still grinning. He went on amicably: "You do not remember me? I am Bernabe Anaitillo."

Redding's disgruntled mien fell away. Bernabe was a native whom he had helped to drag from the clutches of a tropical fever.

"Sure—*si!*" he cried, and began to shake the brown hand of Bernabe Anaitillo. "I remember you now. I didn't recognize you at first because you look so much better than when you were sick." His Spanish was clear, and the Visayan understood perfectly.

Bernabe's face filled with the light of gratitude. "The little American is good," he said with some feeling. "I shall remember until I die. And let me say to you, *Cabo Chiquito*, this: Come here to-night, and watch until midnight—and come alone. There will be a sentry here; but he will not matter. And don't tell others about this. *Adios, amigo!*"

Bernabe smiled and darted away. Redding hurried from the hut, and began to look for the Visayan. He searched as many of the thatched houses as he could reach without going too far from his post, but all his efforts revealed no sign of Bernabe Anaitillo.

That the stockily built brown man was trying to do him a service he was absolutely sure. Perhaps, he told himself, Bernabe would cause a consignment of arms to be delivered into his hands that night. Then little Redding began to smile; for here was the prom-

ise of something unusual—and how he would laugh at the other non-coms, in the event fortune gave him something handsome!

Mess-call came, and before its last notes had died away the water-front sentry was posted. This latter procedure was supposed to be the signal that Redding's duties for the day were over. Redding left the water-front with the coming of the guard; but he did not go directly to supper: instead, he went straight to the dirty-white tent that served as a mess-hall for the commissioned officers.

Captain Pollock saw him and went to him. Redding told all he knew in regard to Bernabe Anaitillo the Visayan.

The company commander tugged thoughtfully at his mustache before he spoke. When he spoke, he said:

"I don't believe there's anything to it; however, go alone to the hut at the water-front, and stay until the midnight guard relief comes. The chances are," he added with a faint smile, "that the native means to present you with an *olla of bcno*."

Redding saluted and turned away. After he had eaten, he took up his rifle and hastened to his post. He spoke to the sentry; then he entered the hut and sat down to wait.

Two hours went by, and the bedtime call rang out on the bugle. Another hour passed, and the moonless sky became completely overcast with a blanket of clouds that presaged the approach of the rainy season. It was so dark that there seemed to be an opaque wall on every hand. The little wind that came was from the jungle and laden with strange, clammy odors. All was still except for the irregular tramp of the sentry and the gaggling croak, now and then, of an iguana. Redding began to grow impatient from the long and silent vigil.

And then he thought he heard the splash of an oar somewhere out on the bay.

He rose, and stole down to the edge of the lapping black water. He strained his eyes in the darkness, but he saw nothing whatever. Finally he muttered one little, bitter word, and retraced his

steps to the hut that served him as an office.

Five minutes later there came a voice: "*Cabo Chiquito?*" It was almost a whisper.

"Bernabe!" ejaculated Redding, in a smothered tone.

"You will soon be rewarded, *amigo mio!*" And Bernabe was gone.

Redding was on his feet and glaring hard toward the place where the window should be. His eagerness overcame his sense of discretion, and he uttered an exclamation aloud. The sentry heard it, and hastened up.

"Let's go down to the edge of the water and see what we can see," suggested the corporal, his voice shaking.

They went. They stood there for fifteen minutes, and nothing had happened. Redding grew irritable from his boyish impatience; he told his companion that he was going to get into one of the small outrigger dug-outs that lay near by, and make a little detour into the bay.

The sentry knew something of the sea. "Be careful," he warned. "The tide's going out, and it's so dark you may not be able to find your way back. And the breeze is from the landward."

Redding pushed one of the dug-outs clear, stepped into it, and took up a paddle. Soon the little craft was making fair speed toward the center of the bay. It was some two hundred yards from the shore when the explosion came.

There was a great, dull-red flash, and a roar that almost deafened every ear within a mile of it. Before the reverberations had been lost among the hills back of the town, Redding knew the truth—that the insurgents had made a desperate stroke by laying and firing a mine beneath the quarters building, and that Bernabe had wanted him to stay at the water-front in order that his life might be saved! And Redding knew that there was small possibility of any of his comrades living through such an explosion as that which he had just witnessed. There would be left alive of the whole post only the ten guards, two hospital men, two sick men,

the three commissioned officers, and himself.

Soon all became as still as death again. There was no light anywhere. Redding strove to return to shore and reconnoitre, but he had lost all sense of direction. After several hours of unavailing work at the paddle, he collapsed in the bottom of the *barote*, and went to sleep.

When the little corporal awoke, it was to find his frail craft taking the roll of the open sea. He rose stiffly, stood on his feet in the swaying dug-out with difficulty, and looked in every direction. A few miles to the southward lay the island he had recently quitted; west of him he saw the northern point of Tablas and the indistinct shape of barren Carabao; to the northward and toward the red disk of the rising sun there was nothing but the blue-black foam-flecked water. A feeling of utter loneliness settled down upon him. He sank wearily to a seat, and reached for the paddle—it was gone, and so was his rifle: he had left them lying across the sides of the *barote*, and the swaying of the sea had lost them! He seemed so infinitely small, now, on that vast stretch of restless waves.

Another hour passed; and a small schooner, one of the tubby, blunt-bowed, round-bottom class that carries copra and *abaca*, two-masted, dirty-sailed and weather-worn, bore down upon the little corporal. The latter strained his eyes in the attempt to distinguish what manner of crew the vessel carried. There was small chance of its being a white crew, he ruminated gloomily, for he judged—and correctly—that the schooner had come from Ugdagon, a small town across the island from Romblon. If—ah, there were two brown, bare-limbed men standing at the starboard rail! One of them saw the American; he raised a hand, bawled out a command in native jargon, and the course of the vessel was changed slightly that it might not run down the dug-out.

Two more minutes, and there came a voice that Redding recognized:

"Vivo el Cabo Chiquito!"

It was Bernabe Anaitillo, of course.

He was in command of the schooner, the *Isla de Tablas*.

Redding caught the end of a rope, followed it, and soon found himself standing on the copra-scented deck. About him were some twenty armed insurgents, all of whom were eyeing him curiously. Bernabe offered his hand to the American; the latter took it dazedly—and with little grace, for somehow he was beginning to hate Bernabe. And Redding now saw that Bernabe wore at his hip one of the regulation American army revolvers.

"It seems that I have again saved your life, *Cabo Chiquito!*" smiled Bernabe. "How did you happen to be adrift in a *barote?*"

Redding told him.

Bernabe lighted a cigarette—which to Redding smelled as though it were made of a mixture of catnip and cheese-cloth—and sneezed.

"There need be no secrets between us," he said slowly. "We are going to Romblon, there to meet a party of thirty insurgents who are crossing the island on foot. We will then number more than fifty, and it will be no hard matter to take as prisoners the few of your countrymen who are left. Believe me, *amigo mio*, it is no easy matter to take lives as we have just done in Romblon. I am sorry, *Cabo Chiquito!* But it is war—what right have the Americans to rule us? The same right"—with a sneer—"that the British had to rule the Americans long ago! We are fighting you just as you fought the British."

Ominous growlings were coming from the other insurgents. Bernabe noted it, and sent them away for the safety of the young white man who had saved him from a fever.

"Bernabe," said Redding, "if all your countrymen were as well educated as you, the Philippines would be left to self-government."

He turned on his heel, went to the extreme forward part of the deck, and there stood staring ahead. He saw that the vessel would soon be entering the wide mouth of the Bay of Romblon.

And as he watched, he thought deeply. Bernabe was a great deal like some others had been—in that he underesti-

mated Redding's importance in the world, of course. Bernabe had made no move toward binding him or imprisoning him; either he was regarded harmless, else Bernabe had great confidence in his gratitude for having picked him up. Redding decided that it was the former, and it hurt. He frowned hard, clamped his teeth together, and uttered a bitter word to the wind. He would show Bernabe. The Visayan had twice saved his life; but—it was war.

So Redding began earnestly to try to concoct some plan by which he might get the upper hand of the insurgents. If he could succeed in doing this, he ruminated, the Americans left alive in Romblon could gain a victory over the thirty footsore men from Ugdagon. He knew that anything he did would have to be done quickly: the wind was driving them rapidly under a wing-and-wing canvas, and it would require less than two hours for the vessel to reach port.

"One against twenty!" he whispered to the breeze. "But," he added hopefully, "I'm an American, and they—well, they aint!" He continued after a moment: "My old dad used to tell me that I had a million dollars' worth of brains, but was too big an idiot to use 'em. Now I'm going to use 'em!"

Plan after plan suggested itself; but all were laid aside as extremely impracticable. He must have something better than trying to steal Bernabe's revolver and holding at bay the whole party; he must have something better than to try to get all the insurgents in the hold on some pretext—

The Filipinos began to crowd about him, all of them looking intently ahead. Redding saw that the schooner would soon be passing between two lines of reefs, named *El Tiburion* and *El Cuchillo*, already plainly visible.

Bernabe Anatillo, the best sailor aboard, took the helm rather than slacken the speed of the vessel.

Redding noted that all save Bernabe were on the forward part of the deck. An idea of some magnitude came to him. It seemed rather desperate; but it appeared to be his only chance to aid the Americans left alive on the island.

He strolled, apparently without aim, to a point behind Bernabe, who paid little attention to him. When the schooner was within a hundred feet of the narrow space between the reefs, the young corporal seized Bernabe's revolver with a movement as of lightning, and struck its owner unconscious before he could utter a cry of alarm. Then Redding took the helm, bore hard to the starboard, and ran the *Isla de Tablas* straight on the reef known as *El Tiburion!*

The round-bottomed craft lifted her blunt bows high, listed rapidly to the port, and then dashed her masts into the foaming brine. The Filipinos uttered cries of fear, and dropped their rifles in their plunge to the waves. The little schooner sank out of sight with a gurgling of great air bubbles from her hold and a grating screech from her riven hull.

Redding found himself swimming desperately and choking with salt water. In his right hand he still retained the revolver he had taken from the Visayan. Bernabe—he wondered if Bernabe had sunk. He began to look around him. Bernabe's limp body was coming up close by him. A sudden rush of feeling at his heart urged him to save the Visayan; he seized him by his stiff, black hair, trod water, and drew the brown face clear. After a moment, the commander of the insurgent party came to and began immediately to swear. Then he struck out for himself.

It was almost half a mile to the nearest shore. Those who had been aboard the *Isla de Tablas* began to swim for it, all of them in terror of the many sharks which were known to infest those waters. Redding managed to remove his shoes that he might not be handicapped in the race; then he took the revolver between his teeth and set himself to catch up with the natives before they reached the strip of shimmering white beach beyond.

And he accomplished it, although it was a hard struggle for a landsman. He crawled out of the water not fifty feet behind the fastest of the natives. So nearly exhausted were they that all sat down to rest.

When the little American had drawn a dozen good breaths, he rose, the revolver gripped tightly in his right hand. The Filipinos also went to their feet, their dripping faces determined and hard. Bernabe was in the lead, his aspect most ferocious, as they made a rush for the corporal.

Redding raised the revolver, crying thunderously: "*alto—alto!*"

The natives halted. The hole in the barrel of the white man's gun was too threatening; the pair of eyes beyond the sights were too terrible. They knew, doubtless, that they could overpower him; but several lives would be lost at best, and not one of them wanted to die.

"Take him!" Bernabe cried vehemently. "Take him!"

"Better not try it!" said Redding, his blue eyes flashing fire.

Bernabe addressed the American in a voice filled with reproof: "It is for this that I have twice saved the life of *El Cabo Chiquito!*"

"In your own words," replied Redding, "'It is war.'"

He took a step toward the twenty-one brown-skinned men. They began to fall back, their faces ashen.

"On to Romblon," ordered Redding, and they obeyed him!

But the little corporal was not yet congratulating himself. The thirty insurgents from Ugdagon might have observed the sinking of the schooner from the hills—and they might come to the rescue of their countrymen. After some reflection, Redding told himself that his chances were rather slim, after all; so he decided that he would prepare for the future by allowing Bernabe Anatile to go free just before they reached the outskirts of the town. Besides, war or no war, he admitted that he owed Bernabe a great deal.

A jutting bit of land had hidden the town from Redding's sight. When Redding and his prisoners had rounded this, the wreck of the quarters building lay in plain view before their eyes—and it was a most complete wreck, a mass of twisted and splintered corrugated iron and wood. Apparently, the town was entirely deserted.

But when Redding had marched his captives to the square in the center of Romblon, he saw that the town was not by any means deserted. On the square were pitched the shelter-tents of the company; and at least seventy of his comrades were standing or sitting here and there, all of them alive and uninjured!

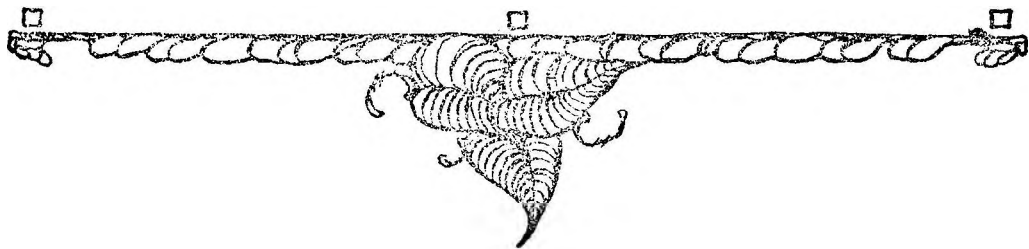
The first sergeant sent up a cheer. The others took it up, and the hills rang with it. The commissioned officers hastened to see what it was all about.

Redding turned his prisoners over to the guard, who told him that the company had bagged the insurgents from Ugdagon an hour before. Then the weary but exuberant young American asked to know how the company had escaped annihilation.

"After a bit of thinking," Captain Pollock explained, "I suspected an attack. So I had all the men steal from their quarters after 'Taps' had blown; we came here and knelt in the grass, and waited. Now let's have your story."

Redding told it. He finished with a request to be relieved of his job as corporal of the port—a request that was readily granted. Then the little corporal, *El Cabo Chiquito*, had a hearty meal and went to his blanket for a much needed rest.

He soon fell asleep, of course, and—of course—dreamed of orange blossoms and night-blooming jessamine and sweetheart talk.



Philip, Junior

An appealing little true-to-life glimpse of Christmas time in prison, wherein some of the pleasanter moments as well as the darker aspects of a convict's life are tellingly depicted.



By RICHARD POST

COUNT bell rang at four o'clock those short December days. At four-ten, the keepers, relieved by the night guards, were through the front gate, buttoning great coats and turning up coat collars as they faced the north wind that swept across the lowlands separating the prison from the town. It was the twenty-fourth of December, and the keepers, eagerly anticipating Christmas Eve at home with their families, were not disposed to take the chance of receiving an extra duty order at the last moment.

At four-fifteen, the deputy warden sent the last reported man to his cell and slammed his desk resoundingly.

"I wouldn't punish a dog to-night," he exclaimed, some heat in his voice as his clerk, an inmate, entered the office. "I can't see why the guards report men for trifling offenses on Christmas Eve," he continued, stepping gingerly between the piled up boxes of cigars and the crates of oranges that were strewn about the floor.

Robert Stedman, his clerk, smiled. During two years, as only an intelligent servant can, he had come to know the man in the blue uniform whose word was law within those gray walls. Unobtrusively, when he could, the Deputy did the kind thing. This Stedman knew well.

Mr. Collingswood paused with his hand on the door-knob. "Hello there!"

he exclaimed. "Cote's on the bench. Suppose he wants to catch me before I go."

As his eyes took in the situation, Stedman hurriedly left the office. He waited in the rotunda, leaning against the railing of the basement stairs. The Deputy's conferences were always unmarked by the presence of a third person.

Yet the clerk, as well as if he had been present, knew for what Philip Cote, the hospital cook, was pleading. The latter's white face, the teeth that continually gnawed his lower lip, the eyes that for a week had refused to smile and only flashed intermittently with stabs of pain, all expressed a sorrow too poignant for words. Philip was asking for a three days' temporary parole so that he could go to his boy, who was dying.

The granting of the request was all but impossible, Stedman believed. The clerk knew that however they might bestir themselves, the Deputy and the Warden could do little. The sole power lay in the Governor, and he, far away, lacked the personal contact necessary to single out a deserving case from the many others.

Stedman briefly reviewed the facts. Cote's nine-year-old, motherless boy lay in a Chicago hospital, ill with pneumonia. A letter from the nurse, received that twenty-fourth of December, had

stated that Philip Jr. could not live over two or three days at the most. Cote was pleading to go to him.

Cote loved his boy. He was immensely proud of the little fellow. Of this there was no doubt. As Stedman watched the pantomime through the glass, he recalled with sharp regret the many occasions on which he had chopped short the hospital cook's recital of his boy's wonders. Philip Jr. was Philip Sr.'s constant theme, to which every conversation, no matter how irrelevant, finally wandered home. Pictures! Why, he had a dresser covered with them. Cote had become a better man, thinking of that boy.

The officers, trusting Philip as they did, entertained no doubt that, given a temporary parole on honor to go to his son's bedside, he would return punctual to the minute at the expiration of the three days. They knew him. Ah, that was the rub! The Governor did not, and Cote's record militated against him.

Temporary paroles were granted, yes, on rare occasions, at the solicitation of friends, to exceptional prisoners with good records, both on the inside and the outside. But not to such as Cote. His record was the obstacle—he was a third timer.

That was what his record said. On the other hand, Cote's friends claimed that his offenses had been light ones, merely the product of an unfavorable environment. Never before had he enjoyed a real chance. Now, with his devotion to his boy to strengthen his resolution, officers and inmates were firm in the conviction that he would walk straight.

A parole denied him on his one-to-five-year sentence, the hospital cook had remained year after year, until now his maximum sentence, less good time, was nearly up. On its completion, he would receive a full discharge. This was the supreme tragedy; in three months Philip Cote would walk out absolutely free and yet he couldn't go to his dying boy that Christmas Eve.

Of all this Stedman thought as he watched the man in gray plead with the man in blue. Knowing the Deputy as he did, the clerk was certain that Mr.

Collingswood needed no urging. If it lay in his power, he would grant the request.

Finally the door opened, and Philip, the lassitude of utter despair in his halting steps, started across the rotunda to the hospital door.

"Wait a moment, Cote," the deep voice interrupted with a kindly boom. "I told you we couldn't, and yet of course there's always a chance, though in your case it's a mighty slim one. I'll talk to the Warden as I go out, and if he thinks there's any show at all, I'll let you know."

The hospital cook turned quickly at the Deputy's words and hurried to the bench. Many times he clasped and unclasped his hands as he awaited the result of the interview.

Five minutes later, Mr. Collingswood appeared before the gate, his broad face smiling. Cote's feet flew up the steps to the barred wicket. When he returned his face had momentarily lost its tenseness.

"Stedman," he called in at the door, "the Deputy says the Warden will telephone the Governor for me in the morning. Perhaps there's a chance. Perhaps—" His enthusiasm was dying away as he realized how slight it was. "I'll try to hope to-night, anyway," he concluded.

The captain of the night guard, jangling his keys warningly, was waiting to unlock the gate for the hospital cook, and the latter, without further remark, returned to the hospital. The captain then crossed the rotunda, pausing in the doorway of the Deputy Warden's office.

"Too bad about Cote," he remarked sympathetically.

"Mr. Collingswood told him the Warden was going to call the capitol in the morning," Stedman replied, between bites of his supper. "There's an outside chance the Governor might let Phil go."

"Oh, rot!" the captain ejaculated, pushing back an orange box the better to seat himself. "You know that's all bunk. They're doing what they can for Cote—quite right too. He's a good man here, but you know he's got a bad record. There isn't a show. I remember—"

Two trusties at the yard gate, de-

manding admittance, obliged the captain at this point to cut short his story.

Stedman cleared away his tin dishes and then, with the help of Morris, the librarian's clerk, and Barclay, the runner, started to unbox the oranges. Over a hundred inmates had made purchases of a dozen or two apiece, and these had to be delivered first. Then the contents of the two remaining boxes, mixed with two bunches of bananas, were thrown into large baskets for the general distribution. All in readiness, his two assistants carrying a basket, Stedman, four boxes of cigars under his arm, started on his tour of the wards. Rawlins, the chaplain's clerk, and Reade, of the hallmaster's office, were busy with their own distribution. There was much to be done before bell-time at eight-thirty.

For just as everywhere else, even in prison, it was Christmas Eve. Behind grated doors the men waited for a little token of cheer, some sign that the great world behind the gray walls had not entirely forgotten. The hallmaster's and the chaplain's clerks distributed presents from friends: fruit, books, pictures, postal-cards, cell-furnishings, cigars—all of which had successfully run the gamut of official scrutiny. Stealing noiselessly in their "sneaks" past the cells of men who had none to send them Christmas cheer, Reade and Rawlins brought gifts to those with friends.

Stedman and his assistants, on the contrary, visited all, giving two cigars apiece to the men above twenty-one who who were permitted to smoke, or an orange and banana to the minors not allowed by the rules to use tobacco. Poor cheer, maybe; but to friendless men, happiness beyond reckoning.

After it was all over, the last cigar delivered, the last cell door opened by an obliging guard to admit of a fat orange, the clerks gathered in the Deputy's office to talk over their plans for the morrow. Each man tried to smile, but with none was it a very brave effort. For these were University graduates, men who had known real nights before Christmas. Into each clerk's mind, unbidden, crept the thought of Christmas Eves before blazing hearth-logs, his wife, bright-eyed, radiant in her young,

fresh beauty, beside him on the rug. Before them stockings hung, bulging in a dozen places, while all around overflowing gifts were piled. Upstairs, children dreamed of the morning.

Then he would straighten himself slowly in his chair and remember. Yes, it was Christmas Eve, but he was in prison.

These were the privileged, the trustees, whose punishment, not apparently so severe, was in reality a thousand-fold worse. On the morrow they would wake behind barred doors. But that wasn't the worst, that wasn't half the worst—it was the thought of the ones waiting outside, the unutterable things that they had read between the lines from brave wives and uncomprehending, pitifully questioning children, the past week. That was the hardest part.

"We all have our nerve, I see," Morris remarked, after the silence had lasted several minutes. "I'm glad of that. Though I don't mind confessing that I find it pretty tough."

Stedman looked at him, his glance full of sympathy. He knew that a year ago, Morris, a bank teller, had been one of the honored men of his little town. Now—that was better not said on Christmas Eve night.

"I understand," he answered, his voice low. "It's hard enough on me, who have been through it twice before, but it's harder on you—the first time. Why, you're scarcely more than *fish*—haven't spent a Christmas in prison!" He joked with assumed bravado.

"There's no use of reminiscences to-night," cut in Rawlins sharply. "I imagine none of us have anything very cheerful to think about, but as Morris says, we're men, not children; we have nerve. Regrets don't go very far, and as just now we can't make things any better, let's forget just as much as is humanly possible. Reade, what of the morrow? What are the plans for the elaborate dinner which I understand will precede the Havanas that the Deputy allowed us to buy?"

The tension relaxed; the half-dozen office men fell to discussing the preparations for the banquet on Christmas afternoon. Invited by the two inmate doctors, with the consent of the prison

physician, the rotunda trustees had secured the approval of the deputy warden to their plans, which included a course dinner, oysters and chicken, finished off with better cigars than the rules generally allowed.

"It's too bad about Cote, though," Reade concluded. "If he goes to his boy, we'll be up in the air; and if he doesn't, why I'm afraid he'll be so much all in that there'll be nothing doing in the astronomical department."

"Don't worry about Cote," Stedman answered quickly. "He's game—Phil is. He'll be there with the goods whatever happens. If he should go, which of course we all fervently pray he may, everything will be ready before he leaves; trust old Cote for that. And if he doesn't, if he's half dead from anxiety and grief, why you'll never know it from the cats he serves up. Phil Cote's game all the way through."

It was nearing nine-thirty, and, Christmas Eve though it was, the trustees of the rotunda, like the other inmates before them, must take the count and go to their cells. Not that they thought anything about it. It had become a habit at nine-thirty. And they were tired, from rising at six-twenty, and the long, arduous day that had intervened. They were tired—due to sleep soundly—though it was Christmas Eve and church-bells would ring outside.

All but Cote. In the hospital, the beds were thrown together in large rooms. There were no bars, none visible, anyway, but the unseen ones were ever present that night. Wearily the imprisoned man counted the days, then dropped the reckoning in despair. Only ninety-one remained, and he had put in over thirteen hundred. Only ninety-one and yet he could not go to his boy.

At four o'clock the guard on his rounds finally found Philip sleeping, the covers scattered as he had tossed them in his restless turnings. Gently Kennedy drew the blankets about Cote's throat. He knew the story and finished his inspection on tiptoe.

Thus it was that Christmas came to the prison.

Notwithstanding the confidence in Phil's nerve which he had displayed the

night before, Stedman felt worried at ten o'clock that morning, when the Warden in person, his tall, soldierly form outlined against the bars, called Cote to the gate. In the first shrinking of Philip's thin figure, in the suddenly stooped shoulders, the Deputy Clerk read the answer. Without speaking to his friends in the rotunda, walking as if in a dream, Cote returned to his post in the hospital. Philip, Jr., was dying and he could not go to him.

The morning passed without incident. Outside, the day was bitterly bleak, real winter with snow deep on the level and piled in drifts along the roadways. The wind still blew sharp and keen from the northwest, wailing in a crescendo of mournful music about the cell blocks, which like the spokes of some great wheel radiated from the rotunda.

Inside all was in keeping. Men of wealth, as wealth goes in prison, those who had cigars and much good tobacco, smoked all day—others as long as their stock lasted. The steward furnished an excellent dinner at noon; then at two, count completed, the bell rang and the keepers, deputy warden and hallmaster went home to a belated dinner. Only the assistant hallmaster, Mr. Black, in the rotunda, and the four guards in the wards, were left on duty Christmas afternoon.

The holiday, as all holidays, had been a busy one for the rotunda men. In the morning there were belated letters and presents to be delivered. It was necessary for Stedman to hunt up the farmers and kitchen men, who, coming in late at night, he had missed the evening before. Papers and magazines had to be distributed, the more thoroughly because it was Christmas and the men in the cells would need the solace of the printed page that long afternoon and evening. But with the ringing of the bell all this was over, the duties of the rotunda men performed.

Then ensued a wait, long it seemed, until at three-thirty, Fredricks, the hospital nurse, rang the bell on the door. Smiling broadly Mr. Black pulled out his key and led the way to the hospital entrance. Now was the time for the rotunda men to enjoy Christmas—if enjoy it they could.

The two doctors were already at their places, and without waiting for invitation their guests appropriated chairs at the long table. As they entered, Cote was bending over the stove, bringing the chicken from the oven. His smile was steady, a perfunctory greeting, similar, in its entire disconnection with his personality, to the attentions he was bestowing on the menu itself.

The excellence of the dinner, which would have been considered a good one anywhere, was, of course, multiplied many times by the circumstances in which it was eaten. Chicken and oysters to men whose diet had been boiled beef or salt pork for weeks; rolls with butter, plenty of butter; fruit salad, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, pickles, apples, oranges, bananas—all these were indeed in contrast to ordinary days. Mince pie and nutcake were but a prelude to ice-cream. It was a quarter to five when cigars were lighted and chairs finally pushed back from the table.

As Cote made his rounds, refilling each cup with black coffee, Stedman rose to his feet, throwing a wry glance at the liquid. "I suppose as there is nothing else in stock more exhilarating, this will have to do," he began with a smile. "I take it the idea is for us to drink our toasts in this coffee. Is that correct, Cote?" He hoped his question would bring a response.

The hospital cook only nodded. His part in the celebration was but that of a well-trained servant. He could about as well have been an automaton.

"The custom is, I believe," Stedman continued, from his position of seniority assuming the part of master of ceremonies, "first of all to drink a toast to the absent ones, those of our circle who, having been fortunate enough to secure paroles during the past year, have stayed out—" As he concluded, the deputy's clerk rested his arm affectionately on Rawlins' shoulder, to show that no sting lurked in his words. For the chaplain's clerk had been paroled during the year and had come back.

After the general laugh had subsided, the toast was drunk—all stand-

ing. It pleased the little group to imagine that Pierce, Davis, and Brighton, who had left them during the twelve months and were making good, thought of them that afternoon, in the joy of Christmas in the great, glad world outside, remembering the year when they themselves had occupied seats around the banquet table behind the bars.

Stedman rose again. "Here's to you, Reade," he said. "I believe your short time's up some time in June. May you make it. We wish it sincerely."

The toast was drunk, with what, outside, would have been cheers, for Reade was popular.

"And to you, Barclay," Stedman next proposed, addressing the young runner, who blushed deep, livid red as the rotunda men drank to him in turn.

"And next—" the deputy's clerk hesitated, embarrassed. In a flash Morris, pushing him into his chair, took the toastmaster's place.

"Here's to our modest deputy's clerk, who's due in December, three full years. May he be sitting down to a different Christmas dinner a year from to-day."

Still Cote made his rounds with the coffee. Suddenly Morris, who was still standing, happened to think that some one had been missed.

"Why, we've forgotten Philip Cote!" the librarian's clerk exclaimed. "He's first of all, with full time up—no parole business to bother with, on the twenty-sixth of March. Isn't that correct dope, Reade?"

The hallmaster's clerk, thus appealed to, whose reputation on accuracy of dates was a prison proverb, stated that the day was March twenty-fifth.

"One day less. Good! Here's to Philip Cote," Morris continued, waving his cup in what he intended to be a graceful semi-circle.

"No, boys; not that," Stedman interrupted hastily, springing to his feet and pushing the librarian's clerk back into his chair. "Don't you understand?"

The hospital cook stood motionless, his hands filled with cups, in the center of the floor. At Stedman's words he crossed to a service table and de-

posited his burden carefully, for in prison habit is stronger than any emotion. Then he walked slowly back to where his friends sat. For the first time that afternoon he spoke in other than monosyllables.

"Bob understands. I thank you, but I don't want a toast this afternoon. Not even good wishes. I can't—I can't hardly think."

With quick intuition Stedman placed a chair before Philip, and the next instant, his arms brushing away the dishes, Cote's head fell forward upon the tablecloth.

He was crying, a grown man crying.

The circle was silent. No man knew what to say. Sorrow and grief and the tortures of mental anguish, all were commonplaces in prison. Alleviation there was none, except as rough jokes might jolt brooding out of its groove. But this was different, as Cote was different. There was no question about the genuineness of his sorrow. Humor did not fit in here. Their high tribute was silence.

It was in this moment of soundlessness, when even the shrieking of the wind outside seemed to dull into a wailing grief that the click of an opening door was heard from far down the passageway. Evidently it was five o'clock, and the captain of the night guard, who had relieved the assistant hallmaster, was coming perfunctorily to inspect the feast. The rotunda men had rather counted on him. The captain was their friend, and at another moment would have been welcomed as one of their party.

But as the steps came nearer and their tread, light and quickly moving, could be separated from the moan of the wind outside, Stedman started up.

"The Captain walks more heavily," he muttered, taking a step toward the door. Cote raised his white face and dully gazed about him.

The next instant every man was on his feet. It was not the captain at all; there in the doorway, great-coat, muffler, storm-cap, all whited with snow, was the prison chaplain. His cheeks were aglow with the cold, his blue eyes dancing, their sparkle in friendly rivalry with the sheen of the enveloping frost.

"Merry Christmas!" he cried, and his tone meant it.

"Especially to you, Cote," the Chaplain continued, as, not waiting to brush the snow from his coat, he advanced toward Philip, a letter in his hand. "It's about the boy—he's better, much better—going to pull through all right now. I called at the post-office this afternoon, and found this for you among the other mail. When I read it, I thought I'd better bring it right up—sort of special delivery."

He smiled again, so kindly; and in the smile, to the rotunda men, he seemed to be the spirit of all their good Christmases past in happier days.

This time the cheers were genuine, unrestrained by prison rules. Each man knew what the trip had cost the Chaplain—a Christmas dinner exchanged for a two-mile struggle with the blizzard.

"I thought you'd all be pleased," the Chaplain explained, blushing awkwardly like a boy. "Why, look at Cote!"

Philip stood erect, his face radiant, a young man once more. No words were required to express his gratitude as his eyes ran over the two hurriedly written pages.

"Chaplain, I'm sure you'll join us in a toast," Stedman said in the next moment. "It's coffee, though it may be cold."

The cup shook in his trembling fingers as he held it aloft.

"Now let us all drink to Philip Cote, Philip Cote, Jr., and the twenty-fifth of next March!"



Free Lances in Diplomacy

"Secret Instructions from the Czar"—a brilliant narrative of diplomatic intrigue wherein Lord Trevor and Nan find themselves pitted against an American soldier of fortune and an Austrian secret service agent, in a struggle for the possession of an uniquely important document.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

HE SAT alone at one of the side tables in the great dining-room of the Hotel Cecil, on the Embankment—a man in conventional evening dress, whose clean-cut features and indefinable air of world experience and distinction attracted the attention of several guests at neighboring tables. He had the manner of a man accustomed to any surroundings in which he might be placed—an unmistakable air of breeding seasoned with a life of adventure and the habit of command. The majority of those who commented upon him, *sotto voce*, set him down as an army officer, out of uniform—a veteran campaigner, though he seemed in his early forties. And there were some who came really nearer the mark in the belief that he was a soldier of fortune. But all were puzzled when a gentleman known to be of the Austro-Germanic diplomatic corps left his table at the other side of the room and quietly seated himself with the stranger as if they were acquaintances of long standing.

"Well, Fessenden—I suppose one might have expected to run across you in any particular spot on the earth's surface—but isn't London a bit civilized for a man who specializes in revolutions and nerve-wrecking adventures?"

The stranger looked the other over with a frankly quizzical smile, noting the evidently increasing paunch, the puffiness under the eyes and other evidences of gastronomic influence in his manner of living.

"Hmph!" he observed. "Schriener—you seem to have become the sort of spider who sits in the center of his web and induces all things to come to him—instead of chasing after what you want, as you did in the old days. This sort of thing"—waving his hand, slightly, to indicate the luxurious dining-room and its aristocratic assemblage—"is an old story, and a stale one, to you. But it doesn't come my way frequently enough to dull the relish. A little over three weeks ago, I was standing against a 'dobe wall in a little Mexican pueblo, with a file of opera-bouffe soldiers who

had very business-like rifles in front of me. They fired at six of us—but I dropped in the nick of time, and they left me there for dead. Worked my arms loose, presently, put one of the other poor devils out of his misery—a couple of rifle-balls had paralyzed without killing him, and he might have lain there for days before they came back to cut his throat—and managed to reach Vera Cruz just as the *Corcovada* was sailing. Now, I'm sitting here with civilized people around me—the orchestra has just played Dvorak's 'Humoresque' most beautifully and is about to render two other favorite selections of mine. I've had the first decent meal in three months—after a bath and some really clean clothes. I'm going on from here to the house of one of the most popular hostesses in England—I've taken chambers in the Albany for a month or so—and I'm going to forget for a while some of the things I've seen, recently."

"Made a fortune over there, I suppose?"

"M-well—no. You wouldn't call it that—nobody would, in these days. And one unlucky investment would wipe it out, I suppose. Lots of men could live the rest of their lives on my present income—if their banks were solvent. But I figure I've enough to live about as I please for a few years, or months, until I get restless, again. Then I may lose what I've got, or make more. It's all a good deal of a gamble—like living."

The Austrian sat for a while tapping a spoon lightly against an empty wine-glass, apparently buried in thought, and, their curiosity having given place, by this time, to more personal interests, the guests at neighboring tables paid no further attention to them. It had been once said of Schriener that when his perniciously active brain halted five minutes from its everlasting weaving of intrigue—political or social—he would cease to live. So, with no preconceived plans as to making use of Fessenden, it had struck him as a vaguely favorable coincidence when he saw the American across the room, and he'd gone over to chat with him. Here was a typical soldier of fortune—a free-lance in every phase of his existence—bound

to no one, or no country, by any ties or obligations whatsoever. And, if a tempting enough bait were dangled before him, there was probably no personal risk at which he would balk in considering an adventure which promised excitement with a chance of reasonable gain among its possibilities. The Teutonic coalition could use such a man, could *always* use one. And they were exceedingly difficult to find when needed—one of Fessenden's caliber, at least.

"Fessenden, how do these English over here strike you? They're a bit cocky, you know, about the superiority of their institutions over those of any other country—particularly, their diplomatic service. Now you're a man who has seen a good deal of the world: what is your estimate of the average Englishman? Do you consider that he makes good on any of his claims—or is it mostly bluster and brag? Eh?"

The adventurer lighted a long cigar with a very deliberate air of quiet enjoyment. "Oh, I don't know," he commented. "I've not happened across the bragging sort very frequently—at least, in words. Their cockiness is more an unexpressed assumption that all of their ways and institutions really are the best—and that no sensible person thinks of disputing it. Of course, there is the middle-class of Englishman who is always running down your country and cities to your face, telling you frankly that all your methods are quite wrong and that things should be done as they are in England. But he does that because he really believes it himself—not from any disposition to be impertinent. And your Londoner of the upper classes is generally one of the most courteous, considerate men you'd meet anywhere—that is, if *your* manners are the ones under discussion. But as to whether their customs always *are* the best, of course that's open to discussion. In many ways, the English make good—stolidly, phlegmatically, along the lines of common horse sense. When it gets to anything imaginative—well, they flounder out of their depth entirely, and rather glad of it. In regard to diplomacy, I'd say they knew a lot more about that sort of thing than

we do in the States—the secret, polished, clean-cut sort of diplomacy, I mean, which defeats political plans without your knowing exactly what happened to them. We're gradually building up a diplomatic service, but it will take us a long time to learn that we mustn't invariably say what we think—straight from the shoulder. It's funny—that the best nation of poker-players in the world should be the worst diplomats, as a whole."

"Then—er—you wouldn't pit your American brains, say, against an Englishman of equal intelligence and experience—at anything in the diplomatic game?"

"Oh, now you're getting down to personalities. I'll pit my brain and intelligence against those of any man on God's green earth, at any old game he chooses to play—if there's sufficient object in it!"

It was not said boastfully. The man was merely expressing belief in himself—and his belief was based upon half a lifetime of experiences that would have made cat's-meat of the average man, a dozen times over. But there was a light of crafty satisfaction in Schriener's half-closed eyes as he grasped the full significance of the remark.

"Object — eh? Hmph! . . . I wonder what you'd consider sufficient object? . . . Eh, *mein Freund?*"

"Oh, I suppose that would be pretty hard to define. Not money alone, at all events. There should be a good-sized monetary stake, of course—just to lend interest to the game. But I imagine it more likely to be something which appealed to me as the class of stunt the average man would never dare tackle—would consider impossible at the start. That sort of thing interests me—no getting around it. But for the next few months, I mean to enjoy myself here in London—quietly, sociably, like a civilized being. I want to get the first raw impression of that 'dobe wall in the Mexican pueblo—with what lay at the foot of it—shoved far enough back in my mind so that I don't see it every night before I get to sleep. I want to stand around in the drawing-rooms a while among

handsome women in evening dress—and talk with them, listen to real music, see a few good plays, ride a good horse along Rotten Row in the early morning—sit in a window at the 'Travelers' and go leisurely through a copy of the *Times*, damp from the press—and cut the pages myself with the sharpest blade of my pocket-knife. Then, I want to motor down to Epsom and see the Derby run. I want to shoot over some of the Scotch moors, and motor back through the west of England and Wales—and Devon and Cornwall. We've a great and glorious country across the pond, Schriener—but when it comes to loafing, comfortably—to getting all there is out of life—there's no place in the world that quite touches England—between April and November."

"Hmph! . . . T'ere iss some truth in t'at! Myself, I almost agree with you. But—suppose, now—suppose you could do all t'e things which you haf said—live here in London, or the Shires, at your ease—and yet—? Eh? . . . You catch me. . . . eh?"

"Lif as you please, as you have describe'—and yet do something for some people I meinself work for, sometimes—something w'ich has the spice of danger—something w'ich the average man would surely say was impossible—eh? You would have the object to play the game. You would have a thousand pounds—five thousand pounds—for your expenses, say—while you were playing. Undt mebbe five thousand more, if you manage to pull it off. Eh?"

"Sounds rather interesting—as far as you've got. What's the other side of it?"

"T'e other side? . . . I do not understand."

"Oh, yes you do. Don't talk like a fool, Schriener! . . . I'm no infant. Suppose I not only don't get what I go after—but get caught smelling around it? What happens—to me?"

"Ah! . . . That, I could not say. Perhaps you get shot. Perhaps you go to Pentonville—mebbe, to St. Helena or Ascension. Perhaps you may be considered just a harmless lunatic—dropped from your clubs, not received

any more at the best houses—who can say?"

"And perhaps—if I don't go to St. Helena or Ascension—I may find myself one of the most popular men in London, because certain people imagine I know a darned sight more than I really do and are afraid to drop me until they find out? Really, you know, I like that view of it better. Suppose you put your cards on the table, Schriener? I'll not betray you, but I wont go into any blind game without a few cards up my sleeve. And while we're about it, we wont talk in any such piffing figures as single thousands. We'll just start at ten thousand, Sterling, or there'll be nothing doing. Shucks! . . . I can pick up two or three thousand at *chemin-de-fer* in Brooks', most any night, if I really set my mind on it! Come on, now—loosen up. What do you want me to do—and what are the possibilities?"

"Ever hear of the mysterious Englishman known, or referred to, as the Diplomatic Free-Lance?"

"Oh yes. He's occasionally featured in even the 'plate-matter' of second-rate Mexican journals in the smaller pueblos. In fact, the Latin races seem to have a more unbounded respect for him than any of the Teutons—but I s'pose that's because they're born with the spirit of intrigue, and because he's scored so frequently at German expense. Well, what about him?"

"He would be your principal adversary, I imagine. Ever hear much about the Russian count, Radolypin?"

"Nothing more than the general impression that he has the Czar's confidence to a considerable extent—sort of an Imperial adviser, as it were."

"Well, he's all of t'at—undt a great deal more. Radolypin is the man who gifs orders to the Russian foreign secretary as to what Russia's foreign policy really iss. He tells the Czar t'e pawns he must move on t'e chess-poard—so t'at Russia shall always haf t'e advantage at t'e end of t'e game. He iss the diplomat so smooth, so simple minded, that no one believes he iss great in any way. No one believes he has the power. Well, the fact iss not even surmised, as yet, among the Continental

diplomatic corps, because—though Englandt and Russia are toget'er in t'e *Triple Entente*—Russia is supposed to have certain policies which she would not share or confide with Englandt. On account of the Indian-Siberian question. But, in view of the Balkan situation undt t'e interminable complications which may arise from it threatening the peace of Europe, it iss to-day advisable that t'e Czar and King Chorge haf some kind of a secret understanding which must not be known to any of the other countries—not even France, the other member of der *Triple Entente*—"

"Hmph! . . . And you think this Count Radolypin may be sent to England with secret powers to conclude such an understanding?"

"A moment! . . . Something else, you shouldt first understand. With all his influence, there are certain authorizations which even Radolypin probably could not obtain from the Czar—because Nicholas himself might risk assassination at the hands of his own court and the Grand Dukes by giving them. No one can figure with any probability upon how far the Czar dares or would go, with Englandt. But whatever authority Radolypin brings to London, there is one point almost certain. His bare word, his personal assurance, will not be enough to settle anything really binding between the two monarchs or their governments. He was here last month—being given private interviews with His Majesty and the Premier—and, if I am right in my suspicions, he left with a pretty definite idea of about how far each government would go. On this visit—he is now stopping in this hotel, and is at the Russian embassy every morning—he undoubtedly expects to conclude the negotiations. And that is something impossible for him to do without some written authorization over the Czar's signature. It will be undoubtedly in cipher understood by the two monarchs, their premiers and Radolypin only—and the translation may even be in some obscure or difficult language, like Sanskrit—or Arabic. It is said that Nicholas and George are proficient in both. But there will be something definite, though in obscure terms, in writing."

"And it's that bit of writing you'd like to obtain—eh? You don't want *much*, do you, Schriener! After I'd risked my life and liberty on this little every-day job of yours—and had succeeded in getting away with some piece of tissue or India paper covered with what I supposed to be Sanskrit or Arabic—I'd feel just a little bit flat to find it merely a laundry bill—or perhaps a quotation from Firdusi, sent him by some admiring lady-friend. Wouldn't I—eh? Still, it ought to be an easier job in London than in St. Petersburg. And I don't exactly see where your Diplomatic Free Lance is likely to make any trouble in the game—"

"Wait a bit! . . . You will, before I get through. If England could know the exact amount of authority Radolypin has—how far Nicholas would be willing to go, if forced to it—it would naturally put them in control of the situation. They'd know how far they could bluff. Incidentally, they would get a hint as to what ultimate object may be in the Czar's mind. In fact—if my surmises concerning Radolypin are correct, and I think they've occurred to few others if any—England would give fully as much as Germany to obtain possession of that little scrap of paper—and would go to just as great lengths as we would to keep Germany from getting it."

"Hmph—suppose they offer me a better figure than you do."

"Oh, that doesn't alarm me, Herr Fessenden. I'll give you the surface reasons first—and then one other. You and I have been through some rather trying experiences together—and are almost friends, if not quite. You are known pretty much around the world as a man of your word—for or against a person or a proposition. If you say you'll help a person, you can be depended upon to do so. If you say you'll get him—to use one of the American expressions—you're pretty sure to do that also. There is nothing mean or small about you. After receiving my confidence, you would not take money from my enemies to betray it, and you care more for the game than the money, always. But if those reasons are not enough—you'd be much more sure of

losing your life by playing against than with me. Because the English may never even suspect what you're after, and will not be watching you until they do—while I would know what you were doing and could have you shot or stabbed or poisoned a dozen times before you had a chance to do it. You'd have too much on your mind to spend much time looking for that paper, I assure you."

"Do you know, Schriener, I wouldn't take just that tone, if I were you! I didn't ask for your confidence, and I've made you no promises. You're right on one point—I wouldn't go after you in any underhand way. But if you think I care a tommy-rap for your threats, or if you even repeat that remark again, I'll give you frank and open notice that I'll go over to the other side—and put it up to you to stop me if you can! Really, you know—I don't take that sort of thing from any man. And I'd go into the game to beat you, without any monetary consideration at all. Shucks! . . . You can't bluff me, in your tame little civilized European way! I've seen too much of the real thing for that!"

The Austrian saw that he'd made a serious blunder and hastened to rectify it in his smooth, dangerously quiet, diplomatic way: "*Mein Freund*—I apologize. Not'ing in t'e way of a threat wass intended—nodt for one moment. You are at perfect liberty to go to the English with your proposition if you wish. If the thick-headed fools should haf sense enough to surmise what Radolypin must haf brought wit' him, this time—and should imachine *we* suspected it, also, they wouldt know very well t'at we would do our tamdest to get t'at paper—shust so much as t'ey. Perhaps they might offer you some money to get it for them—perhaps nodt. T'ey would probably think t'ey could do it better t'emselves. Certainly, they would never pay you the ten thousand pounds you speak of so easily. T'at is quite a sum, Fessenden."

"Possibly—but that paper, in your hands, would be worth ten times as much. Well—the proposition sounds kind o' interesting. I wont say I'll bother with it—and I wont say I'll not.

Reckon I'll sleep on the proposition and see how it looks to me in the morning. If I get your measly paper, I'll put it in a safe place, somewhere, and then tell you what it'll cost you. Funny point to me is why you don't go after it yourself."

"I am known to be connected with the Austrian diplomatic service, in some capacity not generally understood—and it iss safe to assume that my actions are pretty closely watched by the British foreign office—also, the people with whom I am seen the most frequently. You, on the other hand, are quite evidently an American and a stranger in London. You would not be suspected—for some time at least. But—we naturally have others whom I shall have looking for that paper."

In any large hotel dining-room, there are usually pillars at regular intervals, and tables either against or near them in such positions that a person seated at one side would be visible to anyone within a certain radius from that side of the post—while another person opposite, against the post, would be completely hidden from the same point of view. Facing across the room from his side table, Fessenden had been greatly attracted by the profile of a lady who sat by the second pillar down the aisle. She was a brunette with clear skin, beautiful brown eyes and soft, very dark brown hair. Once or twice, he caught her glance, as she looked at him, casually, and it seemed as if the attraction were mutual—for she met his look calmly, even appraisingly, as if trying to form an opinion as to his real personality. But after settling this in her mind, she apparently paid no further attention to him—and the curiosity he might have had as to her companion didn't occur to him until, walking out to the smoking lounge with Schriener, the couple passed him on the way to their limousine at the porte-cochère. Noticing the way he paused and looked after them, Schriener remarked:

"Beautiful woman, iss she nodt? The toast of the Continent! You haf met Her Ladyship—and Lord Trevor—yess?"

"Oh-h-h—that's the famous Lord Trevor, is it! I've seen their pictures in

the papers, of course—reckon most everyone has, but I've noticed 'em particularly because he seems to remind me of some other acquaintance I've known—somewhere—can't place it, exactly."

"Oh, you probably ran across his pictures or saw him when he was only a baronet, some years ago—and his face stuck in your memory—yess? Pecause t'e man iss known all aroundt the worldt, I t'ink. And his beautiful Lady, also. She wass his ward, you know. Her father wass his closest friend when Trevor was a Deputy Commissioner in India, years ago—and the girl was left in his charge when her father was killed in Kabul as an officer of the Indian Segret Service. They have been in the society gazettes of every country for years."

"Oh, I made up my mind that was where I got my idea of a resemblance—because his face is too striking to be mistaken for anyone's else. Make a deuced handsome couple, don't they? Well—got an appointment somewhere? I'll stay here and finish my cigar before I go on to that reception. Suppose I can find you at your club—or leave word for you there? So long—see you later."

Now Schriener's proposition concerning Count Radolypin and his supposed cipher instructions was scarcely more than a nebulous idea in Fessenden's mind, as yet—something to be acted upon or discarded when he should have slept on it, breakfasted and considered it in various lights. But the Fates took a hand in the game in a most unexpected way, and found him as instantaneously quick to grasp an opportunity as he had ever been, at various times and in many different countries—though the rapidity with which events played into his hands left him a little dazed until he had a chance to pause and consider "where he was at."

It just happened that, when Schriener left him, he walked leisurely across to the hotel bureau to ask for possible mail, and while the clerk was looking in the box with his room-number, a messenger came up to the window with a note for Count Radolypin. While the messenger waited, a page was sent

into the smoking lounge and presently returned with the Count himself, who signed for the letter—touching elbows with Fessenden, so that the American had an excellent opportunity to study him at close range. Then, as luck would have it, a Londoner whom he knew very well came out of the dining-room and approached them both—introducing him to Radolypin in a rather flattering manner as a man who had lived a most adventurous life in many lands. Personal gossip suggested anecdotes. Fessenden was a thrilling conversationalist, in a quiet and perfectly unconscious way, when some one hit upon the only effectual way of drawing him out—and the Count was thoroughly interested in a very few moments. The three chatted for an hour within ear-shot of the hotel-clerk—who naturally supposed them old friends, having missed the preliminary introduction while at the telephone—and they drove off to one of the best-known London houses in the Londoner's motor-car.

In the morning, Fessenden again met the Count near the hotel desk, when the same clerk was on duty—and casually noticed the number of Radolypin's letter-box, and room. Half an hour later, he came upon the Count busy with letters in the writing-room, and when that gentleman went out, fished a few crumpled sheets with bits of his hand-writing out of the waste-basket.

Fessenden's brain was by this time working with lightning rapidity. Putting himself in the other man's place, he reasoned that, if he had come to London with an exceedingly valuable and dangerous paper, the place where it would stand absolutely the least chance of theft or disturbance would be in a sealed envelope in the hotel safe. He had no positive knowledge, of course, that any such envelope in the safe bearing the Count's name existed—and, if there happened to be none, he took the chance of putting himself in a very suspicious light. But after carefully considering all of the risks, he sat down at the writing-table and, after one or two experiments, wrote upon one of the hotel envelopes an exact fac-simile of the Count's sprawling and self-appreciative signature: "Radolypin."

With the guileless expression of a child, he stepped out of the lift, ten minutes later, in full view of the desk—and sauntered across to the window, with the envelope held gingerly between his thumb and finger. Holding it up before the window, he calmly asked the clerk:

"Er—excuse me for troubling you, Mr. Hobbs. Have you an envelope like this in the safe? Er—I was with the Count in his room, just now—his valet is shaving him, you know—and—er—"

The clerk flattered himself that he held down his job because he was a sufficiently experienced hotel man to understand what a guest was trying to get at without putting him to the trouble of explaining every detail; so, after one glance at the familiar signature, he smilingly opened the safe behind him, swung open the door of an inner compartment, and took from a pigeon-hole an envelope apparently identical with the one Fessenden held.

"This must be the one he wishes, Mr. Fessenden. It is the only one there, sir. Yes, sir—thank you, Sir."

Fessenden nodded pleasantly, stuffed the two envelopes carelessly in the side pocket of his morning coat—stopped, about ten feet away, to light a cigar, walked over to the lift apparently unconscious of the regulation against smoking in it—and was taken up to the floor upon which his own room was situated. Directly after breakfast, he had overheard Radolypin giving his valet leave of absence until evening, and the Count had left half an hour later for the Russian embassy. He had mentioned lunching at St. James' Club with a friend and going out to a house in Kew for dinner, that evening, so it seemed to Fessenden rather improbable that he would ask for his envelope before the next day at the earliest. There had been no one else beside the clerk in the bureau, and no one within ear-shot—no witness to the handing over of the letter; in fact, it had not occurred to the clerk even to ask for a receipt, particularly, as no value had been placed upon the envelope's contents by the Count.

Fessenden knew that if it came to a Scotland Yard charge, the clerk's con-

tion would seem a weak one. He was a guest in good standing at the hotel, who could produce bankers and acquaintances to vouch for him. Being a supposedly wealthy American, in London to enjoy himself—and in position to clearly prove that he had met the Count upon the previous evening for the first time—there would seem a total lack of object in his stealing an envelope of Radolypin's from the safe, or even a possibility of his knowing that such a thing existed in that particular place. Altogether, it seemed to him that he had little to fear in the way of consequences. But, as he had spoken to several people in the hotel about the chambers he was taking in the Albany, he thought it just as well to move over there with his luggage that afternoon.

When he had done so, and had locked his strong oak door against all intrusion, he sat down in his most comfortable chair—he had spent nearly a week furnishing the two rooms and bath, rather luxuriously, to suit himself—and calmly ripped open Radolypin's envelope. Fessenden was an honest and open pirate. Upon the rare occasions when he did anything technically criminal, he did it as a matter of course, with no regrets and no consideration of consequences. With the letter still intact, he might have returned it to the Russian in a dozen different ways and remained innocent of any charge which might be brought against him in connection with it. But, with the ruthlessly violated envelope lying upon his table, and the thin sheet of India paper covered with hieroglyphics in his hand, he had crossed a Rubicon and burned his bridges.

As nearly as he could judge, the writing was in Arabic or some Oriental language which closely resembled it. If the paper were anything but the one so greatly desired by the Vienna and Berlin *Auswärtiges Amts*, he could not understand why a Russian of Radolypin's standing should have it in his possession at all. In fact, so sure was he that he actually had in his hands a document worth fifty thousand dollars—or a death warrant—that he leaned his head back on the padded cushions and laughed softly to himself.

"Schriener frankly admitted that being 'caught with the goods' in this little matter meant transportation to St. Helena or Ascension at the very least! He insinuated that the slightest suspicion of 'double-crossing' on my part would keep me with my hand on a gun every minute of the day and night—with excellent chances of getting wiped out! His putting me on the job was an admission that he didn't know how to go about it himself. And when I bluffed about ten thousand pounds or nothing, he never turned a hair! And here, just by fool luck, I grab what looks like an opportunity—use my wits for ten or fifteen minutes—and actually get away with it! Oh—Lord! Either I'm doped, dreaming—or else things are coming my way in chunks! Let's see now—mustn't get too cocky over it, or else I'll come an awful cropper. Serve me damned well right, too. Now suppose Radolypin discovered his loss to-night or to-morrow—or the day after—and traces it to me, as he's pretty likely to do? I can skip across the Channel to-night—and be in Vienna by the time Schriener can join me there—but I'd be on his ground—in his power. Why pay me my ten thousand, when he could have me put away somewhere and get it for nothing. Might go to Paris—or out to Tonkin on a French boat—and cable Schriener where he could get the paper after he'd come across with the cash. Wouldn't be safe in the States—English extradition would catch me there.

"Suppose I stay right here in London—go back to the Cecil in the morning as if nothing had happened, and breakfast with Radolypin? Make the charge seem all the more ridiculous. At the worst, it would mean temporary espionage—probably a search of these rooms by Scotland Yard. Can't take a safe deposit vault; they'd be on to that, and it would look suspicious—no—no, that wouldn't do at all. Well—that means I'll have to take a chance and hide it in these rooms somewhere—somewhere—so—ridiculously open and exposed that no one short of a born lunatic would ever think of looking for it—eh? Then—let 'em arrest me if they like. They can't prove a damned thing!

. . . Bound to let me go after a few days—on the police charge, at least—and if the secret service chaps catch me, they're welcome. Reckon I can stay in the game as long as they can. Thunder—what a joke! What—a—fool—joke—on the whole lot of 'em!"

Had Fessenden trusted his memory for faces a little more, been just a trifle more sure that Lord Trevor's resemblance to some man he had formerly known was something more of a coincidence than recollection of his pictures in the public prints, he would have bent his energies upon thwarting a far more dangerous antagonist than either Scotland Yard or the Germanic *Auswärtiges Amt*.

As Lord and Lady Trevor stepped into their limousine at the portecochère, he said to her in a low tone:

"Notice the tall, fine-looking man who was standing over near the Bureau, talking with Schriener, of Vienna, as we came out of the dining-room, Nan?"

"Rather! I had been watching him from where we sat, for half an hour or so. He was dining alone, at first—Schriener was at the other side of the room, and crossed over to his table as soon as he noticed him. They sat there for quite a while after the coffee was served—talking over something. As nearly as I could judge, Schriener first sounded him in what he meant to be a careless way, then appeared to be putting up some sort of a proposition to him. I could see the man get a little more interested—see the calculating look in Schriener's half-closed eyes. That other man is no fool, I think. He seemed to be sizing our friend up—and coming pretty near the mark, too. But Schriener's proposition interested him in spite of that. I saw his eyes light up as he considered it."

"Hmph! Nan, dear, I fawncy I'd best take out this Fedora hat from under the seat, and the other top-coat—put on 'Trevelyan's' mustache—an' let you drop me at Trafalgar Square. I'll go back to the Cecil at once! You saw enough to explain the half of it—the rest, is this: That other chap is Roger Fessenden—gun-runner, adventurer,

revolutionist, explorer, soldier-of-fortune. One of the coolest, luckiest, nerviest men this world has ever produced. He's made a dozen fortunes—lost them, made others—led forlorn hopes an' come out alive—established at least two governm'ts I know of. I knew him in Washington, an' on the Pacific Coast, fairly well. He thought he remembered my face—but I fawncy was fooled by the pictures the papers have printed of me, everywhere—an' a few inquiries as to my position, here, would throw him off the track entirely. Lawst I heard of him, he was with Felix Diaz at Vera Cruz. Then it was reported he'd been stood up against a wall in Orizaba, an' shot.

"Well, here he is—apparently in funds—evidently stayin' in London to enjoy himself. But—here's the point which int'rests me. That chap, Schriener, is no fool. He's really more brains than any of that lot over there except the Chancellor. An' if I'm not greatly mistaken, he's figured out the sort of authorization Radolypin must have with him here, along pretty much the same lines that we have. There's no question whatever in my mind that Radolypin must have brought with him some definite authorization from both Nicholas an' the Cabinet as to how far he may go if he has to. Now Schriener dare not openly attempt to get any paper in Radolypin's possession; he's far too closely watched. There's none of the Austrian or German agents at present in Lon'on whom he'd like to trust with so momentous a matter as this. But Fessenden, whom he appears to know quite well, would be just the sort of dare-devil—scrupulously honest adventurer—to carry out a commission of that sort, successfully—for a price. An' you may be quite sure that Schriener would agree to any ord'n'ry price while he was lightin' a cigarette—an' make little objection to a pretty stiff one. I know Fessenden. He's the luck of the devil, for one thing—an' he doesn't know what fear is. Faith—I believe I'm wastin' time! I really cawn't get back to the Cecil any too quickly. Let Sabub Ali run you back to Park Lane at once, an' send Abdool to me."

Ten minutes later, a fine-looking American whom several acquaintances recognized as a Mr. Arthur Trevelyan—who lived on a large estate just south of Dartmoor, in Devon—walked into the lobby of the Cecil. He spoke to one or two, purchased half a dozen of his favorite brand from the cigar-stand—and stood talking with a couple of fellow club-men near the door leading to the smoking lounge at the moment Fessenden was introduced to Count Radolypin.

In perhaps half an hour, a handsome, olive-complexioned man with black hair and military mustache—whom no one would have taken for an Afghan until they heard some one address him as Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan—came quietly into the hotel, bowed to one or two men he knew and was passing Trevelyan on his way to the smoking lounge when that gentleman reached out a detaining hand. It was done with such an accidental appearance that no one would have dreamed the meeting had been pre-arranged, or that the soldierly-appearing American, Trevelyan, and the famous Lord Trevor were one and the same person. Before Fessenden even thought of taking a cautionary glance around the lobby to see who might possibly be observing him, he was under an espionage compared to which the surveillance of Scotland Yard was a kindergarten game of hide-and-seek.

In the morning, Sir Abdool dropped in to breakfast with a visiting Oriental potentate when Fessenden came down in the lift. During the night, a King's messenger from Downing Street had been more or less constantly in the hall outside the American's room, in the uniform of a hotel employee. When Radolypin and Fessenden were in the writing-room after breakfast, Sir Abdool was standing just outside the door. When Fessenden was practicing the Russian's signature, the Afghan sauntered in to a neighboring desk, wrote a short note—and went out again—glancing quickly over the American's shoulder as he went. When Fessenden went up to his room for the brief ten minutes, the King's Messenger—this time, as a hotel guest—rode up with

him in the lift—and came down again when he did. Fessenden thought no one in the lobby was near enough to notice what he was doing when he showed the envelope to the clerk and received Radolypin's envelope from the safe—but one of the sub-managers had a desk behind the safe, and Sir Abdool, who knew him well, was standing by it when the clerk opened the safe door. Through the crack, he saw the name on the envelope—and Fessenden's face through the glass window.

It was not Trevor's intention to interfere with the American until positive that he had secured the paper. But when Fessenden drove away in a taxi with his luggage, to the Albany, there was no longer any reasonable doubt in his or Sir Abdool's mind as to the actual possessor of the document at that moment. They followed the taxi with a private car which was capable of doing eighty miles an hour if necessary—and Abdool went up to look at a vacant apartment upon the same floor as Fessenden's when that gentleman locked his door. In the meantime, knowing the American would be under constant surveillance, Lord Trevor returned to his Park Lane mansion, where Her Ladyship, Sir Edward Wray and Sir Francis Lammerford were waiting for him. He explained the situation to them, as he was convinced it must be—graphically, and briefly.

"You say Abdool is positive the name on that envelope was Radolypin—and that it was handed to Fessenden through the window?"

"Well, the crack under the hinge of that safe-door is an inch an' a half wide—an' it's not eighteen inches from the pigeon-hole where the envelope was. Of course, he could only see the lower part of Fessenden's face an' necktie, through the window, but he's positive about the tie an' the stick-pin. Besides—why was Fessenden practicin' on Radolypin's name in the writin'-room? Eh? Perfect circumstantial evidence all through."

"But—Fessenden went up in the lift again, to the floor where Radolypin's suite is situated. How do you know he wasn't taking that envelope up to the Count in a perfectly innocent way?"

"Because the Count had been out of the hotel for a good hour, at the time."

"Very good. Admit all you infer and suspect. How can you be certain that Fessenden actually got what he was after—or, at least, got anything of vital int'rest to us?"

"Ah! . . . There, I'm not so sure. I'm quite positive that Fessenden thinks he has it—in fact, is so well satisfied that he cleared out, bag an' baggage, to the rooms he's been fittin' up at the Albany."

"Even so, his bein' sure isn't quite enough to warrant our searchin' his rooms with Scotland Yard inspectors! Suppose, after we'd put a pers'nal indignity of that sort upon him, we find nothin' at all—or an envelope with a letter of credit, or banker's draft—which would be the most likely thing for Radolypin to put in that safe? Where does that place us—eh?"

Trevor laughed, boyishly—squared his shoulders, and lighted one of his long, brown cigars. "If you're goin' to quibble about the chawnces we're takin', Wray," he protested, "I fawncy Lammy an' I will begin to laugh. Lord, man! . . . Have we done a single thing in the pawst five years that the govern'm't would dare acknowledge? I'm quite well aware of the fact that, in this game of ours, I'm a pirate—a burglar, thug, anything you please. I've broken so many laws, in so many diff'rent ways, that the idea has ceased to have any terrors for me. If I'm caught I take my medicine—naturally—that's all a part of the game."

"But—dash it all, old chap! . . . You occupy altogether too great—too prominent an' valuable a position to jeopardize it by adventures of this sort!"

"Look here, Ned, I'm not jeopardizin' quite so much as you'd like to have me believe in this particular case, at least—though I'll admit I do so in others. We've got Fessenden foul on a charge of obtainin' somethin' under false pretences. He's in no position to make much of a howl over anythin' we do to him—an' the peace of Europe may hang on the possession of a little scrap of paper which we've reason to

suspect is now in his possession. Now, if you'll lend me Creighton for a few hours, I've a Scotland Yard inspector's uniform that'll fit him—an' he'll be plenty good enough to hold the bobbies around the door of the Albany, assistin' him very respectfully while Lammy an' I induce the manager of the place to let us in with his pass-key if Fessenden wont open his door, an' search the place awfter we've arrested him. Come along, Lammy—get into other clothes, an' change your face a bit! We should get back there before our friend has a chawnce to go out—an' take the paper with him!"

In about half an hour, three men walked quietly up to the door of the Albany—one of them beckoning in a peculiar way to the police bobby across the street. When he came lumbering across to them, a single glance at the metal badge inside the shorter man's coat was sufficient to make him their most respectful servant. Giving him a description of Fessenden's height, coloring and general appearance, they went quietly up the stairs and were met on the second floor by a bearded and dark-complexioned gentleman whom few would have suspected of being Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan.

Preferring to avoid bringing the manager into the matter if possible, they walked quietly along to Fessenden's suite and knocked at his door. As they had thought he possibly might do, he opened it, inquiringly, as if he had nothing to fear from anyone.

"Eh? . . . Was it you who knocked, gentlemen? Must be some mistake, I reckon—I don't recognize any of you."

He started to close the heavy oak door again, but Trevor shoved his foot between it and the casing. "What's this! . . . What the devil do you mean! Take your foot out of my door! Oh, you wont, eh? . . . Wait a second!"

An ugly blue automatic pistol flashed up from his hip into their faces. "In this country," pursued Fessenden, "I've understood that a man's house or apartment is his castle—which he has a legal right to defend. So you'll take yourselves off and allow me to close my

door—or take the consequences! I'm not fooling, you know—I'll pump this right into you in less than half a minute. Hike, now—*pronto!*"

Trevor's voice was low—quiet—but like a north wind in winter—chilling. "Fessenden—we are Scotland Yard inspectors. You are under arrest, and the building is surrounded. You'll have a fair hearing, of course—but a pretty serious charge has been laid against you. Commence firing if you wish. Others will take our place. It will then be a hanging matter instead of a term in Portland or Dartmoor. Now if you will hand over that pistol and open your door, we will treat you as considerately as possible."

Feeling certain that nothing could be proved against him and that submission to the law was a strong card in his game, Fessenden swung open his door without a moment's hesitation, and handed Trevor his weapon.

"You'll have to show me your authority, gentlemen. Ah! . . . That's sufficient. I'm a law-abiding person—and have done nothing for which you have any right to arrest me. If you insist upon it, I shall push an investigation through the American ambassador. Really, I advise you—if I am to be temporarily confined anywhere—to make it some private place of detention not generally known as a police building, so the newspapers don't get hold of it. If you insist upon taking me to Scotland Yard, I shall push this matter to the limit and break some of you before I'm through!"

Trevor appeared to hesitate—though there was a chuckle in his whisper as he said, in Lammerford's ear: "The fool is playing right into our hands—take him to one of the strong-rooms in the basement of the Foreign Office—in a closed taxi, so he won't know where he is going.

"That's a bit irregular, sir."—Trevor then proceeded aloud, "but I'm willing to be as considerate as possible. We will confine you in such a building pending your preliminary examination, and the inspector in charge will be responsible for your property, here, after it has been searched."

The American was taken down the

stairs by Creighton and Sir Abdool. They called a taxi at the door and got into it as if they were merely three friends starting off upon their own affairs. But at the next corner, the shades were pulled down—and in Downing Street, they hurried their prisoner into the building and down stairs to the strong-room in the basement so rapidly that he could form no estimate of his whereabouts. Then he was systematically searched by an Afghan who had practiced the operation until it was a fine art with him—but the search was fruitless, as they had anticipated.

Meanwhile, in his rooms at the Albany, Trevor and Lammerford had gone through everything as if with a fine-tooth comb—examining even the stuffing in the furniture—but the shadows warned them of approaching evening before they sat looking at each other in exasperation, completely baffled. Just then, there came a light knock at the door—and when they opened it, Her Ladyship—heavily veiled—walked in.

"Close the door, George—and lock it. I've been waiting hours to hear from you, and I couldn't stand it any longer. You've not found anything? . . . No! . . . I can see that by your faces. Perhaps a woman's intuition may discover something you've overlooked. I've been trying to puzzle it out the whole afternoon, while I waited—after you telephoned that you two were alone here in the rooms. Abdool says there was absolutely nothing even in the lining of the man's clothes and shoes. So it follows that it must be in this room or in the taxi which brought him here just before lunch. Well, it's not in the taxi—that's certain. It's here! . . . Now—let me sit in this big chair, and look around—and think. That man, from your description, George, is clever enough to choose a hiding place so ridiculously open that one would stumble over it a dozen times without thinking of examining it more than casually. What is there of that description? This chair? . . . I see you've ripped the upholstery. The foot-stool? . . . That, also—you've ripped. Coal-scuttle—clock—hollow brass tops

of the andirons? I see you've been at them all. Tobacco jar? Yes, I see the shreds of tobacco, where you dumped it on the table. Humidor? . . . H-m-m—You certainly tumbled all the cigars out, and even took out the wet blotting-paper behind the perforated screen. H-m-m—could a cigar be split—and pasted together again?"

"Oh Lord, yes—but we examined every one. Every leaf is intact—no sign of a slit in any of 'em. We even ripped open every cigarette in the tin box—an' they're Dimitrinos, at a guinea the hundred!"

"Wait a bit, Lammy! Possibly you stopped just a hair's breadth short of discovery. Suppose a person had a pen-knife with a razor-edge on it? Couldn't he cut down into the 'lighting end' of a cigar—lift out a pencil of the filler—and stick back just a little end cork of it?"

"By Jove, Nan! . . . That could be done—with a very sharp knife which had a long and narrow blade. And these are all of them fat-ended cigars—cheroot ends. Let's examine the ends, under the reading-lamp, here. By Jove, you know! . . . Here's one that looks a bit mussed—oh, I say! Let me dig it out! By gad, Nan—you've

jolly well struck it, don't you know! Here's the paper—an' it's in Arabic! Holy cats! . . . Read this, will you, George! Nicholas has actually signed it himself—and it gives England the key to his Balkan policy for two or three years at least. Nan—you're the cleverest of us all! The one thing we overlooked was the ends of those cigars!"

About ten, that evening—when darkness prevented him from seeing what the building looked like outside, Fessenden was taken from Downing Street in a closed taxicab and driven to the Albany, where he was released with the explanation that the real criminal had been found and that Scotland Yard regretted the temporary inconvenience to which he had been subjected. When locked in his room once more, he noted the evidences of thorough search and smilingly opened the humidor on the table. Apparently, the cigars were in the order in which he had left them—but upon a piece of Japan paper was written:

The envelope, with its enclosure, has been returned to its place in the safe at the Hotel Cecil. Accept the thanks of a diplomatic free lance for borrowing it—temporarily.

O n e o f t h e S p a r r o w s

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

JONES, we'll call him. That will do for a name as well as any other. We might let him go simply as "he" or "him" according to whether he was subjective or objective at the moment, grammatically speaking. But since there will probably be other he's and him's in this yarn, it might be confusing. We might get him mixed up with some of the others; so we'll let him pass as

Jones. And, as long as we are naming him, we may as well give him a front one. Let's see—Bill will perhaps be all right. Bill is easy to write and it is quite as good a designator as the next one. Here he is then: Bill Jones.

Having named him without the aid of godfathers, sponsors or the like, let's have him enter. Paradoxically enough, his entrance begins with an exit. The

door of the Anchorage swings open, letting out into the October night the hum of many chattering voices, the smell of stale tobacco and staler malt, and Bill Jones.

Bill doesn't come as quietly as the voices or the malt or tobacco smells. He comes with a grunt and a curse and a waving of bony arms and legs. Since he hasn't wings—Bill Jones with wings!—he lands with a *whoof* on the curb, half in the gutter, half out of it: a very uncomfortable landing; if you don't believe it, you are at liberty any time to try it.

In the doorway of the Anchorage stands the why and wherefore of Bill's recent aviatory experiment—a large man in a long apron which at some time in its experience may have been white, one of the bartenders at the Anchorage.

You see, Bill had surreptitiously gobbled three drinks out of a bottle while the bartender's back was turned; but Bill had forgotten the mirror along the back of the bar which soullessly disclosed his perfidy. Therefore, the outer darkness for him. But even as he groans with the pain of the curb-edge in the small of his back, he grins at the remembrance of those three purloined and unpaid-for drinks. They can't get those back, anyway.

You will find any quantity of Bill Joneses along the waterfront. They toil not, neither do they spin. To be sure they are not at all like Solomon in all his glory, but they "get by" somehow.

There was no very particular sense in letting a curb-stone chew into a perfectly good back. Probably from that reason as much as any other, Bill got up. Having purloined drinks at several other places besides the Anchorage that evening, he was rather wobbly. Indeed, the first thing he did when he got up was to fall over the curb-stone from which he had arisen. This necessitated his getting up all over. But he didn't complain. Bill was quite used to patience in the matter of getting up. He was thankful he could get up at all, and let it go at that.

It was cold for November. The sky was overcast. A few stray flakes of the first snow were sifting down. A few flakes of snow are always valuable in

a yarn of this kind. Hans Christian Andersen didn't despise them, so why should we?

Certain marked and not altogether novel sensations warned Bill Jones that he'd better find a place to sleep and find it at once—that, if he did not do so, he would sleep wherever he happened to be, and a little privacy is always a desirable thing.

Wherefore, Bill wobbled along like a very badly handled craft making very heavy weather of it against very persistent head-winds. He wobbled, and beat and stumbled and lurched around the nearest corner which seemed to offer some degree of darkness and seclusion. It happened to be the corner of the big warehouse at the end of the dock.

Now it was God's own mercy that Bill Jones did not walk straight off the end of that wharf into the water of the harbor and so into oblivion. Bill's guardian angel or his lucky star or his rabbit-foot or his horseshoe, whatever it was, didn't let Bill do things that way. Instead, he found a gang-plank leading to the deck of the tubby old freighter, *Mohican*, moored close to the shoreward end of the dock. He had not the least idea where he was, save that it was dark and that the lee of the forward house offered him shelter from the rather biting wind which swept in from the bay.

Bill laid him down in the lee of that forward house; perhaps it would be more accurate to say he dropped him down, or even he collapsed him down. At any rate, he stretched himself out in the gangway, drew his knees as close to his chin as possible and began to snore, unmindful of the bitter Mrs. Hemans wind or the Hans Christian Andersen snowflakes.

At half-past eleven that night the *Mohican* slipped her moorings and put to sea. She sailed at that unholy hour because by so doing she could utilize a high tide and get out over the bar in the South Passage, and by taking the South Passage she would be able to save eight miles and several tons of coal. They figure things carefully on the Consolidated Lines. She was headed for Savannah with six thousand seven hundred and forty-one cases of shoes—and Bill Jones.

Bill did not know he was going. He did not know it until they were wallowing across the Shoals in the bleak half-light which comes just before dawn of such dreary, overcast mornings. He was awakened by several things—a roar from the whistle, a splash of briny water which came over the bow and spattered his face as the *Mohican* stuck her nose into a particularly heavy sea, a growl of a near-by voice and an ungentle boot toe somewhere beneath the tails of his frayed and tattered coat.

"Get up, you lazy swab! Call yerself a seaman?" the voice inquired.

Bill saw one of the *Mohican's* officers standing over him. He sat up; he realized where he was even if he didn't realize how he had got there. He scrambled up with alacrity. He thanked his lucky stars the officer hadn't recognized him as a stowaway—an involuntary stowaway, it is true, but a stowaway none the less. They had quite a reputation for dealing with stowaways on the Consolidated Lines. So much of a one that they seldom found any stowaways aboard any craft on the line now.

Bill scrambled forward. He made a great pretense of doing something useful at the port rail. The officer was satisfied. He poked aft. Bill looked around him.

It was still spitting snow; the wind came in gusty flaws. It bit to the marrow and set the teeth to chattering. The whistle was groaning away at regular intervals, and to windward a screaming siren rose and fell, rose and fell. Bill knew it for the signal on Magatauk Island. Thus much he had oriented himself, when there came a wild whoop from the man on look-out in the bow.

Out of the darkness—the grim snowy darkness close ahead—came a flash of a red port light. Then as if by magic, as if she had risen silently from the sea, came the masts, the sails, the rigging of a big four-masted schooner.

There were hoarse cries from her deck—one loud-voiced, clearly articulated oath.

Bells jangled in the *Mohican's* engine-room. There were wild yells from the two men in her wheel-house. Bill braced himself.

There was a shock that sent him headlong to the deck, a crunching, a splintering, a grinding. Perceptibly he felt the freighter's bow lift. Then it settled.

He jumped to his feet. Those masts were heeled far over to starboard. There was a popping of rigging like so many cracks of rifle-fire. A roar of purling water rose high above all else.

He ran forward. The *Mohican* had bitten deep into the stricken craft. The bow had cut far into the schooner amidships. It hung there now like a terrier worrying a rat.

Below him eight men swarmed aft along the schooner's sloping deck. They ran, screaming horribly, for the long boat in its davits by the taffrail. They swore and shouted like demented things. It made Bill Jones fairly sick to watch them.

They made the long boat and began to lower it—the port davit-ropes first, because the port davits were so much higher than the others. They scrambled and tugged and pulled trying to get the boat on even keel before it hit the water.

Then out of the after companionway of the schooner's cabin came a woman with a child in her arms—a child of some four or five years. She made for the boat. One of the men turned with a howl of rage to push her back.

Bill Jones on the deck of the *Mohican* let out a bellow of wrath. The woman rushed again. This time two men pushed her away. They had the boat nearly lowered now. On the *Mohican's* deck was a veritable confusion of orders.

The third time the woman with the child made for the long boat on the schooner. This time she was felled roughly. Bill Jones felt his blood boil. He shouted and raved and cursed. He called the men on the schooner's deck frightful and unintelligible things.

A coil of sheet lay close at hand. Bill Jones threw it overside. After which he grabbed an iron capstan-bar and swarmed down the line to the schooner's listed deck. The woman and the kid were going in that boat or he'd know the reason why.

His feet had just touched the schooner's deck planks when there came a yet sharper creaking. The *Mohican* backed

away. She seemed to slide away silently into the darkness. Up came the schooner, heeled to port this time and wallowed crazily.

"She's goin'!" Bill heard one of the men, already in the boat, yell. "Git the oars. Pull outa here!"

There was a frightful roar of water into the hold. The cover of the main hatch flew off as if from some mighty explosion. Bill Jones caught off the top of the wheel box. He leaped to the woman with the child. He crushed them in his arms. Then the schooner lurched under and he was in a whirling, maddening vortex which was trying to tear the woman from his arms.

An age it seemed he went spinning downwards. An æon he clung with a grip of desperation to that limp body in his clutches.

Then up they came—up, up to light and air.

The woman still had the child in her arms. A piece of the wreckage drifted near. It was the cover of the wheel box Bill had torn off just before the schooner plunged downward. He caught it, held it in numbed fingers, panting, spent, all but dead.

Onto it he managed to get the woman and the child. They were both alive and gasping great breaths of air. It sounded almost like sobbing, the way they breathed.

Bill held them on. He did not attempt to crawl onto the cover himself. There was scant room for three. To try it would be too much risk. The water was numbing him. He felt his head whirling; but he managed to hold those two on the wheel-box cover and even to lift his voice in a shout. It wasn't any articulate cry for help; just a wild, despairing bellow, the cry of some stricken thing gone mad; he kept at it persistently, throwing back his head and sending that booming wail across the gray water.

Once the woman said: "There's room." And she moved over on the cover. But Bill merely shook his head. He knew for one thing that he had not strength to crawl onto it, and for another thing that he would risk their lives in doing so.

A light shimmered momentarily upon them—the powerful searchlight of the *Mohican*. It was sweeping the waters for any survivors. It rested upon them, was gone, came back again.

Bill Jones let out a series of yells until his throat refused him another sound. Even then he made strange, throaty hisses.

A boat came thrashing towards them. He could see the men at the oars as they came down the path of light the searchlight made. He threw back his head. His fingers were slipping from the wheel-box cover. With a supreme effort he let out one last shriek. Then he felt the cover torn from his clutches.

The woman screamed. She tried to reach out to him. At imminent risk of upsetting her frail craft she strove to clutch him as he was swept past the cover.

The boat shot alongside. They lifted in the pair from the frail raft. The woman was raving.

"Get him! Get him! Don't let him drown!" she was shrieking.

The men in the boat did not see what she did—Bill Jones going under the water some ten yards to leeward. They rowed stolidly back to the damaged *Mohican*. They tried clumsily to calm her.

The Hans Christian Andersen snowflakes began coming down in earnest now, as it was eminently fitting they should. The woman continued to thrash about the boat in unseemly fashion and beg the men in it to save "him," whom-ever he was. They made a guess it was her husband, probably the schooner's skipper. And so they came to the wallowing freighter with her stove-in bows.

It says somewhere in—in (Now who's pinched the Concordance again? They know I'm eternally needing it. They might let it alone once in a while. I'll start a fine, healthy young fuss about this when I go down to lunch!) —Well, anyway, there's something, somewhere, about not a single sparrow falling unnoticed in the Great Scheme of Things. So I'm not worrying a bit about this Bill Jones.



The Marriage of Madge

Her relatives try to influence her choice of a husband—and they have some powerful arguments. But the right man proves his right-ness in a characteristic and compelling way.

By LILLIAN DUCEY

I AM a crusty old woman—shriveled and brown and creased like the edges of home-made pies—one of those stingy old women whose relatives invariably say of her: “Does she think she can take her wealth to her grave with her?”

However, I hold that one’s money is one’s own just as much as one’s clothes, and I act accordingly. If I feel like giving away any of my clothes, it is my business entirely. And if I refuse to give any away, that is also my own business. And yet I will say this for them, that in spite of their almost-post-mortem interest in my money they treat me as the chief of their tribe. Not even a babe is christened without consulting me. And right here it will not come amiss, perhaps, if I explain that I have a rather fiery tongue.

Such a tongue! But there—at four-score, leaves are not easily turned, so it is useless to think of that. But a tongue so cock-sure that it doesn’t even give the heart a chance to skip a beat and so win out! A tongue that yesterday fairly spat out destinies as if God in the Highest had abdicated! Oh, I have no patience with it at times! And neither will you when you hear.

I was sitting at the dining-room window. I always sit there afternoons, because I can see my grand-niece Madge as she leaves the school building. Madge is a school teacher. But in case some preconceived picture comes to your mind when I mention her vocation, I must sketch her just a little before plunging into her story.

Old eyes are far-sighted as you know, and even from here her slim beauty is apparent as she comes down the street. Slender she is, but nowhere angular, with beautiful shoulders and bust—a truly distinguished young woman. Before she gets close enough for more minute inspection, I admire her bearing, her walk. But when her face is clear to me—ah! Complexion like the blush on a peach, skin soft as a pussy-willow bud; and such eyes!—blue, with a double rim of coal-black lashes; and the sweetest mouth, with just a hint of repression about the corners as if she always kept a grip on herself.

I’m not a bit partial. That is all as true as the creation. Now then:

Yesterday as she turned in at the gate, I saw something was amiss. A little of the peach tint had dropped out of her cheeks; the lines of her mouth

seemed curved to sadness. "Be quick there, Bridget!" I called. "A cup of tea for Miss Madge, and some of that special fruit cake!"

I was knitting furiously when she entered.

"Aunt Anne—" She had paused nervously on the threshold. I have told you I am a formidable old woman.

"How's your father to-day?" I never raised my eyes. "A man with a family betting a thousand dollars on the election! *And losing it!* Everybody with an ounce of brains knew Jakon had no chance. He's always on the wrong side of the fence, your father. *Where* did he get the thousand?"

"Oh, Aunt Anne—please! I feel too dreadful."

"Sit down and have some tea." I managed to reduce the cold hostility of my tone. "That is the cake you like so much."

She took a sip of tea. I could see it was with an effort. "Aunt Anne," she burst out, "he hasn't the money. It's too awful! And I suppose you know that he lost it to Mr. Merrivale."

My knitting absorbed me while I waited. Of course I knew. Of course I knew too, that her father hadn't a thousand dimes. And Mr. Merrivale had been wanting to marry Madge ever since she put on long dresses.

"Well," I said at last when I saw she was not going to speak, "what does your mother say about it?"

She smiled bitterly. "Can't you guess? *She* doesn't understand why I can't love Mr. Merrivale—a man almost fifty! Mother can only see his money and her needs."

"It's an excellent match." My false teeth clicked. "If you don't marry him you'll have to teach all your life to help bring up the other ten."

"Then I'll teach."

I looked over my glasses for sterner effect. "And how will your father pay him the thousand?" I spaced each word. "Merrivale is no fool with money? Marry him."

"I will not! I will not marry that man!" she cried passionately. "That is the one thing I won't do for them. Anything else. I'll work my fingers to the bone. All my life I've done it. Ever

since Father married and the first baby came—I was only ten myself—I have given them all my time. It was I who cared for every baby until it was able to care for itself. For fifteen years I've been a nursemaid. I work after school as hard as if I were a married woman. And if it hadn't been for you, Aunt Anne, insisting on my going to school and paying for my board while at Normal— Even those three years, all the work piled up for me to do on Saturdays when I came home."

My needles flashed like lightning while I listened. It was the first time Madge had shown any bitterness. I was touched—but that is neither here nor there.

"Marry him and don't be a fool," I said bluntly.

"Never!"

"You'll have to in the end."

"Never!" she flashed again.

"Then don't expect me to remember you in my will." That's a favorite threat of mine. Generally it works like a charm, but I'd never tried it on Madge before.

"Oh, Aunt Anne! What a thing to say to me!" Her voice broke pleadingly. "Remember me now—that I am a girl like other girls. And help me out of this, Aunt Anne. I know what a dreadful request it is after all your goodness to me—but wouldn't you please let Father have the money?"

I stared at her pale face as if I had not heard aright.

"Are you crazy?" I cried. "Let your father have a thousand dollars!"

"Please, Aunt Anne!"

"I—will—not."

"It is a debt of honor, he says, and must be paid."

"Debt of honor—rot! The bigger the rogue, the easier that phrase rolls off his tongue. I wouldn't give or lend your father a thousand dimes. No, not even a thousand cents."

She sighed deeply.

"I was afraid you wouldn't."

"Then why did you ask? Are you like all the rest of them after all? Have you no pride?"

She rose a little wearily and turned to go, it seemed. But suddenly, with a wild, despairing gesture, she retorted:

"Because I am desperate! Because I saw no clear way to turn! And," she rejoined passionately, "*because I have pride*. The pride that wont let a man buy me. The pride that makes me wash and iron, sew and mend, sweep and dust, so they wont get hired help they'd never pay. The pride that makes me pay the butcher and grocer every month, and wear my underwear patched out of all recognition, in consequence. I've never talked like this before! I've never let myself go! I never will again—but *pride!*" Her voice broke chokily. "Ever since I've been able to understand, I've felt shame for their shiftlessness. No one—no one!—has any idea how I have worked. And then worked too, to keep myself, my body, as every bit of me cries out to be kept. No pride, you say!"

So there was my gentle Madge. No wonder the soft lines of her mouth held that hint of repression. Even I had not gauged the depths of her, and yet I knew she was a rare little woman.

"Sit down and drink that tea," I said.

"I can't!" She tossed her head a little wildly.

"Sit down, I say. Control yourself. There comes the one woman on earth I positively hate—Mary Carrs."

"Oh, I must go!" Madge rose again. "I—I can't speak to anyone just now."

"Then I'll take her in the other room," I said. "You wait." And I hobbled to the door myself.

Presently we were seated, smiling at each other like two cats on a fence before they begin to yowl. And we have been on that fence for forty years, although she is a score of years younger than I—ever since she moved next door, a young spit-fire of a bride.

"Oh, Mrs. Withers."—she put out a hand and placed it on mine—"I have made a discovery that almost breaks my heart. I never dreamed of such a thing! My Robert—my splendid boy!"

"Eh?" I scowled. "Your Robert—a boy? He's thirty-five."

"Oh!" She sniffed a little. "But when a thing like this happens you—you feel he's still your boy. I can't believe it quite. Even now I—"

"Out with it!" I snapped. "What'd he do?"

"He—he is in love, Mrs. Withers."

"You're the biggest fool this side of Elm Street, Mary Carrs. If that's all it takes to make you snivel!"

"But you don't understand! There he is, getting along so fine. Everybody says that in a few years he'll be one of the biggest lawyers in the city. And to have this happen!"

What did I care about her Robert being in love. I wished she'd go. "When's he going to be married?"

"He says she wont marry him."

"Well for heaven's sake, Mary Carrs, what ails you then?" I gasped.

"Oh, but she will. She will! What woman wouldn't in the end? And you may not like to hear me say it, but it would break my heart if he burdened his young shoulders with such a family. And that's just what would happen!"

"A widow—eh?" My voice was calm with that ominousness that presages a storm. An idea had stirred in my mind, and before she could do more than shake her head, I began scathingly:

"Does he still say his prayers at his mother's knee? Does he confide in her when his little heart is sore with love? You're right; he is a boy. A man doesn't whine."

She looked at me for a moment. I didn't know whether she was going to get angry or not. I wished she would, and take herself away.

"I found it out—a letter he had thrown in the waste basket," she stammered at last. "He was—wasn't pleased because I read it. But I just couldn't help myself. And a mother—a mother has some rights."

"Who is she?" I brought out the question trenchantly. "Or would you rather not tell?" I knew she was dying to.

At that she slipped a hand into the bosom of her dress and brought out a letter. "He doesn't know I kept it." She paled a little. "But I just could not burn it with the trash—such a splendid boy as he is!"

I held out my hand. If it trembled, what was the odds; my age might account for that. I knew I was walking into her trap, but I walked. No one yet has had cause to call Anne Withers a coward. Just the same I was afraid to

look at that letter. But I made a vow even while I hesitated: If what I suspected was true—well, Mary Carrs would feel my claws for her attitude. The brazen thing!

I walked to the window then, and turned my back. And sure enough! Well, I kept the letter. It was forgotten in all that turmoil that followed. Here it is—the maudlin thing:

Madge, Madge—what a thorn in one's side even the dearest, sweetest, loveliest, and best girl can make herself. Do you know, you unselfish little Cinderella, that you are breaking my heart? One would think those ten little sisters and brothers were the only people in the whole wide world to be considered. Just this minute I'd like to shake you for not being at the gate when I passed. Why, if it wasn't that I am compelled to go by your house going to and from the station, I'd never even have those ten or fifteen minutes two or three times a week. And yet you love me. Madge, do you realize it is almost two years since we made that momentous discovery?

I've reached the end of my patience—and that is flat. I won't be held off any longer. I insist upon it that you marry me, and almost immediately.

My plan is to take you away from this town for a while. You've been doing housework ever since you were knee high to a grasshopper, so for a time we will try hotel life in the city. We're going on a regular lark—you and I. I've saved for the day—and you are going to have everything that the heart of a girl ever wished for, even to a husband.

I regret that I have not forced you into a formal acknowledgment of an engagement between us. This weak consideration of your wishes is going to cause a lot of trouble for you unless our position is made clear at once.

I await a reply with a definite day set. But I warn you—I shall carry you by storm if you fail me, and many things have conspired to make me reach this sudden decision.

And on the blank page at the back was her answer.

I haven't the heart to destroy this, or any place where I can keep it, so am sending it back to you, Robert, dear. Just knowing that you care for me as you do makes me very happy and all things endurable. So don't worry a poor girl any more than you can help. I must iron to-morrow after school, but if I am not too hot and mussed looking will be at the gate when you go by in the evening. Good-night. And now I will run out and mail this so it will be at the office when you get there to say good-morning to you for me.

"Isn't he just splendid?" Mary Carrs rolled her eyes.

"He's a fool!" I had myself in hand. "And so are you. And as for my niece Madge"—I flung open the door between the rooms—"she can have the richest man in the whole country for a husband."

Madge looked from one to the other of us with great, questioning eyes. I answered her by saying:

"You know what you came for, Madge. Well, I have been thinking and am ready to make you an offer. If you will marry Mr. Merrivale, I'll give your father that thousand dollars—and I'll see that he pays *that debt of honor*. Moreover, every month I'll give your parents the equivalent of your present salary, and hire and pay for a maid for them."

I stood erect, puffed up with my own munificence. There was no degree of lavishness I would not have resorted to to sting Mary Carrs and her precious son. And Madge had been such a martyr all her life, I thought she would walk to the stake without a murmur if she knew the family would be provided for, and knew that they would not look for help from Mr. Merrivale.

Instead, she looked at me so shocked, so pained, so—so—oh, just as if I had stabbed her.

"Aunt Anne," she said slowly, "*that* is something I will not do—marry Mr. Merrivale."

"But for the family?"

"No."

"I'll—I'll double the amount—treble it!"

"No! No!"

"And I say you will!" I was getting furious at being foiled. "You must! Would you have Mary Carrs go whining around about her precious boy wasting himself. Do you think I could stand that? Marry Mr. Merrivale and laugh at them all. *Laugh at them all!*"

Pale as death, Madge gripped the arms of her chair.

"Aunt Anne," she said chokily, after my shrill cry had subsided, "I always believed in you, your heart, until this moment. Always I believed in your justice—stern as it was at times. I don't know how you found out about—about"

Robert. I suppose his mother must have told you—I didn't know that she knew. But I—I couldn't give up his love."

"Then I wash my hands of you!" I retorted. "Go! Be a slave, a drudge!"

"Rather than marry a man I dislike."

"Moonshine nonsense!" I flared. "But I'll tell you another thing: Did you know your father was short in his accounts at Kensmore's? Did you know that? A thousand you think he lost! Well, he spent three thousand of his firm's money electioneering. He's one of those deluded beings who think that if they happen to hold money in their hands that it belongs to them."

I thought she was going to faint, but I never stopped.

"And now don't you think you'd better do as I say? Marry Mr. Merrivale and I'll pay all that so you won't be under any obligations to him. Otherwise, your father won't find himself in a very enviable position."

She covered her face with her hands. Not a sound, but the tears trickled through her fingers. I looked at Mary Carrs with triumph in my eyes, for I knew the battle had been won. And at that moment Madge spoke.

"Very well," she groaned. "I will do as you wish. I don't see that I can help myself."

There was such despair in her voice as I had never heard before. And by the time a person gets to be eighty they hear a few hearts wail. But I am a hardened old sinner.

"Now!" I turned to Mary Carrs, jubilantly, "you need not worry about your boy. Who is he, anyway, compared to—"

But suddenly Madge began to sob—deep, long, tearing sobs. Her head dropped on the table before her. Her whole body shook. Even the room seemed to vibrate with them. It looked as if all the unshed tears of a lifetime had welled up from some deep storehouse. All the heartaches she had never cried about before she seemed to be crying about now. Yet I looked my neighbor defiantly in the face, daring her to believe those tears were for her son.

Mary Carrs looked at me, returning stare for stare. But even as we looked

at each other I suddenly saw her face blanch, and she looked around me out of the window to her own house.

The next moment some one unceremoniously flung open the kitchen door. It closed with a bang and Robert stood before us in the doorway.

"What's the matter?" His voice was husky. He looked at his mother and me, but we did not answer; then he took a swift step to Madge's side. "I could see her from the window. Thank the Lord I came home early. What have you two been doing to her?"

He looked savage enough to frighten anyone. I could see Mary Carrs wilt in a sort of pleading, silent confession. Madge, however, made a supreme effort. Raising her face, she answered for us:

"Nothing, Robert. Not a thing." She spoke a little wildly.

"Not a thing," his mother echoed.

I clicked my teeth.

"She is crying for joy, Robert Carrs," I said.

"Joy!" He looked around at us for a moment. Then he tossed out his arms irritably and commenced to walk around the room. "What do you take me for? Joy—"

"Yes." I stood my ground, adding: "It gives me pleasure to announce to you my niece's engagement to Mr. Merrivale."

He froze in his tracks and stared at me. I believe that if I had been a man not even my age would have saved me. He seemed to fairly rock on his feet from fury. Not until he noticed that Madge was moving toward the door did he come to. Then three, quick strides he took and grasped her hands, bringing her back by force.

"Now," he said grimly, "we'll have this out."

"Not in my house!" I snapped angrily.

"Right here." He looked me in the eye and his voice rumbled like distant thunder. Then he said more calmly: "Yes, right here, where you forced her into agreeing to that."

I had always thought he was by nature masterful, from the square set of his jaws. But I looked at him in derision. An unspoken challenge flashed between us. The next moment he had

turned on his heel and gone into the kitchen, closing the door after him. I wondered at him, but the minute after, he was back with us again.

"You don't understand," Madge addressed him wearily. "Further talk is useless. It's all too heart-breaking and—and I cannot stand any more. Let me go and you can talk to Aunt Anne. She will—tell you."

She rose but he gently forced her back in her chair again. Then he too sat down silently, taking his mother and me in with a stern glance.

A pause followed that was so lengthy I thought none of us was ever going to speak again. My tongue had never failed me before, but I was waiting for him to lead.

On this silence suddenly burst the sound of feet coming up the back porch. The next moment I heard Bridget say: "You'll find them right in there, sir." And her voice sounded as if she had been running.

I looked, expecting to see Madge's father or Mr. Merrivale, or—or anyone but the man who came in. It was the clergyman who lived around the corner.

"So glad you were in, Bern!" Robert Carrs rose and held out his hand. "Bridget explained to you—didn't she?—that you were to marry Madge and me."

I jumped up. "What!"

"Robert!" his mother gasped.

But Madge looked white and helpless. For a moment only, though. Presently she rose also. "Mr. Bern," she said, and I could not help but admire her tragic dignity, "you have come upon a conflict of wills. Mr. Carrs is very, very kind, but he doesn't understand. I cannot marry him. Isn't that enough?"

For a second the clergyman looked at Robert uncertainly. There was a question in his eyes which I answered.

"She cannot because she is engaged to another man."

Robert laughed grimly. A look came into his eyes that made me think of court-rooms and tribunals and such.

"I'll tell you, Bern," he said. "They have bullied her into saying that she will marry Mr. Merrivale. I don't have

to tell you why. But I'll stake my professional reputation on the statement that he doesn't even know that he is engaged. Just ring him up and find out."

While the clergyman was telephoning I told Robert Carrs a few things in the plainest, most vitriolic speech I could think of. Big, masterful, uncompromising, he towered above me and let me rail. "What did he say?" He turned to the minister with a manner that considered me as little as one might a buzzing mosquito.

Mr. Bern smiled a little. "Mr. Merrivale says that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to know such was the case. Unfortunately, however, he cannot confirm the rumor until he has seen the young lady."

The words had barely passed the minister's lips, when Robert Carr was bending over the back of Madge's chair. In thunderous silence—at least so it seemed to me—he raised her to her feet.

"Now then, we're ready, Mr. Bern," he commanded.

Madge turned a little and fixed him with a stare of frank alarm. "I—I—"

"Not a word!" he spoke sharply. "I am only claiming my own. Begin, Bern."

Infuriated, I rushed forward. But he reached out one long arm and gently seated me in the nearest chair without even taking a step.

As if in some weird dream I subsided. I even listened. God knows I never met with such commanding power in my life. It was all over before I could collect my wits. And I guess that was the way it was with Madge too.

Then the first impression I was conscious of in the silence that followed was Madge's face. Ashen, it had been; now she suddenly flushed. Like a statue touched with the witchery of life she seemed, incredibly transformed from the white, shattered thing of the moment before. A second so; then she covered her flaming cheeks with both hands, and buried them in Robert Carr's shoulder.

"It's all wrong! I had no right—no right to, Robert," she gasped in a queer,

catchy voice, half cry, half laugh. "I—I mustn't think of my own happiness. But you somehow just swept me along. What will we do now? No, I just can't be married to you! What will I do? I should have explained to you."

Robert Carrs drew a deep breath. He followed it with a laugh that began with a low rumble in his throat.

"It is quite too late now," he cried exultantly. "Even your aunt must admit that."

"But Father! *Father*—Aunt Anne!"

To that despair and appeal in her voice I snapped out: "Nice time to think of your father now when it is too late! Nice behavior, this! But I'll look after your father. Beggar a poor old woman—that's what you all want to do. Well, it's the last time I'll do it. Remember that."

"Aunt Anne!" Once again that vivid look swept over her face.

"Tut, tut!" I clicked and waved her away. Then I took Mary Carrs and led her into the next room.

"Be sure you tell the story right, Mary Carrs." I faced her after I had closed the door.

She looked at me—indignant.

"How your son forced my niece to marry him against my will and hers," I explained forcibly.

And that was yesterday. The whole

town is properly shocked—as it ought to be. Never heard of such a marriage in my life. Half an hour after it they were rushing for a train to take them to the city—without bag or baggage, leaving *me* to inform the family. And that very brazen young man had the impudence to kiss me when I protested against their leaving in such indecorous haste. "Want to get her out of this mess for a while," he laughed, "and without losing a moment. We'll have a whole hour in the city before the shops close to get the odds and ends we need."

And now I can sit at this window day after day with nothing to look forward to—the minx! But I'll get her back. I will! There's that lot across the way. Isn't a more valuable corner in the city for a residence. But I never would sell it because I did not want a house stuck up between me and the sunset. Now—Oh! What good are sunsets? What good is anything with Madge gone?

Well, I'm not going to begin at this late stage to whine. No indeed! But as soon as they had gone I sent word to the architects. And I'll show Mary Carrs what sort of a match her son made. And I invite anyone to see if that house wont vie with the sunsets for attractiveness.

The Dead Man's Tale

By FRANK FALKINBURG WHITFIELD

WINSTON was broke; and he was not only broke, but worse yet—away from home and friends, where he could always get money.

If only he had money to cable to America he might stave off starvation. But—he turned his pockets inside out ruefully—this time he was up against

it good and proper. To make matters even more baneful, he was in a place where luxury and plenty abounded on every side. He might have begged, and undoubtedly would have made out well enough at that, but, like all Americans, he was proud.

He shoved his hands deep down into

his empty pockets and looked angrily up at the impressive Casino of Monte Carlo, that stood near by. Inside, he knew gold was being wagered recklessly, just as he had done less than an hour previously. He knew that the average person who went into the gaming room there cared not whether luck favored or not; those who frequented the place went more for the excitement and entertainment than with any thought such as Winston had harbored when he had gone inside to play roulette, and to break the bank.

Winston had come to the little principality with the one idea uppermost in his mind—to break the bank, by means of an "infallible system" he had evolved. And, like all the many others who had attempted the same thing, Winston had lost. He had lost considerably over a thousand dollars. And that was all he had possessed!

Morosely, he walked slowly back and forth, watching the grand display of richly gowned ladies as they flounced proudly into the Casino with their escorts. For once in his life Winston felt like turning yeggman.

Presently his attention was attracted to a man who had just come out of the Casino, and who, like himself, was wandering about aimlessly. Winston took it that he too had lost heavily at the gaming table. The newcomer did not speak to Winston; he paced off a square nervously, mumbling to himself at times in an undertone, his mouth twitching the while. His nationality seemed either French or Italian.

Winston noted the stranger's movements carefully. Why not? There was nothing else to claim his attention or interest. The foreigner seemed to be in ill luck, just as he was himself. This proved a solace to Winston.

It was not long before the Frenchman resorted to decisive action, for of a sudden, he darted into a dark spot a little distance from where Winston stood and—

It happened so quickly that Winston could scarcely grasp the meaning of it all. Deliberately, and with premeditation, the man had drawn a revolver and shot himself!

Winston passed his hands before his

eyes. What with his own troubles, and the act that he had just witnessed, he was dazed for several seconds. But he was not too much upset to see the several attendants rush hurriedly out of the Casino and jam gold into the dead man's pockets.

Not long after this the police came and took notes on the case, seeming satisfied that it had been one of premeditated suicide; they found the gold in the dead man's pockets and therefore concluded that it was not on account of the roulette that the man had ended his life.

Winston knew differently, but he said nothing. He had put two and two together. He laughed softly to himself. No wonder the police had been fooled! It all seemed very clever to Winston; he wondered if the police were always flim-flammed in this manner. He smiled again, as he thought of the novel manner in which the authorities of the Casino eluded blame.

Moreover, Winston had heard that suicide had been and was a common occurrence at Monte Carlo. Likewise, he had heard rumors of the very incident he had witnessed a few moments previous. Heretofore he had doubted the truth of these statements of the placing of money in the pockets of any suicide who had presumably lost at roulette. Not so any more, however.

It is said that dead men tell no tales. Winston wondered how true this so often expressed declaration really was; and he finally concluded that in this particular instance it was not true at all; in fact, he was sure that in some cases dead men *do* tell tales. At least one dead man had impressed a mute story indelibly in Winston's mind.

By the manner in which Winston acted it appeared that he was greatly agitated. He first smiled, then frowned. Then he deliberated ponderously, with no expression on his face which might indicate his inmost thoughts. But this was not for long; his musings soon vanished and his mind came back to reality.

Continuously and oppressively the question weighed on his mind. Could he do it? Would his plan work? His jaws locked forcibly; his plan *must*

work! It was the only course for him to follow. Dire need demanded that he attempt something of such a desperate nature. The only things he lacked were the necessary implements.

He strolled over near the place where the foreigner had but so recently taken his life, but his search was in vain; the police had taken away the suicide's revolver.

How stupid of him! Why hadn't he thought of that before? There was a revolver in his suit-case at the hotel. And he could get another article he wanted there too; his bill was paid to date and his credit was still good. To the hotel he made haste, whispering something into the head-waiter's ear. A minute later he had just what he desired; a large bottle of claret. To the head-waiter he said something about a tip—later. Then he went up to his room and secured the revolver, an antiquated affair not worth pawning which had been preserved as a family heirloom. With the revolver and bottle of claret concealed in his coat, he went again to the spot where the Frenchman had taken his life. And thereupon Winston proceeded to carry his own plan into execution.

All the world seemed so happy and care-free about him; money seemed so near and yet so far. And this was why Winston was doing what he had in mind; he could not bear to see others enjoying themselves, while he remained in misery. His collar was wilted and his hair was disheveled, but what cared he? Soon it would all be over.

Somewhere—he presumed it was from the Casino—he heard the strains of music. How sweet it seemed, and how mean it made him feel for what he was about to do. Yet there was no alternative.

It must be done!

In one hand he held the revolver and in the other was the bottle of rich old claret—blood-red. From the bottle he slowly drew the cork, meditating the while. Then he took one last drink from

that bottle. How good it tasted! And to think it must be wasted! What a shame!

He turned about and glanced furtively on every side to see that he was alone. He was gratified beyond measure to find that he was. It was such a relief to do the deed with no one prying into his secret! Then—

There were the reports of several revolver shots, which were fired by Winston's deliberate fingers; and there was the spilling of considerable claret over his head and bosom-front at the same time. Winston, as he lay on his back there in the shadow of the Casino, presented a most ghastly sight, indeed. There was claret aplenty, and in the semi-darkness it resembled human blood perfectly.

From the Casino ran attendants—who, upon hearing the shots, had anticipated the inevitable. Into Winston's pockets was crammed a bounteous supply of gold coin; and as quickly as they had accomplished their mission, the attendants departed, leaving Winston where he had fallen. Before the police had time to arrive, Winston jumped to his feet and made ready to depart.

"Enough to tide me over several days, at any rate," he muttered to himself as he got to his feet. "I'm *some* sorry spectacle!" He chuckled as he drew his hat down over his head and his opera cape about his shoulders to screen the spots of the claret. "At this rate, I guess I'll have to commit suicide every night," he muttered to himself. Then, with perfect poise, he sauntered back to the hotel.

In Monte Carlo, to this day, the authorities have never been able to account for the mysterious disappearance of the body of a suicide. As the matter stands now, it seems rather improbable that the case will ever be cleared up—unless said *body* some day again attempts the same trick and is caught in the act.



A Daughter of St. Louis

A complete novelette describing the experiences of a young St. Louis girl who ventures aboard one of those curious floating theatres which travel up and down the Mississippi: a lively and unusual narrative.

By FRITZ KROG

I

MYSTERY

IT was dark as pitch, hot as blazes and humid as a Turkish bath: a fine night for a murder.

So said everybody to everybody else in St. Louis on one of those September evenings which make St. Louisans pray for rain and cooler weather.

About a mile above Merchants Bridge in North St. Louis, an old Colonial pile, dark and silent, loomed like a house of mystery over a line of bluff some hundred yards from the Mississippi. Trees overhanging the stately portico were motionless and wet, and the grass under them smoked with vapor.

Into these nebulous regions, some minutes before eight o'clock, like a veritable ghost, skulked a long, thin youth bearing an unlighted lantern. Stealthily he made off toward the river.

He had not gone far when the lithe, slender figure of a young girl appeared some paces behind him. Whenever he stopped, she stopped, and when he

turned his head, as he did sometimes, she crouched close to the ground.

When he reached the bottom of a flight of wooden stairs which led from the top of the bluff to the bottom, she stumbled and he heard her.

"Alva Carter!" he exclaimed with a ring of disgust in an otherwise Southern drawl.

The girl did not answer at once.

"What are you following me for?" he went on irritably.

"I told you I would some night," she replied, likewise in a Southern accent. "Now you might as well tell me where you're going."

"I wont. I thought you were going to stay overnight at Aunt Mary's. You told a—an untruth—to me."

"Did I?"

"Yes, and that's all the good your sneaking around and poking your nose in other people's business will do you."

"You hush, now, Dudley Carter. How dare you talk to me like that." This was spoken sharply, Alva being properly very angry.

"Well, anyway, you might as well go

on back to the house. I'm going to take my skiff down the river." And without another word Dudley stamped off down a board walk laid over a marsh, which he crossed to reach a boat-house and a wharf where a number of row-boats were moored. Unlashing one of these and lighting his lantern, he pushed out into the current.

But he was wrong in assuming that he could stop the pursuit by such tactics. The pursuer had come prepared for them; and when she reached the bottom of the stairs and whistled, which is a girl's privilege when darkness permits, a voice answered her:

"That's you, aint it, Miss Alvy?" it said.

"Jem?" she answered eagerly and turned, as a little runt of an old man crawled from beneath the stairs.

"Yes'm," he went on in an excited whisper. "I been a-hidin' here sence supper, so as Hanner couldn't ask no questions."

Jem sighed and pointed to a little shack which stood close under the bluff about a hundred paces away. A bright light outlined a square of window.

"We'll have to hurry," said Alva, disregarding any anxieties about "Hanner," "or Dud might get away from us. He's getting his oars now."

"Gosh, what would Hanner say if she knowed about this," Jem murmured under his breath, but he obediently followed the girl.

They arrived at the wharf, unloosed a skiff and were well under way before their quarry's lantern, a good-sized yellow glow, was lost sight of in the gloom.

"Careful, now, Jem," said Alva, who sat in the stern while he pulled. "Don't get too close. We'll keep in the dark."

"Yes'm," the oarsman replied; and, after a pause, added: "Where do you reckon Dud's a-goin' now?"

"That's what I want to find out."

"You don't know?"

"No."

"Wouldn't he tell you nuthin'?"

"No."

"You don't reckon he's up to no tricks, now, do you, Miss Alvy?"

"I hope not."

Jem fell silent for a while, seeming to chew the matter over. "Gosh," he said

finally, "you cert'nly do beat all, Miss Alvy."

Alva hated to discuss her fears with Jem, though her brother, whom she was following, had filled her with them to overflowing. She had her reasons for being secretive.

For a month past, Dudley's actions had been mystifying and worrying her. First she discovered that he stayed out nights until the small hours; later she learned that he was making payments on family debts, larger than his regular salary allowed; then she found that he hiked off in a skiff; and finally, one morning as she was cleaning his room, she discovered red stains on his face towel and pillow slip.

The Carters—Alva, Dudley and their widowed mother—had been hard up since the death of the father a year ago; the house was mortgaged; Dudley had to leave college; Alva was looking for a job; and Mrs. Carter was ill. Under these conditions Dud' might well have seen fit to do at night what he might have been ashamed of by day: so Alva reasoned.

Had she been gifted with true detective instincts, she might have had an easy time to run down the explanation of his conduct; but she acted in a very un-sleuthlike manner and asked him at the very beginning of her discoveries what he had up his sleeve. He told her several stories, changing his tale each time she found out something new; and when she started to follow him, he led her off on all kinds of false scents.

This kind of tag game went on for a week or two, when Alva discovered the mysterious stains. The sight of them froze her blood, but at the same time steeled her resolve. Heretofore she had been open and above-board with Dudley; now she decided to match stealth with stealth.

She might properly have called in *Sherlock Holmes* in this exigency; but feeling that that astute gentleman was hot on his way to London, as was his custom, she chose Jem Buskett for an ally. Jem, who was an old, gray-haired river-rat, and harmless in the last degree, may not have been a good sleuth, but he could pull an oar; and that was precisely what Alva wanted of him.

She planned beforehand for the night's work like any good general. In the afternoon, she arranged a hiding place for Jem, had him set his skiff so that it could be pushed off in an instant, and helped him grease the oarlocks to stop their squeaking. At supper, to throw Dud off his guard, she had told him that she was going to spend the night with Aunt Mary; and, in order to make the ruse convincing, she had left the house until the night was thick, then returned and hid under the front porch. All of which proves a very fair amount of spirit, enterprise and determination.

The one hitch in the program—her stumble on the stairs—did not discourage her. Dud, ignorant of her arrangements with Jem, would assume that she could not follow him down the river; and no matter if he saw her, she reasoned, he could not stop her. But she wondered as she kept watch in the lantern glow from her post in Jem's skiff, if Dud knew she was still on his trail.

"If he sees us, he'll sing out," thought Jem.

Whatever Dud knew, he held his peace, and the pursuit continued very quietly. Except for the sough of a trolley car on Merchants Bridge, the clatter of a train upon it, and the far-away blasts of steamboat whistles, the whole river and the shore, close by which the guiding light remained, were silent and weirdly desolate.

But just below the bridge the river-front lost its lonesome character. Boats and a strip of cobblestone levee flanked with warehouses appeared, and there was light and life both on the water and ashore.

"Look sharp now, Jem," said Alva. "Dud is heading in."

There was moored here, among other river craft, a white house-boat of a most astonishing size. It was as high as a two-story building throughout most of its length; about a fourth of it carried a sort of additional story; and it was twice the width of an ordinary river barge and something over twice the length. Out of three open windows in one side of this monster poured floods of bright light, sounds of many voices, and occasional strains of music. Dud

tied the skiff to this houseboat at what might have passed for its stern. To it was lashed a tiny old fashioned side-wheeler. It was dark thereabouts; and when, after a period of waiting, Alva and Jem followed, only an empty boat remained.

"Well, of all things!" Alva exclaimed.

"He's inside," said Jem.

"Of course. But what for?"

Jem was silent for a time.

"I know," he burst out. "It's one of them floating palaces of sin the *Post-Dispatch* tells about. They has a low-down show in there, and drag it out in the river to sell beer without a license and gamble."

Alva had read of such establishments. Full of misgivings, therefore, she had Jem pull around the houseboat to investigate, and found out that this was, at the very least, a floating theatre.

Above a brightly lighted entrance she saw lettered the following:

THE BARNEY-CANN

FLOATING THEATRE

KEEP COOL

ENJOY A RIDE ON THE RIVER WHILE YOU

WATCH A GOOD PLAY

WHY SWELTER IN A PLAYHOUSE ASHORE?

FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

A small crowd of people was gathered on the levee; a few stood around the box-office, and a spieler was bawling at those on shore through a megaphone.

"Jem," said Alva, "have you any money?"

"No," he replied. "You don't want to go in, do you? I wouldn't if I was you."

"But I want to see what Dud is doing. Row back to his skiff."

Jem obeyed, though when he had his boat alongside Dud's he saw fit to argue some more.

"You aint goin' to sneak in, are you, Miss Alvy?"

"No, we wont have to. There's a door up there, leading to the stage, I reckon. We'll knock and see what happens."

"Miss Alvy!" Jem gasped.

"We've gone this far; now we'll see it through."

"I don't like it. Supposin' now, they is gamblers?"

"If anything happens, we have our boat."

Despite all protests, Jem was loyal, and faithfully climbed to the door at Alva's heels. She knocked, but received no answer and, after more knocking, scared blue fits out of her ally by turning the door knob.

"Don't, Miss Alvy!" he said, trying to hold her hand.

But when the door was opened and Alva went within, he followed again.

"Gosh!" he whispered hoarsely. "What will Hanner say?"

They found themselves in a dimly lighted region filled with scattered odds and ends of lumber, broken furniture, boxes, ropes and wires. Beyond a gray wall of canvas, the back drop, sounded footfalls and a murmur of voices.

"Hullo, you two."

Alva turned and saw a very big, blond young man staring at her with a pair of very blue, curious eyes.

II

MORE MYSTERY

Alva dropped her lids under the big, blond young man's steady gaze and hurriedly made up her mind that he looked too nice to be a gambler, a dive-keeper or other stripe of law breaker. But he was inquisitive.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I should like to see the manager of this place," Alva replied, having decided while the stranger was sizing her up that she would not tell him what her errand was, if she could help it.

"I am the manager—Barney Barney, at your service."

Alva was silent. What should she say now?

"How did you get here?" he went on.

"I knocked on the door there. Nobody answered. So we just came in."

Another pause ensued while Jem, who had shrunk behind Alva, began to shuffle his feet and Barney jingled some keys in his pockets. Alva knew, as women know such things, that he was admiring her.

"Is there some one you want to see?" he asked, not unkindly. "Are you looking for anybody around here?"

"I'd like to take a look around the stage," said Alva. "May I do that?"

"Are you a reporter?"

"Oh, no."

"Are you looking for a job?"

"No!"

Barney did not say, but his eyes betrayed that he wanted to know, then, what the deuce she did want here. Alva thought he was impertinent, and the resolution not to elucidate deepened.

"My dear lady," he went on, "you'll have to excuse me for being blunt. I'm very busy. We're just about ready to start. If there's anything around here you're after, perhaps I can help you. If not—"

The peroration was interrupted. In the midst of it a fat, oldish man, with a gray mustache which made him look like a walrus, had entered through the stage door. He was dressed in dirty overalls and looked very hot and greasy.

"Barney," he said in a deep, growling voice, "I can't get nobody to help me fire. Brown is gone, drunk again, I guess, and Pew says he's got to play in the orchestra to-night."

When Barney turned to talk to this Walrus person, Jem plucked Alva's sleeve.

"Let's run now, Miss Alvy," he whispered, and furtively eyed the door.

"No," Alva replied. "You sneak around that curtain thing"—pointing to the back drop—"and see if you can find Dud. When you do, tell him I want to see him."

"S'posin' I git caught?"

"Supposing you don't. Besides, who is going to hurt you? Quick now. Duck behind that box and then run for it. Don't you dare come back until you've found Dud."

To emphasize her wishes she pushed the hesitating messenger on his way.

Meanwhile Barney and the Walrus were arguing. "Now, look here, Cann," Barney was saying. "You can't have the whole cast shoveling coal. Myers wont do it, that's all. You'll have to pick somebody up off the levee."

"I aint goin' to pay somebody I don't

know for sure can do the job," the Walrus growled. "We've got too many expenses anyway. You've got a whole raft of 'boes on your pay-roll who don't earn their salt. Lemme have a couple of 'em. I'll show 'em what a real night's work looks like."

"Now don't come that on me, Cann," Barney broke in hotly. "You're a good engineer; I'll gamble on that; but you don't know beans about the show business."

"Maybe not," Cann came back, "but I know when it don't pay. Here we are, the whole shebang from the flag-pole on the tug to the box-office on your house-boat, plastered with mortgages—and you kick because I'm tryin' to cut down expenses."

"I'm not kicking about that. But you can't expect men who have been engaged as actors, to shovel coal without a protest."

The Walrus grunted contemptuously. "You talk like a little work is goin' to kill 'em," he went on. "It'll do 'em good."

Here Alva lost the thread of argument, as the disputants paced away. Barney had apparently forgotten her for the time being and she heaved a sigh of relief.

But before he and the Walrus disappeared, they were met by two women and a fresh confab started. The newcomers were in costume: one, long and thin, in a loose white tunic; and the other, squat and stout, in abbreviated skirt and red bodice.

Alva was staring curiously at them, never before this having been so close to real actresses, when she was startled to see one of them pointing toward her. A moment later Barney approached.

"Are you Miss Nellie Boyce?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me in the first place?"

"But I'm nothing of the kind," Alva interrupted.

"Not Miss Boyce?"

"No."

"Maybe she sent you here in place of her?"

"No, she didn't. This is the first I ever heard of her."

Barney scratched his head. Meantime the actresses hove to beside him.

"She says she's never heard of Miss Boyce," he said, turning to them.

They stared very curiously at Alva, who grew frightened and wished Jem and Dudley would come to her rescue.

"Who—who is Nellie Boyce?" she faltered.

Barney, looking very thoughtful, did not answer.

"She was to play the part of the *Fairy to-night*" the long, thin lady in the loose gown volunteered. "The regular girl quit us this morning."

"Will you take that rôle?" Barney asked abruptly.

Alva gasped.

"You don't need any preparation," he went on. "We've fixed everything for Miss Boyce. Miss Booth, here"—turning to the long, thin one—"will read the lines. You come on only three times, twice on a platform, which you wont have to leave, and once out of a clock."

Barney continued to explain volubly, but Alva hardly heard him. She looked about wildly for Jem and her brother: They were nowhere in sight.

"Will you help us?"

Barney's question compelled attention.

"I—I don't know," she said nervously. "I want time to think. I—I want to talk it over with Father."

"The old man who was with you? Where is he?"

"He'll be here directly," Alva replied, looking around and wondering herself where he was keeping himself.

Barney and Miss Booth and the short, fat one, apparently mystified to the last degree, laid their heads together to talk things over. Meanwhile the Walrus, who had kept himself in the background, stepped forward and began a fresh clamor for a coal heaver.

"I'll 'tend to it directly," said Barney.

"But we're late now. I ought—"

"Can't you see I've got enough troubles of my own?"

"It'll just take you a second."

While the argument grew, Alva saw a gray form grow haltingly out of the gloom at the far end of the drop. The appearance developed into Jem. But he was alone.

"Where is Dud?" she demanded in a low voice, as she advanced to meet the old river-rat.

"I seen him," Jem replied in a hoarse whisper and looked nervously at the actresses. "But he wouldn't come to see you. He says for me to take you back home and he'd talk to you to-morrer."

"I wont go," said Alva, and stamped her foot. "Where is he? I want to know what he's doing here. Show me where to find him."

"Gosh, no, Miss Alvy. You can't go. I come pretty near gettin' in trouble. I wouldn't go on that stage ag'in for no money, Miss Alvy. Let's go home."

Alva hesitated a second; then she went very determinedly to Barney, who was still having words with the Walrus.

"Mr. Barney," she said, "I'll take the part."

Barney looked puzzled, but nodded.

"Miss Booth will help you dress," he said and, looking at his watch, added: "You have twenty minutes before your first cue."

"About that coal, Barney—"Alva heard the Walrus say as the long, thin one and the short, fat one hustled her away.

Jem stood helplessly in his tracks and went blue around the gills.

III

NOT HERE

Miss Booth led the way through a mystery of gloom, sticks, boards, ropes and hanging, dangling things until she reached a door which she opened.

A heavy odor of moth-balls, perfume and burning hair staggered Alva as she looked into a hazy room filled with all manner of ladies in all stages of deshabelle. There a very matronly lady was struggling into cotton-batting ermine; there another was plastering down gray locks of sheep skin; several were hitching skirts; others were unlimbering rats, puffs and false backs. And the whole air resounded with the clacking of tongues, singing, laughing, the jangle of spangles and the swish of clothes.

"We haven't a minute to spare," said Miss Booth, pushing through the crowd and dragging Alva with her. "Take down your hair and I'll hunt up your dress. Miss Stone will help you unhook."

Alva was fussed, frightened and flabbergasted. Her ideas ran in circles. It seemed all very logical to think of herself in these *papier maché* surroundings one moment and a wild fancy in the next. Now she was a victim of circumstances, blaming herself, Barney, Jem and Dud, one after the other and sometimes all at once, for getting her into such a pickle. Now she was sorry she came; now she was looking forward to the solemn moment when she would confront Dudley and drag him back to respectability and triumph.

And what *was* Dudley's business here? Was he an actor? Or was he running a gaming table in some subterranean region of the boat. What would happen when he saw her on the stage? What would happen to her? What would his confederates do when they discovered her purpose? How could she escape from this place when the time came for such a move?

While her head reeled with the jumble of thoughts, she felt hands pushing her, pulling her, spinning her round, pawing her face, wallowing in her hair, fumbling at her back and fiddling at her feet. By and by the hands stopped their labors and she found herself sitting on a stool and staring into a cracked mirror that gave back a face which she could not believe was hers until she winked an eye to find out.

Her cheeks looked as if a house painter had spilled a day's work on them; her eyes were ringed, penciled and edged with blue; her lips were carmine and the rest of her face looked as if it had been smeared in a flour barrel. Some sort of loose white, satiny drapery fell away over her shoulders; her hair was down and a tin star sat on her forehead.

"Here's your wand," she heard somebody say, and a broom-stick was thrust into her hand. "You'll have to wave it when I begin talking. Just keep cool and sit still here for a while. I'm going to find Barney."

Alva sat still enough, being powerless to move, until she was hoisted from her seat and shoved away from the mirror. The next thing she knew, the lights were gone, a strong man's grip lay on her arm and Barney was talking.

"There's not a second to lose," he said rapidly as he dragged her to a stairway leading down into some sort of dark space under the stage. "We'll have to go down here. You'll come up through the floor. We'll hoist you up. You needn't be afraid. Just hold tight and when you get up, they'll throw the spot light on you. Don't let that feaze you. Just keep cool—that's all."

She felt herself lifted on a platform, had a confused impression of a vast space filled with whispers and rustling; she dimly made out a sea of pasty faces before her and then a bright light suddenly blinded her. She could see no more, but she heard a voice speaking strange words, it seemed, just at her shoulder, and presently everything was dark again.

She came out of her trance to find herself standing in the wings with Barney, who was talking to her. But she could not make out what he said. Overwhelmed with the full consciousness of her situation, she was seized with a scarce controllable panic.

"I—I can't go on with this," she gasped. "I've never been on the stage before. I didn't come here to look for a place on the stage. I came here to find out what my brother is doing here."

"Your brother?"

"Yes, I followed him down the river."

"What's his name?"

"Dudley Carter."

Barney shook his head.

"Never heard of him."

IV

"THE PLAY'S THE THING"

To Alva, the earth seemed reeling under her feet. But with a supreme effort of will, she pulled herself together and kept her wits.

"But his skiff is tied on this houseboat," she insisted.

"I can't help it. There's no one around here by that name."

Alva looked fixedly at Barney.

"Are you telling me the truth?" she asked earnestly.

"I certainly am. Come on over here where we can talk this over. There must be a mistake somewhere. We ought to be able to straighten it out."

He led the way to a settee in a rather secluded nook deep among the wings.

"I saw Dudley stop at this houseboat," Alva repeated emphatically. "He came in a skiff, and Jem Buskett, who is not my father, and I, were following him in a skiff. The boats are outside."

"So that's how you came to be here?" said Barney. "I've used up a lot of gray matter trying to dope it out."

Alva was not so much engrossed in the problem of the vanishing brother that she had no room in her thoughts for curiosity.

"What did you think?" she asked.

"Miss Booth thought you were stage-struck and lost your nerve the last minute," Barney replied evasively.

"Is that what you thought?"

"I thought an angel had come upon us unawares."

"To go back to Dudley—" said Alva hastily.

"How does he look?"

"He's tall and slight and very young—twenty-one last June. He looks a good deal like me, I reckon."

Barney smiled and looked incredulous.

"I've got some good-looking actors around here," he said, "but—"

"He's not here?" Alva interrupted sharply.

"No, not that I know of."

"Mr. Barney, I don't believe you're telling me the truth."

"But, my dear Miss Carter—"

"Jem saw Dudley on your stage and talked to him."

Alva watched Barney's face carefully, but his surprise seemed genuine.

"This is too deep for me," he said.

"Do you still deny that my brother is here?"

"I can't help it. In the first place, it is utterly impossible for anyone to be around here looking like you and escaping notice."

"Please don't talk like that."

"I'm just arguing. In the second place—in the second place, if he *was* here, would you go on with your rôle?"

"Then he is here?"

"I didn't say he was."

"Then I might as well be going."

"You can't get away. We're out in the middle of the river."

"I have a skiff."

"But you'll break up the show if you leave us now."

"Am I as important as that?"

"You bet you are."

"What would you have done if I hadn't happened to come?"

"I don't know. You saved the day."

"Couldn't you use Miss Booth?"

"What would the audience say to such a radical change?"

"She knows the lines."

"Yes, Miss Carter—but the looks."

Alva fell silent, toying with her wand and wondering how far she could trust Mr. Barney. He looked and talked like a pretty decent sort, and yet—

"Where is Jem?" she asked abruptly.

"The old man?"

"Yes."

"He's around here somewhere. I'll look him up for you."

"Please."

Barney arose to depart.

"You haven't changed your mind about the acting?" he paused to ask.

"I want to talk it over with Jem."

"I'm off. But remember, we can't get along without you. Here's a copy of the play."

He produced a pamphlet from an inside pocket. On its cover was printed:

THE FAIRY

A FANTASY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

BARNEY BARNEY.

"Why," said Alva, "you wrote it!"

But Barney had slipped away.

Alva, the play in her lap, was moodily surveying the phantasmagoria of figures drifting back and forth on the narrow section of stage visible to her through the wings, when Jem shuffled

along. He looked as if he had aged considerably in the last hour.

"Where have you been?" Alva asked.

"Nowheres much," Jem replied.

"That there boss sent me here. He says I was to keep watch over you. There aint nobody doin' you no hurt, now, is there, Miss Alvy?"

"No. Where is Dud?"

"Miss Alvy, I aint seen him sence a while ago. I—"

"Are you sure you saw him in the first place?"

"Cross my heart to die, if I didn't, Miss Alvy. He was a-standin' right over there by that there sign-board, talkin' to a little feller with a cigarette when I seen him, and told him you was here."

"Then where under heaven is he?"

"Gosh, Miss Alvy, he aint here no more. His skiff is gone."

Alva leaped to her feet and stared wildly at Jem—who stared back at her with eyes that looked as if they would crawl out on his cheek bones.

"Jem!"

"Swear to Gawd, Miss Alvy, it is so. I jest come from outside to see how my boat was towin', and—"

Alva seized Jem's arm and cast hurried looks around about.

"We must get out of this," she whispered. "Quick!"

Stealthily, furtively, with bated breath, they stole across the stage to the door at the rear and stepped out into the night.

The mist had deepened and except the blue-rimmed lights of the side-wheeler which was towing the house-boat, nothing except gray fog was visible. From the theatre sounded a low murmur of voices and faint foot-falls; the tug coughed and clacked; water splashed and gurgled.

"Where are we?" asked Alva.

"We must be about north of Cabaret," said Jem, busy on his knees with his skiff fastenings.

"Where *do* you reckon Dud is?"

"Gosh, Miss Alvy, I don't know."

"We saw him come here."

"I know, but he aint here no more."

Alva was silent, thinking.

"Are you sure it was his skiff we found tied here?"

"I'd know it anywheres, Miss Alvy. I rowed it many a time. I know it was his."

"If he's gone, then why did he come here?"

"I don't know. I'm most ready, Miss Alvy, if you—"

"I haven't decided to go away. I'm changing my mind."

"Gosh, Miss Alvy. They's a tough crowd upstairs. I heard tell they was goin' to break up the show."

"What?"

"Yes. That's what they say. We better go now, Miss Alvy. We don't want to get mixed up in no sech like. Come on, Miss Alvy."

"Who told you that?"

"I heard no less'n forty o' them actor folks say as how—"

"There aren't that many people in the cast."

"Leastways, we got no business to stay."

Alva was silent.

"You don't want to do no more o' that play-actin', Miss Alvy," Jem went on pleadingly. "What would your maw say, now, if she knowed you was in that rig-out?"

Alva started.

"Why, Jem," she exclaimed with a laugh, "I forgot my costume. I couldn't run away like this. That settles it."

"I'll get your clothes for you."

Alva laughed again.

"No, Jem. We'll stay. If we ran away we'd be cowards and disgrace the name of Carter far more than an appearance in public could. Besides, I have already done it and we have not found Dudley. And we can't leave Mr. Barney in the lurch, can we?"

Jem silently made his skiff fast.

"Gosh," he said suddenly, "what would Hanner say?"

"Never mind her," Alva replied, leading the way back to the door. "The 'play's the thing' now."

"I don't like that Barney feller," Jem replied as they went within.

"Don't you? I think he's a nice man."

V

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Alva left Jem with instructions to

keep his eyes open and his mouth shut, and proceeded straight to the ladies' dressing room. She entered in decidedly different mood than had possessed her at her first introduction here. She was curious and observant, and that despite the ring of curious eyes from the crowd of sister actresses.

The large lady, whom she had observed before in the act of donning ermine, came forward to help her get acquainted—introducing herself as Miss Faux, playing *Queen Tessenra*.

"And this is Miss Dalgay," said Her Majesty with something like cart-driver accents, and presented a much-plastered witch who offered Alva a cigarette.

"Miss Cauler," the *Queen* continued, covering the *Fairy's* confusion and waving at a *Wood Nymph* in a rather scanty veil.

Miss Ammett, a plump page; Miss Nana, a gypsy girl; Miss Winkle, a cook; Miss Marteno, a cup-bearer, and a half dozen others followed in bewildering succession. Their talk was all Greek to Alva, and she was glad when Miss Booth, the long, thin one, and Miss Stone, the short, stout one, led her into a corner for some finishing touches to her make up—which showed signs of haste, her mentors said.

"You are getting away with it good," said Miss Stone, with a friendly smile.

Alva murmured her thanks.

"Barney says this is your first appearance as an actress," Miss Booth ventured.

"It is," Alva replied.

Miss Booth was silent in face of the fact; but Miss Stone, who appeared more talkative, observed:

"The boss is game on long chances," she said, "and I just knew he'd brace you to help us out when you told him you never heard of Nellie Boyce. I wonder where she is?"

"That's the way with substitutes," Miss Booth snapped, giving Alva's hair a tweak.

"Look out, Boosey," Miss Stone cut in. "You're talkin' to one now."

Alva laughed.

"I wish I knew something about the play," she said, turning the subject.

"There's nothin' to it," Miss Stone replied.

"Maybe Mr. Barney wouldn't agree with you."

"I don't mean it's rotten; but it's easy to follow. The boss done a good job on it and no mistake."

"It's very interesting to know that he wrote it."

"Yes? Well, I think he's a comer. He ought to have his show on Broadway in New York, instead of trying to float it in this old mud creek. It don't seem to catch on with the crowds who come to these house-boats. That bunch don't want no fairy stories."

"I'd heard," Alva murmured, "that places like this were not—just straight amusement halls."

Miss Booth sniffed and Miss Stone laughed.

"We're straight, all right, all right," the latter went on. "And we aint gettin' rich either. I got a hunch Barney and Cann are about ready to throw up their hands."

"That's too bad."

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe Barney would quit fooling around here then and go to New York. That's where he belongs."

Alva thought that the short, fat one was tremendously interested in Barney's welfare, but she did not give voice to the opinion.

"Tell her about the play," Miss Booth interrupted. "I'm going to see if the curtain is up on the second act. It's about time."

"Oh, yes, the play," said Alva as the long, thin one stalked away.

"It's like this," Miss Stone explained. "In the first act, old *Titian the Wood-chopper* is discovered talking to his son, a six-year-old kid. We have him on the stage sometimes and sometimes we don't. When he aint here, old *Titian* talks to his picture and let's on that the boy 's outside playin' with the birds. That's where he is to-night.

"From what old *Titian* says, you get the hunch that there aint enough doin' in life for him. He wants some excitement. Then his good *Fairy*—that's you—comes through the floor of his hut and warns him not to be dissatisfied. But that don't feaze him. He goes right on, hollering for more fun.

"When you exit, the *Devil* calls on

Titian and tells him that he can have anything he wants, just by askin' for it, if he'll turn his boy over to *Old Nick*, who promises to raise him and make a man of him. Old *Titian* falls for the game and the curtain goes down.

"In the second act, you see the *Wood-chopper* in a swell joint with a lot o' heavy swells around him. He's a *Duke* now and has all the coin he can blow. Then—"

The return of the long, thin one with the news that Barney was waiting outside with the *Fairy's* cue cut the story short.

"So long," said Miss Stone. "See you later."

Alva was calm enough when she met Barney at the dressing room door and followed him to her post. All these ugly visions of finding herself in a gambling den were allayed. Besides, she found it hard to be suspicious of a man who could smile as cheerfully as the playwright manager.

"See what I've rigged up for you," he said in a low tone of voice, as he led her to a point at the back of the drop.

Before a long, narrow hole in the canvas stood a deep easy chair and over it hung a light.

"You're to squeeze through there," he went on, pointing to the aperture. "It leads into a tall clock and when I count three you must open the door and step out. Meanwhile, I've fixed up the chair so that you can read while you wait, if you like."

"Is the act on?" Alva asked as she dropped into the seat and wondered if Mr. Barney was as thoughtful of all his actresses' comfort as he was of hers.

"Oh, yes. Have you read the play?"

"No, but Miss Stone told me about it."

"Did she? She's a diamond in the rough. I'll bet she told it her own way."

"She did—but I didn't mind that. She was very kind."

"Did you ask her about your brother?"

"No, I didn't get to that. You haven't found him?"

"Not a trace of him. I looked everywhere and I told the ushers to look for him in the crowd."

"Thanks, so much. I don't understand it. He must be here."

Barney was silent for some time.

"May I ask a question?" he said presently. "You have made me tremendously curious about your brother."

"Yes."

"What makes you so eager to find him?"

"I want to know what he's doing."

"Did he tell you he was working here?"

"No; I caught him sneaking away night after night for the last month and because he wouldn't tell me, I worried."

"I sec. And you saw him come here?"

"Yes."

"If he is here," Barney went on soberly, "you can rest assured he is in good hands."

It was Alva's turn to be silent.

"Your cue!" Barney broke in on her reflections. "The door works on a spring. Just push it open."

Alva barely had time to take her place within the clock when Barney whispered "now" and she stepped out on the stage.

She was not so much confused this time as at her first appearance. The spotlight did not disconcert her so much and she had heard enough of the play to know something of what it was all about. She knew that the old man confronting her was *Titian the Woodchopper* and that he had summoned her to make another wish. She wished she knew her lines; that would take away the guilty feeling that she was fooling the audience.

"Oh, my guardian angel," said old *Titian* in a trembling voice, "I am not satisfied?"

"Why are you not satisfied?" asked a voice from the wings, and Alva waved her wand.

"Riches do not satisfy me," the *Woodchopper* went on. "I wish to be king of the earth."

There followed a sort of chant of admonition from the side lines, to which *Titian* gave little heed, insisting that he wanted to be the High-Muck-a-Muck of all earthly things. The

voice in the wings then declared that it would wash its hands of the business and told *Titian* that he might have his wish.

That was all. The curtain thereupon fell with a loud crash of music from a tin-pan orchestra before the stage, and some sort of howling disorder from the audience.

"Doing better all the time," Barney exclaimed breezily as Alva returned to her chair.

"I am beginning to feel more at ease," Alva admitted. "Now—about my brother."

"I'll see what the ushers have to report," Barney replied. "Here come two of them now. 'Hello, boys, what's the news?'"

The pair who slouched around the "back-drop" toward Barney looked "tough as they make 'em"—stocky, powerful-looking brutes, heavy of voice and hand and foot. Alva wondered at their appearance, and a sneaking fear that, after all, the houseboat harbored some thugs, filled her heart.

"Bill Kraft and Jim Hawks, Miss Carter: they keep order in the gallery," said Barney. "Have you seen Miss Carter's brother?"

They had not and announced the fact with furtive glances at Alva.

"But we spotted Muddy Murdock." Barney frowned.

"So I heard."

Bill Kraft nodded slowly.

"And they're fixed for you," he added.

Barney laughed nervously.

"Jim and I braced him just now," Bill went on, "and he says he wasn't loaded for nuthin except a rotten deal. He says some o' the levee push bought tickets a week ago and you didn't show."

"But those tickets were good for the next night."

Bill nodded again with a sage look.

"Muddy's boys wanted to cash 'em in," he went on.

"I couldn't do that," Barney exclaimed with some heat. "What do they take me for, anyway? You go back and tell Muddy Murdock to start something on this boat if he wants to. I'll show him where to get off."

"I wouldn't rile him," Jim put in. "He wont throw them eggs if you don't give him a chance. That's what he says. 'I'll lay low,' says he, 'if the show is reg'lar.' He give his word for that and you know Muddy. He plays safe and he's fair. He'll wait for you to make a break—you can bank on that."

"Nonsense," said Barney. "I wouldn't say anything more to Muddy, if I were you. Just let him start something. That's all."

When the ushers were gone, Barney turned humorously to Alva.

"I suppose you wont care to go on with your part?" he said.

"I shouldn't want it to rest on my conscience," Alva replied gravely, "that I caused the break which Muddy Murdock is expecting."

Both laughed.

"You're game," said Barney.

"I'm doing my duty," Alva replied. "Who is Muddy Murdock?"

"Why, he's a rough character—leader of a levee gang," Barney explained. "I've never met him, but they say he's a bad one."

VI

THE CLIMAX

The curtain rolled up on the third act. *Titian the Woodchopper* was discovered seated on his throne in a magnificent palace. He had had his wish and was King of the Earth and Emperor of All Temporal Affairs. But he was not satisfied. There was still something lacking to make him happy.

His gloom pervaded the whole court and his evil temper wrought havoc in every direction. He slew his cupbearers and knocked his *Prime Minister* down with his scepter. He pulled the beards of his *Privy Counsellors* and kicked the *Royal Jester* all over creation. But in the end this same poor fool made his master, together with the audience, realize whence all the unhappiness had issued.

It had come, so the fool declared, from the fact that the old *Woodchopper* had sold his son to the *Devil* in exchange for all rights to the *Fairy*

who had to grant his every wish. His Majesty must now wish to relieve his child from the bondage of the evil one—otherwise there would be nothing doing in the happiness game.

Titian admitted that the jester was right and after a peroration of relief at seeing the light at last, launched off on the incantation which he had to get out of his system in order to fetch the *Fairy*. The summons ended with a sort of howl of fear, which was Alva's cue.

She had been stationed this time in the flies above the stage, where she stood amidst a conglomeration of sticks, tin-foil and brass—which, she had been told, represented some kind of luminary, possibly the sun, or perhaps a star of the first magnitude.

This structure was hung from pulleys so it could be lowered to the stage at the proper moment and was of most generous proportions—a circumstance which had suggested to Barney the ingenious device of seating Miss Booth on the off side of it, so that Alva and her voice would mix to better advantage.

To that end the stage carpenter had hastily built a platform, and so on it stood Miss Booth, lashed in place for further security. Barney too was on hand when *Titian* finished his howl of fear.

"Your last appearance," he whispered.

"Really and truly so," Alva replied.

"Go on, go on!" Miss Booth exclaimed hoarsely.

"Let her go!"

The stage hands at the ropes obeyed and the unwieldy contraption dropped slowly to the stage.

Titian, with the *Fairy* at hand, now set forth at length what a fool he had been and how he had been in wrong from the start. He didn't want his riches and power and high offices; he would swap them all, even trade and no questions asked, for a half hour with his son *Arco*, whom he had sold to the *Devil* in an evil moment.

Then the *Fairy* had her say and told *Titian* that she thoroughly agreed with him: he was the worst kind of fool and no mistake. But she scorned the

idea that he had been done; he couldn't put that across on her. Wasn't she on the job, hiding in the milk pan, when he made his compact with *Old Nick*? Didn't she warn him in a still small voice that he would get good and sick of the bargain in no time? And that wasn't all. Hadn't she tried, every time he called her, to put him wise that he was always getting in deeper? She wanted to see *Titian* deny that, the old hypocrite. Wasn't he the fine old sport, though, to come back at her now with a holler about his having been done? He ought to be ashamed of himself. He ought to get down on his shin bones and beg her pardon.

Titian did, and he made a thorough job of it by falling on his face (a trick he had practised so much that he no longer hurt himself by doing it) and throwing a fit something like that of a South Carolina negro getting religion. He rolled around on the floor, made a bluff at tearing horse hair out of his wig, kicked his heels and yelled as if somebody was trying to pry out his right eye. Every now and then he would rise up on one elbow and beg the *Fairy* not to be sore on him. He was just a poor old woodchopper and meant well enough, but hadn't had brains enough to know what to do when Satan called him. He was a wiser man now, and if she would give him back his son, then if the old fork-tailed scalawag ever came around again—well, just watch old *Titian's* smoke: he was an old man, but he guessed he had a few real pokes left in his system.

But the *Fairy* wasn't through with him—not yet. She had one thing more up her sleeve. She was sorry, she said, to see old *Titian* take his foolishness so hard, but she couldn't help him. She couldn't bring his son back. That was outside of her beat. She could grant any other wish—but not that one.

When the *Woodchopper* heard this, he "went right up in the air." He fell into fits of an advanced order and extraordinary finish.

The *Fairy* seemed to take pity on him then, and asked him to keep still for a while and lie still: she wanted to tell him something. *Titian* promptly

calmed down and took up the pose of a long-suffering, broken man.

The *Fairy* went on to say that *Titian* wasn't in as bad a fix as he thought he was: she had just been wanting to find out how sincere he was over the loss of his son. *Arco* was not in the hands of the *Devil* any more, because she had taken him away from *Old Nick* shortly after the compact, and she had been taking care of him ever since. Neither had she ever been an emissary of the old goat-foot, but she had just been making believe so.

Titian wanted *Arco* fetched immediately, but the *Fairy* told him to hold his horses: she had some more to say before that could be done.

The *Fairy* then explained that she would return the boy only on conditions. *Titian* begged her to name them. Well, she said, in the first place he would have to put his finger on his nose and say, "*kerchoo*." This would at once change her into a human being, a young and beautiful girl. *Titian* was willing to try it, but he wanted to know what for?

The *Fairy* hemmed and hawed a while and beat around the bush, but finally she admitted that she had fallen in love with *Arco*—he was such a nice boy and had such beautiful hair—and she wanted to marry him. Of course, nobody would want to marry a *Fairy* who was everlastingly vanishing and couldn't cook, and therefore she wanted to become a real person.

Titian said he would be tickled to death and was getting ready to blow his nose, when the *Fairy* butted in and asked him to wait awhile: she wanted to have a little more say. The old man, therefore, waited while she reeled off a kind of swan song to the fairy business. That done, *Titian* had his look-in with the "*kerchoo*."

As soon as he had done it, the stage hands above were supposed to begin hoisting the sun-burst, the idea being that the *Fairy* disappeared with the sneeze, to reappear in the fourth act as a flesh-and-blood girl, in the person of Miss Stone—who was substantial enough to make the transformation look convincing.

But the stage hands did not hoist at

the right time. One was borrowing a chew of the other in the instant that they should have been hoisting; and Barney, who had remained in the flies throughout the act, had to curse them before they were recalled to duty.

The instant in which the sun-burst left the stage, the *Fairy* waved her wand for the last time and told *Titian* that as soon as she was gone, he might look for his son.

But on account of the hitch in the hoisting, the son was already there.

He came in the guise of a youth in brown velveteens and he looked so thin and worn that his appearance reflected rather badly on the *Fairy's* table board, seeing that she had taken care of him for twenty years or so.

"My son, my beloved son!" *Titian* cried in a trembly voice, and opened wide his arms.

"Brother! Dudley!" shrieked a feminine voice, apparently bent on denying the old man's words.

At the same time the *Fairy* reeled from the sun-burst, which was then about a foot above the stage, and fell on her knees.

Arco turned and whispered over his shoulder at her in a voice somewhat stronger than an ordinary stage whisper: "Shut up, Alva. Exit! Exit!"

VII

THE RAIN OF TERROR

To these strange events, Barney, the audience, *Titian* and his court bore witness with a variety of emotions.

"Go on, go on!" Barney exclaimed hoarsely from his roost in the flies.

But the stage hands, rattled over the *Fairy's* tumble from the star-burst, lowered it to the stage, instead of raising it, as was their intention.

Before it reached the stage, Miss Booth, utterly at sea over the logic of these accidents, thrust her head out in full view of everybody.

"What's the matter?" she gasped.

A roar of laughter rose from the pit.

"Good Lord!" Barney groaned and his soul went sick with the cries he

heard from the crowd beyond the footlights.

"Rotten!"

"Get the hook!"

"We want our money back!"

"Soak 'em, boys!"

"Let 'em have it!"

"Down in front!"

"Keep your seats!"

"Help!"

"Murder!"

"Cut it out!"

At the same time, things began to rain over the proscenium and the air began to reek.

Arco gathered the *Fairy* into his arms and carried her to the shelter of the wings. Miss Booth, tearing herself out of her lashings, followed. After her galloped *Titian*, his prime minister, his fool and all his court. In their blind haste they knocked each other down, fell of their own accord, were trampled by the luckier and more agile ones and tore scenery and hangings on every hand. Members of the orchestra, breaking their instruments and smashing footlights, scaled the stage and added to the confusion and destruction.

Into the mass of his panic-stricken friends, Barney slid down one of the wires attached to the sun-burst.

"Curtain! Curtain!" he roared again, and himself dashed for the ropes to lower it.

When it had fallen, dividing the commotion on the stage from that in the house, if accomplishing no more, he threw himself among his struggling employees to quiet them.

"We don't want any horse-play now," he said as his demoralized troupe gradually gathered about him on the stage, "but horse sense. I want about six of you men to follow me into the crowd and the rest of you lay low here and keep quiet."

If any argument were needed to prove that work was most necessary in that direction, it lay in the indescribable uproar from without which punctuated his remarks. Nevertheless, Barney calmly and with admirable judgment selected his men: a couple of husky scene shifters, two well-conditioned actors (still in costume), the stage carpenter and two ushers from

the pit, who had given up trying to handle the crowd unaided and had retreated to the stage.

"All right," said their leader, buttoning his coat, "stick close now."

He led the way to a little door which opened from the stage to the pit. The sight which met his eyes might have brought dismay to any heart, however stout.

The whole crowd in the pit was struggling in the rear, jammed there apparently utterly oblivious of the fact that only a thin wooden wall separated them from the river. No one occupied the seats except here and there, where some man bent over a prostrate woman or child. Above, in the gallery, tossed a wild sea of waving arms, bobbing heads and swaying bodies.

Shouting as he ran, Barney headed for the herded multitudes at the exits and threw himself into their thickest. Like the full-back of a coach's dream before a critical game, he tore time and again through the packed ranks to the doors and back again, now carrying a woman in his arms, now a child and often some blindly struggling man. He seemed suddenly to have been endowed with the strength of a giant; he was both a spirit of vengeance and oil upon the troubled waters.

There was no resisting such an appeal for order. The little band of recruits from the stage fought with him shoulder to shoulder; in a very short time cool-headed men in the crowd lent their aid and thereafter the tide turned always more and more toward law and order.

As soon as Barney saw the drift of things in the pit, he gathered his assistants behind him and began mounting the stairs to the gallery.

"This is a different job," he called over his shoulder as he went. "Jim Hawks and Bill Kraft are up there. We've got to get 'em out."

Barney and his squad met with no resistance in reaching the tumultuous gallery, and he saw at once the reason. The toughs were too busy with Jim Hawks and Bill Kraft—who were standing back to back, each armed with "knucks" and slug, on two seats just within the center aisle. And in the aisle,

over seats, under their feet, sprawled the victims of their brass-bound fists and black-jacks. It was evident that they had just about reached the limits of endurance. Their clothing was torn to shreds; their faces were bleeding; their arms were flaying wearily and they reeled on their insecure footing.

"Hard at 'em, boys!" yelled Barney and, like the reincarnation of the most valorous Celtic chief who ever drove his enemies from the crags of old Erin, he fell on the mob.

The ensuing fracas was a sight to behold. Barney pounded them and pummeled; he belabored the Muddyites with arms and legs and head; he slung lighter ones clear across the gallery; he knocked stronger ones down and jumped on them. He was hardly more than three seconds in reaching his hard-pressed watchmen, and after that he leaped over seats around them in circles, leaving broken heads and fallen foes in a broad wake behind him.

Now though the newcomers quickly gained the advantage in the first breath of their attack, their advent being so unexpected, there were about a hundred men and boys in the gallery, and about half of these were loosely generated by the redoubtable Muddy. The rest were half in sympathy with him.

Muddy was a saw-boned, red-haired giant, a blacksmith by trade and a brawler by nature. But he had come aboard the floating theatre without any notion of his egg-throwing developing into a row of such magnitude, and he had tried to keep his followers from fighting with the ushers. But when he saw the latter haul forth knuckles and black-jacks, he decided that such serious objection to a little fun was entirely uncalled for; his resentment was aroused and he pitched into the fracas.

When Barney swept down on things, Muddy withdrew again and debated the advisability of continuing hostilities. His wavering was short-lived, however. As soon as he saw the big, blonde fighter, who seemed to be the boss of the relief party, his vanity was pricked and when he saw his friends scattered right and left, his pride was hurt and his loyalty aroused. In a very brief

time he had taken up arms again.

His second entry in the lists was a different matter from his first. He was no longer in doubt. A real fighting spirit took possession of him; and tearing a seat bodily from its fastenings, he shouted the battle cry of his gang, and made for the nearest showman, his ungainly club raised high above his head.

"Easy money, boys, easy money!" he yelled.

This queer slogan had many a time before this put new courage into his men, struggling in gang fights; and here, too, they rallied. Muddy was on the job! A dozen others quickly followed his example and armed themselves with whatever they could tear from the gallery furniture.

Barney's ardor cooled when he saw the weapons. Things were getting serious. Somebody would be seriously hurt, perhaps killed. He didn't like to run away, particularly not when he guessed that the red-haired giant with the chair must be Muddy Murdock, the moving spirit of all this mischief; he would have liked to tackle the scoundrel and lick him to a standstill, but there were too many other elements figuring in this affair. It called for order, not more rows.

Hastily fighting his way to Jim and Bill, who were still in the midst of it all, he ordered them to duck and run. "We've got to cut this out," he exclaimed breathlessly. "It's the only way to get quiet."

The ushers understood vaguely, but they were only too willing to give way, so exhausted were they—unfit to meet the sticks, pieces of chairs, railing and the like which now threatened them on all sides.

The retreat as far as the stairs was accomplished with a rush. There were scarcely any blows exchanged; and Barney, who covered the rear of his little army, took care of these. But the end was not yet.

Muddy Murdock had not gotten enough satisfaction out of this racket. He was disappointed to find that in the very moment when his fighting blood began to boil, the row should cease. He hadn't even gotten in one good smash—and such a chance! He con-

cluded that he wouldn't let it get by him at any cost.

Charging like a mad bull, he reached the stairway just in time to see all but two of the enemy out of his grasp. He roared angrily thereat, and swinging down his chair, felled one of the pair with it.

Now these last two were Bill Kraft and Barney Barney, and it was the former who took this punishment at Muddy's hands. Barney had tried to stop the blow, but was not quick enough. He managed, however, to break its full force by throwing himself against the gang leader.

Muddy reeled under the attack and stepped back, shaking himself free. Barney recoiled, but saved himself from falling and gathered himself for another spring, his whole body tense and vibrant with passion as he looked at his antagonist and recognized him.

"Are you Muddy Murdock?" Barney asked quietly.

"That's me," said the big, red-headed blacksmith.

"My name is Barney Barney. I've been boss on this job all summer. If you think you're a better man for the place, throw that furniture away and prove it."

Muddy said no word, but slinging the chair behind him, he squared off for the impending contest. By a sort of common consent, his men stepped back to give room, and an extraordinary silence fell on the whole gathering. Barney's companions, midway downstairs, seeing the state of affairs, returned, but made no move to interfere. They too seemed agreed to let the two leaders fight it out. The old, old yearning of all healthy men to witness a good fight had them all in its clutches.

Certainly the forthcoming had fair to be a battle of an especially good brand. Barney and Muddy, as they now took measure of each other, seemed about of a size. The gangster might have been an inch taller, but Barney made that slight disadvantage up in quickness. And they seemed both obviously dead anxious to have at each other, as indeed they were.

On his part, Barney had lost all sense of the fitness of things as soon as Bill

Kraft hit the floor. He wanted an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Mud-dy wanted a fight, pure and simple.

He was not long getting it. It took much less time, after the blacksmith threw the chair away, for Barney to let drive at him than it has taken to tell all about how the combatants looked and felt, and how their friends stood around and watched.

VIII

ARCO ARGUES WITH THE FAIRY

When the missiles first began to shower across the footlights, *Arco* carried the *Fairy* off the stage. He was under the impression that she had fainted, but by the time he had reached the wings she convinced him by violent struggling that she was very much alive.

"Put me down!" she cried furiously, at the same time. "Let me go! Where are you taking me? I want to see Mr. Barney. Let me go!"

But *Arco* held tight, for reasons of his own, and despite all struggle and protest conveyed her to the deck at the threshold of the stage entrance. Here he sat her down, and closing the door, faced her with his back to it.

The tug-boat ahead was chugging as rhythmically as ever; the fog was as thick as the river was dark.

"Dudley Carter," Alva began passionately, "I'll never forgive you for this. Oh, Dud, how could you do it?"

Her voice broke and she burst into tears.

"Why, Sis," he drawled, "I didn't do anything. I never dreamt until time for my cue that I would find *you* on the stage."

"You did," Alva gasped. "You must have known. You made me come here in the first place and you hid yourself to fool me."

"Now, hold on, Alvy," Dud interrupted. "I was shoveling coal until the curtain went up on the third act. Look here; I've got thirty-two blisters on my hand to prove it."

Alva wouldn't look.

"What did you do it for?" she demanded.

"Cann was looking for some one to

help and I volunteered. I didn't want to talk to you among all these people and I supposed you'd go home if you didn't find me."

"Then Barney lied to me."

"He didn't."

"Yes, he said he had never seen you."

"If you'll keep still a minute, I'll tell you how it happened. Barney didn't know me. I'm working here under the name of Bernard Matthews."

"What!" Alva cried.

"Yes, and Barney didn't know I was Dudley Carter until I told him when I came back from the side-wheeler and found out that you were playing a part. And I asked him not to tell you he had found me because I wanted to talk to you myself at the end of the act. There wasn't time to talk things over before that.

"Everything would have been all right, if those darned stage-hands had pulled up the star-burst on time. It and you with it should have been gone when I came on."

Alva was silent for a time, piecing Dudley's story into her adventures.

"I don't see what all the secrecy is about," she said presently. "Why didn't you tell Mother and me? Why did you go to such pains all along to fool me?"

It was Dudley's turn to be silent.

"You haven't answered my question."

"Well," he said slowly, "I was afraid you and Mother would ask me to stop. Mother is sick, you know, and she'd get all flustered about a Carter going in for acting. You know she would."

"How about me?"

"You would have kicked about it, too, I know."

"I wouldn't."

"You would."

"But I came here and took a part myself."

"Yes, but you were having one of your tantrums when you did it."

"What do you mean?"

"You were angry because you couldn't find me."

"I went on because I wanted to find you."

Dudley laughed shortly.

"Have it your own way, then," he said. "Anyway, you found me. I reckon you're satisfied now."

"I'm not. You haven't told me why you took so many pains to hide your 'play-acting.'"

"Yes, I have. I told you, I thought you and Mother would be opposed to it."

"There must be another reason."

Dudley began to whistle softly.

But he had scarcely started to do that when the door behind him flew open, and Jem, his voice and legs wobbly with emotion, burst into the night.

"Gosh. Miss Alvy!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Gosh, Dud! I been a-lookin' for you everywheres. Where you been?"

"Right here, Jem," Dudley answered.

"What's the matter?" Alva put in.

"Oh, Gawd A'mighty," Jem gasped, his hands fluttering in his beard. "I thought you all was killed."

"Killed?"

"Yes, they is fightin' all over the house and killin' people."

"Jem!"

"Yes, they is. I seen 'em. That there Barney feller went amongst the crowd when they commenced to raise a rumpus and he's been a-wrestling 'em ever since."

"Is he there now?" Alva demanded.

"That there Muddy Murdock and his gang is murderin' him."

"That can't be!" Alva exclaimed.

"It's so. I seen 'em."

"Are they fighting?" Dudley asked incredulously.

"They has been at each other, tooth and nail, for the last half hour," Jem insisted.

"Oh, Dud," Alva exclaimed in horror-stricken accents. "Think of it—it's our fault."

She started for the door.

"Here," said her brother, "where are you going?"

"We must save him," Alva replied.

"I'll go and see," Dudley went on. "You stay here with Jem."

"I wont do it. I brought this trouble on; now I ought to stop it."

"But what can you do? I reckon you'll go fight those hoodlums?"

"Maybe I will."

IX

THE FIGHT

The contest between Barney Barney and Muddy Murdock is talked about to this day on the river-front of St. Louis. From Merchants Bridge to Coronadolet the levee gangs have told about it and re-hashed it and discussed its honors and its finer points.

Barney and Muddy were each not long discovering that he, respectively, had a worthy opponent. Neither needed much time to "feel out" the other. Each had had enough experience in the great American duel to know quickly how much and how little to expect of an adversary. They were too closely hemmed in by the circle of spectators, the light was too dim and their passions ran too high for preliminaries. It was a knock-down and drag-out from the start, a fight to the finish, and each knew that he would win who could hit the harder, stand the more punishment and the better keep his wind.

Barney made the first move, springing with tigrish fury directly into Muddy's face and almost ending the affair then and there by coming within an inch of sending the iron pounder on his back. But the latter recovered and wrapped his arms around the body on his chest. Barney broke away, landing right and left on his opponent's jaw.

With a bellow of rage, Muddy struck viciously in return, one fist landing on Barney's head, the other sweeping an angry swish out of the empty air. The blow dazed the showman; he staggered, and had the gangster not lost his balance in missing, he might have landed again. As it was, he recovered just in time to meet another furious lunge, which resulted as before in a clinch and swift punches from Barney.

Such chains of events with their inevitable variations followed one upon another in lightning rapidity. Now Barney scored, now Muddy. The spectators who, to begin with, had stood silently by, began presently to comment in low, eager whispers. But the talk was all of the fight; as yet no one, not even Barney's friends, considered an interference.

There came a time, however, when the contest began to grow monotonous. There was apparently no end to it. Neither of the contestants gave any promise of "laying the other out." Under these conditions the onlookers lost the common ground on which they had been standing to see the fight and divided into the two original camps—Barney's friends on the one hand and Muddy's gang on the other. The former quickly decided to stop the fight, but the latter were just as quick to oppose any such action.

Jim Hawks, the partner of Bill Kraft, who all the while had been lying neglected on the floor, was one of the first to consider interference. He wanted to look after Bill, whom he had forgotten at first, but whose condition now suddenly filled him with anxiety.

"Say, you, Callahan," he said in a low voice to a big hulk of a fellow, a stage-hand, by his side, "let's butt in on that scrap. I want to get Bill out. Are you game?"

Callahan was, but as soon as the two stepped forward, a half dozen of Muddy's friends pushed them back with such violence that they barely saved themselves from tumbling down stairs.

"Let 'em alone," growled a dozen other Muddyites with emphatic oaths. "Let 'em fight it out."

"The h— we will," savagely re-iterated Callahan, who was not going to be pushed and cursed, willy nilly.

"You wont, eh?" said a husky Murdock disciple, and seized Callahan by the throat.

Thereupon, in about two shakes of a well-known stick, another row was in a fair way to an eruption.

All the indications, the house over, were that this second outbreak would be considerably larger than the first; for by this time a number of the players, together with a fair-sized quota of men from the audience, had grown curious about the racket in the gallery and were crowding up the stairs to satisfy that curiosity.

Besides the main issue, moreover, here and there minor quarrels arose, such as follow naturally after any kind of human event. Two women near the center of the house began to pull hair

over a pocket book which each claimed to have lost. Three small boys started something with a fat dyspeptic, which they couldn't finish. An elderly lady had words with a young huzzy who stepped on her glasses, and they lit into each other. And so on.

Thus it was that the spirit of the Barney-Murdock slugging match, within five minutes after they began it—so swiftly had the drama moved—permeated the whole house, and the air began to resound again with turmoil.

Meanwhile Barney fought on as oblivious of his folly as the man he was trying to defeat. His every thought and energy were bent on the contest; it was the sole issue of his life to him for the time being. In fact, after the first few seconds of struggle, he had ceased to think at all and he had been governed solely by instinct. He had suddenly become a cave-man; he lived and acted, to all intents and purposes, in the stone age. He wanted to maim his opponent, tear him to pieces, rend him limb from limb and disembowel him.

But Muddy Murdock had grown equally blood-thirsty. His natural state was pretty much that of a brute and he did not need much provocation to change wholly into one.

It so happened that in the instant when Callahan locked horns with the gangster who had cursed him, Muddy managed to get under Barney's guard and fasten his right arm around the showman's small ribs. Barney tried to wrench the arm away, but it held like a vice. On the other hand, Muddy could not, as he found after repeated trials, throw his man. But he would not let go, and ducking his head as low as possible, wrapped his left arm alongside the other.

Barney, after more fruitless efforts to break the terrible grip, turned to the next best counter-move and despite all his opponent's efforts to the contrary, closed his hands around Muddy's throat. The outcome depended, then, on endurance and brute strength alone.

Locked in such death-like embrace, the contestants drew all attention to themselves again. Once more the gallery grew quiet and this time there reigned the stillness of death.

The lull was not long communicating itself to the rest of the house. The men on the steps anxiously craned their necks, but ceased crowding one another. Below, people everywhere wondered what had so suddenly stopped the noise. Almost with one accord every eye was turned to the gallery and silent curiosity held sway over all.

Into this calm there suddenly floated a rich, clear voice, singing a song ineffably sweet:

"The sun shines bright on my old Kentucky home;
'Tis summer: the darkeys are gay.
The corn top's ripe; the meadow's in the bloom.
In my old Kentucky home so far away."

Hark to the old-fashioned melody—the familiar words! They came from the stage and to it turned the crowd. There stood before the curtain a beautiful girl in a spotless white gown, loose and flowing; her hair was ebony black and hung over her shoulders and down her back. Her head was slightly raised and a star blazed on her forehead.

She was Alva Carter.

X

THE MAGICAL VOICE

When Alva, with Jem and Dud wondering at her heels what she would do, arrived at the curtain and looked through a peep-hole at the disordered house, the second riot was gaining headway.

The whole scene—the actors huddled around her, helplessly eying the uproar in the audience; the crowds quarreling in the pit and the sinister quiet in the gallery—transfixed her with horror.

She believed that she had brought about all this disaster, and how great it was, she could only guess. From appearances anything might transpire. And Barney—where was he? Was he, as Jem had declared, being killed in the gallery?

The thought spurred her to action. She cared little what she did, just so she was doing something, and without a word to anyone she pushed the curtain aside. Jem and Dud tried to stop her,

but she tore herself away from them and walked boldly out before the curtain.

The idea of singing came to her in a blast of inspiration to contradict the feeling of utter helplessness which overcame her as she faced the seething house.

She sang, beginning with "My Old Kentucky Home," through the whole repertory of dear old Southern melodies, the songs which her mother had taught her and had sung before her. She could sing well under ordinary circumstances, but here, with so much, as she thought, in the balance, her voice seemed to have been endowed with a new strength and sweetness and compelling power. The will that she must and would command attention found expression; the emotional storm just past—her fears and anger, anxiety, despair for Barney's safety—was still thrumming at her heart-strings, and she sang as she had never sung before.

"Weep no more my lady, oh, weep no more to-day,
We will sing one song for my Old Kentucky Home.
Of our Old Kentucky Home, far away—"

The words died away and again the singer lifted her voice. Now she sang, and with scarcely a pause:

"Sing me a song of the sunny South,
One with a sweet refrain,
Sing me a song of Dixie land,
That I may be happy again—"

From these she passed to some old, almost forgotten plantation chants with all their weird harmony and soft crooning of old mammies singing babies to sleep.

On and on she sang, scarcely pausing after one song to begin another, and never hesitating in a single one. Then, after the first few selections, some of the musicians—a violinist, a flute player and a 'cellist—followed her singing with their instruments from the stage. The effect of the accompaniment, subdued as it was and the players hidden, added the last touch to the gripping quality of the performance, and that heart must have been of stone which would not have responded to the appeal.

The crowds in the pit felt the thrill first. They ceased quarreling; their restiveness disappeared, as did their impatience, curiosity and nervousness, and they sought the nearest seats to listen.

Barney and Muddy, each stubbornly bent on crushing the other, were scarcely moving, so fiercely they held one another, when the singing began; and the crowd about them was hanging breathlessly on the outcome. Hence the music here too sounded in the midst of a quiet.

Barney heard it. For the first time since the beginning of the fight he entertained some other thought besides the struggle. Whence came that music? Or was it a mere hallucination? Little as this first impression was, it was yet enough to stir his better self.

The voice persisting, he heard it more distinctly. Some one was singing, some girl. Now a few words reached him and a scrap of melody. Who was the singer? What did it all mean? He could not answer these questions, presenting themselves in lightning succession, but they served further to arouse him. He began to think and thereafter his transformation to an intelligent, self-possessed man proceeded by leaps and bounds.

"Murdock," he gasped. "Let go. Let's call it off."

Muddy only held the tighter.

"Hear?" said Barney scarcely above a whisper, so terrible the grip was on his vitals. "Let's quit. We can't go on with this."

Now the gangster heard the singing too and it was beginning to excite his curiosity. He was slower than his foe to come around to this point, but once there he started as surely, if more slowly again, on the road to sanity.

By this time, Barney, almost himself, so far as his feelings were concerned, made his appeal for a cessation of hostilities so marked that it could no longer be ignored. He dropped his hands from Muddy's throat.

The big iron-worker, whatever else may be said of him, had a fine sense of fair play, and when his opponent dropped the contest, he was not the man to continue it. Therefore, as soon

as the grip on his throat relaxed, he let go and stepped back.

Barney staggered toward the steps, his friends lending him their aid. Jim Hawks stooped and, unmolested by the Muddyites, gathered Bill Kraft into his arms and followed his companions. At the foot of the stairs they all halted, wondering at the sight of the girl on the stage and giving themselves always more and more to the charm of her music. On their part, Muddy and his gang, curious to see what was going on downstairs, made their way across the wreckage in the gallery, and though they stood there at first, whispering and shuffling, they gradually seated themselves to listen.

There was not a soul in the house, after Alva had won attention, but whom she made hang on every chord and note and word that left her lips. From Barney Barney to the meanest boy in Muddy's gang, they dwelt upon the music. The player-folk, thunderstruck at first, ceased to marvel, and stealing quietly to the vacant seats in front, remained there spellbound to the end. Stage hands, scene shifters, electricians and ushers followed, until no one was left on the stage except the accompanists and Dud and Jem, in whom dismay and amazement gave way to wonder and awe as they saw Alva succeed in what they had considered the height of folly.

For nearly an hour, throughout the whole time necessary to bring the floating theatre to its wharf, Alva held the crowd absolutely in the sway of her singing. Long before it was over, however, she was not alone in her efforts. Some women among the listeners, unable to refrain from humming with her the old familiar airs, gradually joined her outright. Others were not long following the example, and in time the whole house, regardless of age, sex and condition, was singing.

Away down South in the land of cotton
Lives a girl that's not forgotten,—
Come away, come away—
Come away to Dixie land.

When Alva briskly led off on that, the timbers of the house-boat fairly cracked with the shout of joy that returned in glad answer. What Missouri

crowd has ever sat quietly by while "Dixie" was in the air? The first joyous welcome uttered, everybody settled down to do justice to the old battle hymn of the Lost Cause; and not the least of the wild roar which followed came from the gallery. Here a huge, red-haired giant, rising like Jupiter above the heads of the gods and waving his arms, kept time with the music.

This was the last, though no one, least of all the leader, had any intimation of the fact until midway of a verse the door of the theatre was thrown open and a squad of blue coats stamped into the pit. Over their shoulders shone the levee lights.

XI

THE REASON

Cann, who had been warned of the disturbance in the house-boat when it was worst, had sent his sole remaining helper ashore in a row-boat to arouse the police and turned about for home. Hence the strong arms of the law at the landing.

When Alva saw them, she straightaway left the stage. The strain had been a heavy drain, but she did not faint. Wearily throwing herself into Dudley's arms, she took it all out in crying. His eyes were moist too, and he whispered rough, comforting words, boy fashion, as best he could. Honest tears coursed down Jem's cheeks as he hovered about the pair.

"What'll Hanner say, oh gosh, what'll Hanner say!" he managed to cackle as he shuffled.

But the trio was not alone very long. First came the musicians who had accompanied Alva. They wanted to shake her hand; they were enthusiastic; they had never seen anything like it before; it was some pumpkins. After them—the fiddlers, not the pumpkins—came the playerfolk, one by one, their costumes torn and stained, the women with queer fissures in their paint where the tears had coursed and the men husky with emotion. *Queen Tessandra*, the *Witch*, Miss Stone, the long, thin one, *Titian*, the *Jester*—every last one sought the singer, squeezed her hand,

praised her, kissed her and wrung her hand.

It was Barney Barney, a queer figure in a long rain-coat to cover what little was left of his clothing, and with a face all battered and swelling, who finally rescued her. He had just returned from his labors with the police to get the gallery contingent started for the Four Courts.

Alva was smitten with a fresh pang of remorse when she saw his bruised countenance.

"Well," he said through swollen lips and looked from Alva to Dudley, "you found your brother."

"I did," she replied, "but I'm sorry the search had to end like this."

She cast a swift look at the groups of ragged actors near by, the littered stage and wrecked house.

"Oh, I don't know," said Barney, following her eyes. "It might have been lots worse but for you. I'm willing to call it quits, if you are."

"I am," Alva resumed, "if somebody will tell me why you all took such pains to hide Dudley from me."

Barney looked quickly at Dud. "I guess it's up to you, son," he said, "to tell it all."

"Oh, Lord, Barney," Dudley burst out hotly. "Why couldn't you shut up?"

Barney went over to the boy and put his arm around him.

"Don't be a fool, Dud. Don't you think you owe it to your sister to make a clean breast?"

Dudley hung his head.

"Miss Stone!" Barney called.

When she joined the gathering with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes, Alva understood and speech froze on her lips.

"Dud and I are engaged," the short, fat one spoke up defiantly. "He told me you and your mother would never let him marry a actress, so we wasn't going to tell you until the season was over and I got a different job."

She looked about.

"I guess it's over now."

"Why, Sis—look out!"

Alva, who had withstood all previous shocks of this night's making, succumbed at last. She fainted dead away.

XII

THE LAST ONE

About eight months later, one crimson twilight in the early days of June, Alva and Dudley were seated on a bench before the tall portico of their home on the bluff. The hush of the dying day was in the air and as if they had imbibed the spirit of the hour, the pair gazed silently out over the broad Mississippi before them.

Presently Alva spoke.

"Dud," she said, "will you look and see what time it is?"

"That's the third time in the last ten minutes you've asked me to look," Dud replied. "You needn't be afraid; he'll be here by and by."

A faint red tinged Alva's cheeks, and Dud, watching her face closely, laughed softly.

"Who was it," he said wisely, "about six months ago, who raised such a loud shout because I wanted to marry an actress?"

But through his light-hearted manner looked a degree of sadness. Alva reached out impulsively and took his hand.

"Forgive me, Dud," she said, "but you know it was for the best. You were so young. Imagine your marrying at twenty-one!"

"You're just a year older," he replied, jerking his hand away.

"Yes, but I'm a girl."

Dud laughed again and he was still laughing when he caught sight of a tall, broad-shouldered man rounding a corner of the house, with a suit-case in his hand.

"Barney Barney of New York City," he announced dramatically.

"Hullo, Dud. Miss Carter—"

Dudley, grinning from ear to ear, ran away as Barney and Alva shook hands.

"See you later!" he yelled. "I'm off on mysterious business to-night. Look

out for blood-stains in the morning, Alva."

"He's referring to the house-boat nights," Alva explained. "You know, when I started to spy on him, I found red stains on his pillow one morning. They turned out to be rouge from his make-up."

"Speaking of make-ups—" Barney replied and stopped.

"Oh, what is it? Have they accepted your play?"

Barney nodded with beaming face.

"They are to try it on the dog in July," he added.

"Good!"

"And they gave me advance royalties."

"Isn't it great! Everything is coming out splendidly. The 'Fairy' wasn't such a bad failure, after all, was it? You might have fooled away another summer with it, if I hadn't wrecked your house-boat. Isn't that so?"

"And might never have met you," Barney added.

"You know," Alva continued hastily, "for months afterwards my conscience ached for the trouble and loss I caused you."

"We were busted before you came along," Barney interrupted.

"Yes, but I was the straw that broke the camel's back."

"It was really Dud, if you insist on blaming some one."

"Oh, I was forgetting him," Alva exclaimed. "He's broken his engagement with Miss Stone."

Barney grinned.

"Poor Dud," Alva went on. "He had a hard time of it, but Mother and I made him see the folly of it all. I think Miss Stone, too, realized how absurd that boy's marrying must have been."

Barney was silent.

"Speaking of engagements—" he said presently, and took one of Alva's hands in his own.

She did not withdraw it.



The Lamp of the Chevalier

A young Virginian, a coal-miner, has invented a new safety lamp. How he meets the woman of his destiny, how he fights for her, and how she helps him to win fortune with his invention, is told in this powerful story.

By CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

TALOE walked down from the mine in the haze of a late autumn afternoon. He had gone back to work—or at least he would be going back to work next day.

The Virginian was not lazy, but the thought of going back to work made him bitter. Necessity was at his elbow, however. He had only a few dollars of his savings left. Even an inventor must sometimes sleep and he must eat.

Taloe had invented a mine lamp. It was a closed lamp and yet it gave more light than an open one. By its use a miner had better illumination and worked in greater safety. This and some other features of his lamp Taloe had explained to many men. Here and there he had roused a flicker of interest in a face at first masked. But the flicker had died almost as soon as it appeared. And Taloe had patiently gone his way. He could go no further now.

So wrapped up was he in his thoughts that the beauty of the afternoon was lost on him. He might have been forgiven for missing lovely sky and flowing farm-land and whatever was

between, but he was not to be forgiven for not observing Allie Kent. He was scarcely conscious that he turned out of the path to let her pass. But she was conscious of it. She was not accustomed to having men preoccupied when she was near. A look of surprise which widened her eyes swept over her face.

She was amazed at herself, when, at the top of the hill, she turned and stared down at the retreating figure. Standing there with the winds of the evening playing about her and the sun going down at her back, she had a right to her emotions. Her body suggested energy, capability, restlessness; there was a fine spirit and a good deal of latent daring in her hazel eyes.

"I suppose you think—" she began half aloud. "Well, you are a pretty good looking boy." Her voice changed as she changed what she had been going to say. The last word came in a whisper. "You certainly have got it on anyone in this hole."

And that was her way of saying she had met her chevalier. As for the Virginian, no message from her came down to his subconsciousness from the hill

above. A moody pucker was still between his blue eyes, and his mouth had a compression quite unlike hers as he cast about for a boarding-house. He knew there would be little to choose from, and he was soon bending his tall body over a washstand in a cheerless room.

Next day he went about his work without enthusiasm. He did not speak to anyone as "the rope was cut" and the cage dropped away in the darkness. He was aware that one or two men had glanced at him. That was all. He worked through the day without mishap, running a cutting machine alongside a man not so tall as himself but thicker. This man had a crop of jet hair and bushy jet eyebrows. Though he came to work in the morning freshly shaven, he went home at night with a heavy stubble on his face.

The first day the two men worked together without comment. Once or twice, straightening up, the Virginian had a notion that Bill Driggs would be a bad man to make an enemy of—that is, he would be a bad man for somebody else to make an enemy of. For himself, this chevalier was afraid of no man.

The second day was a duplicate of the first. But on the third morning Taloe felt that something had happened to Driggs overnight. The cage was about to be dropped when Driggs walked into the yard.

"Hold'er a minute," he shouted at the man who was giving the signals.

When he stepped upon the cage, Taloe looked at him. Driggs gave him one glance that fairly glittered, and then looked away. He shifted his tobacco to his cheek, and the muscles of his face hardened as his jaws were set.

The two worked together through the morning. Taloe was busy as usual with his own thoughts, and he paid little enough attention to Driggs. Driggs watched him much as some big, sullen animal might have watched. Just before noon Taloe had to pass Driggs. Unconsciously almost, he laid a hand on Driggs' arm. He could feel the muscles in the arm tighten. Driggs turned on him. The light from Taloe's lamp flickered down into Driggs' face. The face was convulsed beneath its black coating.

"Who the hell you shovin'?" Driggs blazed.

Taloe looked at him with something like the amazement in his face which had been in Allie Kent's that evening on the hill.

"I beg youeh pahden," he said in his soft voice, like any chevalier.

"Yu beg muh pahding, do you?" Driggs said. "Well, curse your soul, don't do that again. That 'pahding' stuff don't go with me. . . . There's something I want to tip off to you: Keep away from what's mine. Hear me? Don't butt in."

"I don't caeh to quarrel with you," Taloe said quietly.

"If you monkey with me, I'll get you," Driggs retorted.

Taloe looked at the other for just a moment. Then over his face came a slow smile of incredulity. He turned away, leaving Driggs to mutter to himself.

That night Taloe came from his boarding house to get the breath of the autumn evening. As he stood a moment undecided which way to walk, some one spoke at his elbow. He faced about.

"Hello, 'pahding,'" said Driggs.

Taloe's slow-kindling anger might have flared up, but he could not let it. For Driggs had a lady with him. That forbade Taloe to recognize an insult. And it gave Driggs a notion that Taloe was afraid of him. That was the difference between them.

Driggs and Allie Kent passed on. Taloe turned in the other direction. The big man at her side told the girl of the encounter in the mine that afternoon.

"You don't see him making eyes at you when I'm around, do you?" he asked. "What's the use, Allie? Let's—"

"I'm going into the drug store," said Allie. "I'll be out in a few minutes. Wait if you want to."

She entered the drug store slowly, so that out of the tail of her eye she saw that Driggs was retracing his steps down the street. She did not go into the drug store. Instead, she appeared to contemplate a poster in the window, standing herself in the doorway. She could still see Driggs.

Driggs was almost to the boarding house when another man stepped from

its doorway. Allie Kent turned back in the direction from which she and Driggs had come.

Taloe had gone half a block when he decided to return to his room and go over the model of his lamp. By now he had nearly worn it through with polishing, but the occupation had lost none of its charm. Thus he had turned into the house when Driggs came opposite the doorway. Driggs had another insult ready, but of a different kind. The word which he now applied to Taloe was vile. That was why Allie Kent saw Taloe emerge from the doorway.

"I'll give you half a minute to take that back," said Taloe, the drawl gone from his voice and his shoulders lifted till he towered above the solider man.

Driggs laughed a long, low, chuckling laugh. He repeated the word. The last syllable of it barely escaped being crushed back into his mouth as the Virginian's fist landed there.

Allie Kent, approaching at her leisure but with heart pounding and her breath coming fast, saw the big man stagger back a step. Then she saw the two square off. When she reached the front of the boarding house Driggs lay on the curb, his body projecting into the street. An irate and quite sufficiently handsome chevalier stood above him.

"Isn't that enough?" the girl asked.

Taloe stood up. The dazed look of anger flowed out of his face. Allie was aware that he was really looking at her for the first time.

"Oh, ah," he said. "Oh, yes, you're the lady who was—I beg your pardon, would you mind if I walked home with you? Quite a crowd is gathering."

"I'd be glad," said Allie.

They went down the street together. At Allie's home she asked him to sit down. She probably didn't know it, but there were no chairs on the porch. She looked about her and then dropped down on the step. He sat beside her.

"Did you see the—what happened?" he asked.

"Sure," she said. "It was fine. He got what was coming to him."

That was rather swift for the chevalier. He turned his eyes on her.

"Why do you suppose he went out of his way to attack me in a public place?" he asked.

"Oh, just because he's a rowdy," she returned. . . . She fixed him suddenly with her big eyes. "Say," she demanded, "what is a man like you working in a coal mine for?"

He was conscious that he had been looking into her eyes for several seconds before he fully understood her question.

"Why," he said, "I don't know. Our family have always been coal miners. That is, for a long, long time they have. Since the war, I guess," he laughed softly.

"Where you from?" she asked.

"Virginia," he said. "I should think you could tell by the way I talk. I've got it bad. Some people can't understand me hardly. . . . I never have been away from the Virginias before. But I had to come North to try to raise some money. You see, I'd been studying about mines and things connected with mines for quite a good while. You know, they have a safety lamp now. It was expected to take the place of the open lamp, which is dangerous. But it gave so poor a light that the miners stuck by the open lamps. So I invented a safety lamp that will give more light than an open lamp."

"Oh, and you're trying out your lamp in the mines here," she said brightly.

"Oh, no," he answered. "I'm just working in the mines. I came North to get money, but I couldn't get it. I failed."

Allie Kent swallowed hard and looked away across the street.

"Gee," she said after a moment, "you certainly are funny. You're just a kind of kid, aren't you? Anybody could see right through you. How hard have you tried to get this money?"

"Well, I have spoken to a number of persons about the invention, but I didn't seem able to make them understand. It isn't easy for me to talk, ordinarily."

"Ordinarily—ah," said Allie under her breath.

They sat in silence for a moment. Then he rose.

"I must be going," he said. "It's rather chilly for you out here."

"Chilly!" said Allie . . . "Say, you come to see me to-morrow night. I know a lot of people in this man's town. Maybe I could raise the money for you. How much would it take?"

He raised his big eyes to her face. She found them very blue and clear—"like a kid's," she thought.

"But I couldn't let a lady solicit funds for my invention," he said quietly.

"Why not?"

"I guess I wasn't brought up that way. You see, we have always been simple, studious people down in my home. We just did our work and let it pass at that. We all did, anyhow, till I got interested in this invention. Our training has been perhaps a little different than some of the men's up here . . . Good-night."

She stood up beside him, almost touching him.

"I'd like to have you call sometime," she said. Then came a swift second thought and she voiced it in her perfectly frank Yankee way: "Unless there is a pretty girl a-waitin' for you down in Ole Virginia."

He seemed to think he ought to smile at that, and he did smile a little. Then his lips went grave.

"No," he said, "not that . . . I'd like very much to come to see you unless it is going to make trouble for you. I *had* to strike that man."

Her slim brown hand closed his mouth.

"Don't fuss yourself about Driggs," she said. "I'm glad about what you did to him. And you be careful from now on. He'll try to get you."

The palm of her hand was soft; her voice caressed him. He took the hand in his and quickly laid his lips against it.

"I'll be careful," he said.

He dropped the hand and went down the steps. She went into the house.

"I'll make you," she said to herself. "You woke up there for a minute just because I laid my hand on you." She took a quick, tremulous breath. "Gee," she whispered, "you're funny . . . No, you're not. You're the sweetest boy I ever met. I knew you were the minute I saw you. We'll fix that invention business all right."

Taloe received a message two mornings later which sent his pulses to romping. He had gone over to the night shift, and he had just risen when the message came. It was from the local banker. A banker could want to see him, Taloe knew, for just one thing—to talk over the financing of his invention.

The banker, when Taloe sat across from him in his office, eyed the young man with anything but favor, however. Indeed, for one about to interest himself in a project involving money he seemed almost hostile. The banker fingered a piece of paper with a few notes on it for a moment.

"You have an invention which you are trying to get on the market?" he then said.

"Yes, sir," said Taloe.

"Is it worth while?"

"I know it is."

"You haven't deliberately set out to swindle people?"

The Virginian's color crowded up over his face as red as brick dust. Something of the look which Driggs had seen in his eyes came there.

"Oh, I am merely asking the usual questions," the banker said hastily.

He reached behind him to his desk and picked up a pass book and handed it to Taloe.

"Five hundred dollars has been placed to your credit with us," he said. "Just leave your signature with the cashier."

For a moment Taloe looked stupidly at the entry in the book. Then he lifted his bewildered eyes to the banker.

"Don't you want to know something about my invention before you do this?"

"Oh, I'm not doing it," the banker laughed. "The funds aren't mine."

"Whose are they?"

"They were handed to me to turn over to you."

The banker was not carrying out Allie Kent's instructions to the letter. She had insisted that Taloe must not know that the money was part of several thousands left her by her father. The banker had let silence be his promise. He had always thought Alice was notional.

Now a slow, strange light came into Taloe's eyes. He held the little book in his long hand for a moment and then he put it gently down on the banker's desk.

"It was Miss Kent," he said quietly.

"Yes," said the banker.

Taloe rose.

"Will you tell her, please, that I couldn't take her money, but that I was hugely obliged to her?" He leaned toward the older man. "You'll know how to do it kindly," he said with a touch of eagerness. "Just explain that when I get anybody to put money into my invention it will have to be a man who will investigate to the last probability. Tell her it's a man's game."

He started toward the door. The banker stopped him with a word.

"Sit down," the banker said. "I want to talk to you."

When Taloe left half an hour later his head was in the air. He went to his room, sent word to the mine he would not be to work, and sat down and wrote half a dozen letters back home. That evening he presented himself to Allie.

"Have you seen that banker?" he asked.

She shook her dark head.

"I had to refuse your money," he said.

They were sitting on the porch back of climbing vines which the season was withering. It was chilly and quite dark. She wore a blazer, but her wavy hair was uncovered. The Virginian was keenly conscious of her nearness, but he could not make out her face in the gloom. He had a sense, however, that there was a shadow of disappointment on it.

"Very well," she said at last.

He turned in his chair and leaned to her. He was quite close, but she did not stir. He felt as if something warm had congealed in her. His heart burned with pain. He had been infinitely touched by what she had sought to do for him.

"Don't you see," he said, "that I couldn't work on your sympathy in that way? This is a business proposition."

"You mean you'd rather let some strange man in on it than let me in. I wasn't so much looking to help you as I

was to make some money. I know the invention is a good thing."

"How do you know? You never have seen it."

"Gee," she murmured, "you *are* funny. Isn't it your invention? . . . There comes Mr. Driggs to make a call."

Driggs came up the steps. Taloe rose. The girl sat quietly in her rocking chair.

"How do, Allie," Driggs said. "I got a little business I want to talk over with you."

"What about?"

"Well, I want to talk to you alone."

"Sit down, Mr. Taloe," said Allie in the tone of one who is about to enjoy herself. Taloe could feel that resentment was throbbing in her. He had hurt her by what he had done. He sank back into his seat. "What is it?" said Allie to Driggs.

"I went to see your guardian to-day," Driggs said. "It's all over town about your goin' to lend money to this man for his fool invention. A new fangled lamp! Good Lord, you can pick 'em off every bush."

"What did you tell my guardian?"

"I told him everything," said Driggs. "I told him how you'd been carrying on with this man and how he was after your money."

"And what did my guardian say?"

"Well, he was riled. He said he always knew you was a darn fool—"

"Did you permit him to say that about me, Mr. Driggs?"

"Well, I was there on business."

"And what did my guardian say after that?"

"He said he'd have a talk with you. I just wanted to let you know that when he sent for you you'd probably be put on the carpet. That's all. I just wanted to let you know, Miss Allie, that there's more'n one way to skin a cat."

Miss Allie put a slim hand to her mouth and yawned back of it.

"I wonder why my guardian didn't tell you," she said.

"Tell me what?"

"That I was of age last week."

There was silence among the three of them except for Driggs' breathing, suddenly grown heavy.

"An' you can do what you like with your money?" he demanded at last.

"Just as I like."

Driggs leaned toward her, his eyes glowing even in the dark.

"You've been lyin' to me," he said. "You told me right along you wouldn't be of age for two months."

Allie Kent got lithely to her feet. She went close to Driggs and faced him.

"You fool!" she said. "That's what's been in your mind all along. You just wanted to get hold of the little bit of money my father left me. I knew it, while you kept telling me how much you cared for me. I tolerated you because I had to tolerate somebody. I couldn't shut myself up in the house. You—"

Her scorn of him shook her so that her voice failed. She turned to the Virginian:

"Will you oblige me by throwing this man off the porch?" she whispered.

Taloe rose. He had everything on his side and he knew it. He could take his time.

"Will you go into the house?" he asked.

"Oh, no. I want to sec."

"It is'n't anything for a woman to sec. Go in."

She looked up at him. His eyes, grown a little hard as he prepared himself, softened for her. She suddenly found his attitude toward women very sweet. Her defiance and her daring—which she had often needed—crept away.

"All right," she said softly; and she opened the door and went inside.

She was tempted to remain near the door, but she knew that would be obeying only the letter of his injunction. She started up the stairs. She was at the landing when a thought which struck terror through her came to her.

Undoubtedly Driggs had known that Taloe was there to-night. Taloe once had beaten Driggs. Driggs was unscrupulous. There had been fights in the village in the past in which knives had been used. In this fight Taloe would strike the first blow.

Her father's revolver was in her mother's room. Her mother had only a glimpse of a hurrying, flurried thing which swept into the room and swept

out again. The girl ran down the stairs and out upon the porch. Driggs and Taloe were locked in each other's arms. Taloe had forced Driggs' right hand back of him and was slowly pushing it toward Driggs' left shoulder. Driggs struggled, cursing vilely. But Taloe's free arm held him so closely he could hardly move.

The girl saw that Driggs' right hand held a knife. She leaned back against the door, the revolver in readiness. She was palpitant. Her heart beat in her throat above the vivid blazer collar. She would kill for this man.

Driggs was uttering little gasps of pain by now. Slowly Taloe shoved the hand upward. At last Driggs could stand the strain of it no longer. With a moan he released his hold and the knife clattered to the porch.

Taloe had been aware that the girl had returned. He pushed Driggs away from him.

"You'd better leave," he said.

Driggs, too, had seen Allie. He now caught sight of the revolver.

"Ah," he choked out, "you was ready to kill me, was you? . . . I can see what's up between you two. You and him and your money that you're so careful about. You're stuck on him and he's selling himself to you."

"It's a lie," the girl shot back. "You tell all the gossips in the village it's a lie. I'm engaged to marry him. I was engaged long before I did anything about the money."

"Oh, you're a—" Driggs began.

Taloe struck him across the mouth with his open palm, took him by the throat, brought him to his knees, cuffed him soundly, and threw him down the steps. He started to follow him, but Driggs scrambled up and hastened down the street.

The girl shrank away from Taloe as he turned to her.

"Don't be angry," she panted. "You don't know what gossip will do to a man here. It might kill all your chances of raising money. I thought it was best to say we were engaged. . . . It was all my fault about the money. . . . Mother and I can go away. You'll be going soon. Nobody will know the difference. But I couldn't bear to have peo-

ple think you were that kind of a man—"

But the awakening which she had felt in him at the touch of her hand was completed now. He strode to her, caught her up in his arms, and kissed her as ardently as any chevalier of old.

"Oh," he said some time later, "I forgot to tell you. That banker talked to me for quite a while about my invention. He's going to have a look at it to-morrow, and if he thinks it's any good he'll advance the money to me. Everything will come out all right."

"Yes, everything will be all right," she said. Her eyes widened. "Hasn't it worked out wonderfully? You see, if Driggs hadn't attacked you, you'd never have noticed me. The reason he attacked you was because when I found you were working together in the mine I was forever asking questions about you. He accused me of meeting you. And then you are getting your chance because I went to that old banker about my money. . . . Don't you think I have done something?"

"Yes," he said. And he added with a

touch of mischief in his tone which showed he was learning: "But you told Driggs we were engaged before you did anything about the money. That wasn't quite true."

"It was," she declared. "I said I was engaged to you. That was true. I engaged myself to you the first time I saw you, because I loved you then. Just deep down in my heart, you know, I engaged myself. If we'd never had a real engagement, why, I'd just have been engaged all by myself."

He looked at her. She was leaning a little forward. Her throat, with the summer's tan still on it, was bare. Her lips were held tightly together. Tears trembled in her unwinking eyes. He drew her to him.

"I must have been engaged to you always," he said. "I've met a lot of women, but I never woke up till I met you. I've been going around in a kind of a dream, thinking of nothing but a tin lamp."

"Tin lamp!" she cried. "Well, if that isn't a regular Aladdin's lamp, there never was one."

The Ragged Edge

By GRANT OWEN

THEY had left Port Saïd behind and now the big P. & O. liner was poking slowly through the canal. On either hand stretched the flat, sandy desert, with here and there a laden camel or two or a white shrouded horseman to break the monotony of the arid landscape.

Overhead was the bluest of blue Egyptian skies, and astern trailed a milky wake. Now they passed native dhows, the crews of which scrambled madly ashore and held fast to the line bent about the snubbing-post, while the huge liner

churned past and the little dhow cavorted and leaped and pulled, like some thing alive, trying to break from its fettering bonds. Again they passed an English troop-ship, her deck alive with figures which wildly waved their helmets and shouted very pointed pleasantries at the P. & O. boat. And then—

A loud-clattering gong in the hall outside announced closing time. The attendants of the Public Library reading-room began to close their desks and reach for the overshoes under them. Half the lights went out and the sound

of closing books came from the tables all about the room.

The trip through Suez being a most interesting affair, Jimmy Sneed sighed, closed the big book before him with much reluctance and pushed back his chair. Then, turning up the collar of his frayed overcoat, he shuffled out of the reading-room, with a nod to the attendant whose desk was nearest the door; for all the attendants of the reading-room had come to know him by sight.

Outside a raw March wind was blowing. Jimmie lowered his head to it and made his shivering way up the street toward home. The spell of Port Saïd and Suez was still strong upon him. He could see those bobbing, stone-laden camels plodding along the bank; he could see the dhows, their wide sails spread to the wisp of wind. He could sniff in fancy the dry, desert smells.

He sighed again as he turned the corner of the shabby little street where he lived and turned into the doorway of a wooden tenement house.

Three flights of dark stairs he negotiated by the feel of the banister-rail; then he fished for his latch-key and opened a door.

A pale and rather sharp-featured woman rocked to and fro in a chair beneath the one lighted gas-jet, as she sewed buttons on one of Jimmy's gray flannel shirts.

"I had to work again to-night," said Jimmy, forestalling any inquiry on his wife's part.

"Seems to me you're working about every night lately," said Mrs. Sneed.

Jimmy nodded. "Yep, that's so," he admitted. "Got anything to eat?"

"There's a glass of milk and some cookies on the shelf in the closet," she replied, clicking her teeth as she bit off a thread. "What's the matter down to the factory? Are they short-handed?"

Jimmy, in the closet by this time, answered her thickly through a mouthful of cookies.

"Yep. Three of the firemen on the night shift is sick. Can't seem to get none to take their places, neither. I'm helping 'em out down there by working till they can get some one."

"They'll pay you extra for it, of course," said Mrs. Sneed.

Jimmy started. Not particularly facile of mind, this was a contingency he hadn't thought to count on.

"No, I don't believe I'll get any extra out of it," he mumbled thickly.

"You'd oughter," snapped his wife. "Trouble with you is you're altogether too accommodating. If they can't pay you for working, like they'd have to some one else, you hadn't oughter be working overtime."

"I'll say something about it to-morrow," said Jimmy.

"You'd better," said she with much finality. "You've been working now pretty near every night for a month."

Jimmy, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, came out of the closet.

"I'm going to bed. I'm tired out," said he, moving toward the little bedroom up the hall.

"I don't think much of your working so night and day," said Mrs. Sneed, following him.

"Nor me, neither," said he.

"You'd oughter be getting good pay for it," she persisted.

"I'll speak to 'em, like I said, to-morrow," said Jimmy again, uncasily.

Then he dropped asleep, to dream of blue skies and white sands and bobbing camels and crowded troop-ships. Also, certain corners of Port Saïd being firmly implanted in his mind from his reading, he dreamed of them too.

"Will you have to work again to-night?" Mrs. Sneed asked as they ate breakfast off the kitchen table next morning.

"I s'pose I'll have to, if they want me," said he.

"Don't you do it unless they'll give you extra pay," she admonished.

"I'll ask 'em for it. I can't make 'em pay it if they wont," said he evasively.

His wife sniffed scornfully. "I'll bet you don't get anything out of it," she said.

"I dunno as I shall," he agreed quite cheerfully. "I'm willing to help 'em out for a little—"

Mrs. Sneed sniffed again and slammed the coffee-pot down on the stove.

Half-past six that evening found Jimmy Sneed, his frugal supper at a tiny lunch-room having been hastily swallowed, back in the reading-room of the

Public Library, the big book open on the table before him, his eyes glowing and his lips moving noiselessly, as he went through the rest of the canal on the P. & O. boat.

The light from the shaded lamps fell upon his eager face—a rather weak face, it is true, yet a face not wholly devoid of good points. He bent far over the book, one pudgy finger following the text as he read.

Through the canal they went and into the Red Sea. They were coming into really tropical weather now. Everyone dressed in white, and in the saloons the big electric fans whirred ceaselessly day and night. At night, too, under the brilliant tropic stars, the decks were littered with mattresses which the stewards brought up from the now all-too-stuffy staterooms. You slept there on the deck as close to the windward rail as you could get, and no matter how strong the breeze was, it was never cold.

They were approaching Aden that evening when the gong rang, all too soon, its closing warning, and Jimmy again reluctantly closed the book and shuffled out of the comfortable reading-room to the sleet coming down outside.

How he hated it, the cold, the monotony of the same old streets under the same old flaring arc lights! How he hated the grind of his job in the boiler-room of the factory, the bareness and cheerlessness of his own home!

The only hours of the whole day he really lived were these few brief ones in the reading-room, while he traveled the world as he liked and where he liked: climbed mountains, crossed oceans, sped north or south or east or west, just as his fancy dictated. And if one really got such pleasure reading about it, what must the reality be? What must it be to see these places with your own eyes—to feel the throb of engines beneath your feet, and know that you were going on and on to something new and interesting each day?

That was life! That was something like! Jimmy twitched the coat collar closer about his half-frozen neck and began to indulge in fancies.

Some men can indulge in fancies and come out of it with no harm at all. Others, to whom the fancies are more

real, are not so fortunate. Jimmy began to picture to himself such a trip as the one he had just been reading about. It got him strongly. In his absorption he bumped into an unwary old gentleman and all but walked over a small newsboy who waved a paper under his nose.

At the fifth corner he had made his decision. He would see something of the world—see it first-hand, too, and not through the medium of the printed page—which latter he even had to take surreptitiously, for Mrs. Sneed, for some reason best known to herself, objected to Jimmy reading travel books, and had made such a fuss about it that that was why he sought the Public Library reading-room nightly.

Indeed, Mrs. Sneed had never seemed quite the same to him since the day she had managed, by dint of many tears and much nagging, to get him to promise to forego the joys of travel literature in the future. It had seemed so absurd to Jimmy, and her excuse—that he read all the time he was home with never a word to her—seemed so inadequate!

Well, he'd had his reading just the same, despite her protestations and the promises she had forced from him. If she'd only let him read at home perhaps all this wouldn't have happened; perhaps he would have been content to take his journeys indefinitely via the printed page route. But Mrs. Sneed had kicked; indeed, she had made a scene. Mrs. Sneed must take the consequences of her rashness.

There was a little—a very little—money in a savings bank. It had been put there at privations that made Jimmy shiver to remember even now. Half of it he would take; the other half he would leave for her. That would be a fair division.

He had reached the tenement house. He opened the door at the top of the third flight. The place was dark.

"Ida!" He called his wife's name. There was no answer.

He struck a light. He called to his wife again and then went into the bedroom.

The door of the little closet was open; so was the top bureau drawer. Things lay scattered on the bed—veils, neckwear, an old hat, a gingham dress. Mrs.

Sneed's best dress, the one she always wore when she went out, was gone. So was her best hat, her best gloves.

Distinctly Mrs. Sneed was not a gadabout; neither was she given to going out evenings without some very potent cause.

"Ida!" Sneed called again, poking his head into the empty kitchen.

He scratched his head in perplexity. Then he began to think. He stood there with his brows wrinkling and unwrinkling as they always did when he was a little dazed.

Perhaps his wife had found out his duplicity; perhaps in anger she had simply gone away with no word for him. He opened the door of the kitchen closet. His nightly milk and cookies were not on the shelf. He suddenly felt a sense of overwhelming loss; for on such insignificant things hang all the laws and the prophets of domesticity.

This was home, however bare and cheerless it had been. And he had been thinking of leaving it willfully—with malice aforethought! His weak face began to pucker, his lips to twitch. Maybe she *had* nagged him unreasonably and—

Some one was running up the stairs; the door flew open. There was a quick, nervous sob. Mrs. Sneed was clinging desperately to him. Her best dress was mud-stained; her best hat was slewed over one ear.

"Jimmy, oh Jimmy!" she panted. "So you're alive!"

"Alive?" he repeated, more dazed than ever. "Why shouldn't I be?"

She drew back and stood staring at him.

"Didn't you know—?" she began.

"Know what?" he interrupted.

"That there was an awful fire downtown to-night," said she. "It's the factory. There was an explosion in the boiler-room first. They think everyone in there was killed. The people downstairs told me. I hurried down as soon as I heard. But they said they wouldn't know anything definite till morning—that they couldn't get at any of the bodies till then. So I came back here and saw a light and—"

She stopped short. She took a step back.

"You didn't know it. You weren't there!" she cried. "You haven't been there to-night nor any of the other nights."

Then her arms went about his shoulders again.

"I don't care where you've been, so long as you're alive," she cried.

Jimmy held her silently for some minutes. Then he huskily cleared his throat.

"No, I aint been near there, not one single night," he confessed. "I've been to Egypt instead, and to China, and all over Europe. You wouldn't let me read 'em here at home," he defended his actions, "and so, in spite of all the promises I made, I went to the Public Library. I just had to have that reading. I couldn't seem to get along without it."

"I don't care what you've done so long as you're alive," she said again. "Perhaps I was wrong about making the fuss I did, but once I had an uncle that took to reading travel books, and after a time he got so he did nothing else, and then he went and run off, left his wife and two children to shift for themselves, so'st he could see them places he'd been reading about. I remember the look that used to be in his eyes just before he went, and I thought I saw the same look coming into your eyes, Jimmy, and I was scared. That's why I made the fuss and made you promise me not to read 'em any more."

Jimmy started violently. His mouth opened, but no sound came out of it.

Mrs. Sneed paid no heed to his strange behavior. She was clutching him tightly again as if to assure herself he was real.

"But you can read all of 'em here you want from now on," she hurried on. "It's enough for me to know you're alive, after what I've been through to-night and the scare I've had. Read all you want of 'em, and, yes"—she laughed hysterically—"run away, if you want to, like my uncle did! I wont say a word so long as it wa'n't you that was killed in that boiler-room!"

Gently Jimmy Sneed took off her side-slewed hat; gently he smoothed the rumpled hair beneath it.

"I aint going to run very *fur*—not now I aint," he said with an emphasis that puzzled her.



Hawgood, Slave Driver

The story of a "new broom" set to sweep clean a dusty railroad management—and of a crippled woman telegraph operator who proved a heroine

By DANIEL WARD

EVERYTHING that old man Willoughby touched turned to gold. The reason for this was not necromancy. He merely saw possibilities.

So when he had looked over the Pittstown and Randall railroad, he bought it outright. The road was a single track pike which had fallen into decay. What little business it did, it did perilously. The road-bed was almost innocent of ballast, and the rolling stock was a joke. Half a dozen trains a day were the limit of its activity.

Its stock was held by a hundred individuals who had thought at the time the road was built that any railroad stock was good. The road had been run through a sparsely settled country, from which there was little tonnage. Its promoters took their bonus and went their ways.

Everybody believed now that the stock was worthless. But old man Willoughby was on the inside of affairs, and he knew that coal had been struck on several farms adjacent to the right of way. He bought these farms and many others. He got the road dirt cheap, because the stockholders had not heard about the coal strike. Investigation by Willoughby's agents showed that coal abounded. Willoughby pre-

pared to mine the coal, and he also prepared to put the road on its feet.

He was no less a student of men than a student of industrial conditions. For a long time he had had his eye on Miles Hawgood, superintendent of a division on a prosperous road in which Willoughby held stock. He sent for Hawgood. Hawgood, no less wise in his way than Willoughby, took the summons coolly, though his heart pounded in his breast. Young Hawgood had had a notion that Willoughby would send for him some time.

"I want you to go over and take charge of the Pittstown and Randall Railroad," said Willoughby. "I'm not giving you a title. You'll be the boss in every department. I'll give you a list of a few bright young men. Pick them for your important places if you like. Get others if you want to. Anyway, get the road in running order. Draw on me for what you need. What's your present salary?"

"I'll go to work for you for eight thousand dollars a year," said Hawgood.

Willoughby nodded and turned back to his desk. He had been prepared to pay six thousand, but he was a student of men. He knew Hawgood was the man he wanted. Two thousand dollars

wasn't much if Hawgood made good. If he didn't make good, his whole salary would stop in short order.

Hawgood walked out of the office, went to his own office, resigned, and in two weeks was at his desk in the ramshackle old building which was the headquarters of the Pittstown road.

In ten days he had new men at the heads of all departments. The silver heads, with the road since construction time, walked out. Hawgood called a meeting of his aids the first day they went to work.

"We will spend one week making plans," he said, crisply. "Then we will go on a tour of inspection. Let every man be ready to state the needs of his department as we go along. One week from this morning, gentlemen. Smith-night, have the 26, which will be my car, overhauled and cleaned."

"Yes, sir," said Smithnight; and the car was ready in twenty-four hours. That was typical of the kind of work which Hawgood exacted.

Hawgood knew railroading, from the cleaning of a fire-box to an issue of bonds. And he knew that he knew railroading in just that way. Necessarily, because he was just thirty, he had a mighty good opinion of himself. More, he made those with whom he surrounded himself have a mighty good opinion of him. They were all aware that he drove them, but they liked the exhilaration which the speed gave. The enthusiasm of their youth made them believe they were playing the big game as it should be played. Not a man among them but believed Hawgood was their mental superior. They read his keen glances and understood his chopped-off sentences to the last shade of meaning.

Figuratively speaking, dust rose in clouds from that old pike. Gangs of men descended upon it, ripped away rails, and put in new ones. The shops hummed. Old engines went to the scrap heap. New, modern ones took their places. New wires on new poles shone in the spring sunlight. Buildings were painted. New instruments went to operators along the line. Engineers were jacked up. The superintendent of telegraph had a box relay in his office, and

he had it cut in on the various wires through the day. With a payroll in front of him, he listened and checked off the ability of each operator, fixing the names of the "hams" in his mind. His ax was sharpened for these.

Hawgood did not disturb the heads of departments by calling them to his office. He made the rounds of their offices each day. Five minutes in each sufficed to acquaint him with how things were going. He was a hustler from the village where original hustlers are bred, was Hawgood.

He sat one morning and listened to the ticking of the box relay in the telegraph superintendent's office. Yes, he was an operator, too. He had made Mr. Morse's acquaintance at odd times. He could have sat in on any of the wires and worked his trick with the best of them.

The box relay was now cut in on the train wire. The despatcher downstairs called "HX," Houston, a station thirty miles down the line. The despatcher put out an order there and at the yard office. The operator at the yard office sped it back. He was a good man and safe from the superintendent's ax. The yard got the despatcher's "complete," and then "HX" began to repeat the order. Hawgood listened, while the superintendent went on talking. Hawgood could do two things like that with ease and exactness. As he listened, a frown came to Hawgood's forehead.

"That man must have the palsy," he said to the superintendent. "Did you ever hear such sending?"

It was pretty "bum stuff." The operator "broke himself" time and again, and once the despatcher had to correct him on a number—a mistake which might be fatal at any time unless the despatcher was wide awake. This despatcher was wide awake—for one reason, because he knew he was cut in on the relay upstairs.

"Yes, I'm going to make a change at 'HX' right away," said the superintendent of telegraph.

Maud Daniels, the operator at "HX," had known for some time that she was going back in her sending. Telegraphers' cramp had got into her once supple

fingers. Once her Morse had been as good as another's, but the cramp takes delight in settling on supple fingers. The best sender in the world may suddenly be afflicted by it.

On the pay-roll Maud Daniels was M. E. Daniels. Because new men were running the road the superintendent of telegraph was not aware that he was about to wield his ax on a girl. If he had known, it might not have made any difference. Working for Hawgood, he knew he had to have service. He couldn't sacrifice his own job for some one else.

Now Maud Daniels' career had something of sentiment in it, but sentiment seemed just now to be a lost emotion on the Pittstown pike. For thirty years her people had worked for the road. Her father had been one of its first engineers. Him they had brought home a silent figure on a night when a despatcher blundered in his orders. Later a brother had been run down in a snowstorm when he was trying to get a flag out against a passenger train. The father had left a little insurance. While that lasted, Maud studied telegraphy. She went to headquarters and stated her case. The old superintendent, who had known her father, gave her the day job at her home town. She earned forty dollars a month. That supported herself and her mother.

They did very well till the cramp came into Maud's white fingers. She tried valiantly to fight it off. A strap about her wrist—a common device—helped not at all. Massage and hot bathing likewise were useless. The village doctor could do nothing. He said the hand needed rest.

As Maud saw her job going she did not cry. She came of too stern stock for that. But she worried. She could not tell her mother, because her mother was in nervous ill health. She kept her troubles to herself—which is not good for a pretty young woman of twenty.

The day after Hawgood and the superintendent of telegraph had listened to her sending she got a letter in the train mail. She put the envelope down on the long table and looked at it for some time. She knew what it contained.

"Well," she said to herself, "I sup-

pose we can sell the house and go away to some city where I can get a place doing something else. I don't know how Mother will take that. I suppose it will kill her."

She took up the envelope and tore the end of it off. Though she had been prepared, the letter shocked her. The superintendent of telegraph merely stated that for the good of the service she would be relieved as operator at Houston. A man would be there in a few days to take her place. The letter was superscribed "Dear sir."

"They don't even know that I'm a woman," said Maud to herself, bitterly. "I don't suppose one of them ever heard of my father or my brother. . . . Well," she added, inconsequently, "I guess they'll make a success of the road."

Rebellious tears rose to her eyes, but she fought them back stubbornly. For the rest of the day her sending was better than it had been for weeks. The blood of her father was telling in her.

The autumn rains started the day after Maud Daniels received the letter from the superintendent of telegraph. Thunder crashed and lightning flared across an angry sky. The river in the valley just east of Houston rose several inches on the abutments of the old-fashioned railroad bridge.

The rains lasted for three days. Looking out of his office window at nightfall, Hawgood got a "hunch."

"I'll just take a run over the road while it's at its worst," he said. "That's the way to see things—when they're at their worst."

He sent word to the various chiefs. They assembled in the gray dawn next day at the station. Some of them were worried. While they had done wonders for the road, they had not worked the impossible. Instead of having been re-created, the road had merely been patched. The new rails on their new ties would hold against an ordinary wash-out, but there were long stretches not yet touched. These were danger places, they all knew, but they said nothing to Hawgood. They waited apprehensively for Hawgood to see what he should see.

For thirty miles the special, an engine and the "26," made fairly good time. They were running on a schedule of their own, giving them right of way over everything, but they found the block against them at Twinsburg. A freight coming toward them had been given ten minutes on their time.

"Ask the despatcher what he is laying us out for," Hawgood snapped.

"He says," said the operator, "that he had a first '40' in at Wayne. He had to let it come here when the second '40' got there. The siding wouldn't hold both of them."

"That's fine despatching," Hawgood said. "Why can't he figure a little?"

"He's having all he can do to keep 'em moving at all," the operator replied. "He can't figure on any kind of time. He's got to take his chances."

Hawgood bestowed his well-known glare on the operator and went outside. The "40" arrived and the special started west. In a few minutes the engineer came to an abrupt stop. Hawgood and the others jumped down into the pouring, wind-carried rain.

"What are you flagging us for?" Hawgood demanded of a man who carried a dripping red flag.

"The first '41' is all over the right of way," the man answered. "Went into a wash-out."

They hastened along the track. A sight which distressed him met Hawgood's eyes. The first "41" was indeed all over the right of way. Coming round a curve it had struck a wash-out. The track had been undermined for fifty feet and had slipped down the bank. The engine of the "41" had taken a header over the bank and the cars had followed.

"What a mess!" said Hawgood. "Have you sent for the wrecker?"

"Conductor's gone back to the telegraph office," the engineer answered.

"How far is that?" Hawgood asked, off his guard in his anxiety, but quickly biting his lip. "Yes, I know," he added, "—a quarter of a mile . . . Come on, men."

The conductor met them at the door. "Wrecker's been ordered out, Mr. Hawgood," he said. "Be over here in an hour and a half if she don't run into something."

"It'll take 'em till night to clear the track," Hawgood said; and he and his party sat down in the private car to await the wrecker.

All day they sat there, smoking and talking discontentedly, while the road lay in idleness. Because it had not connections except at the western terminal, they could not send their train over another road.

Toward dusk the wrecking boss, a big, grizzled man, came to the car.

"We'll have the track clear in ten minutes," he said. "We can fix it up so's you can creep over."

Hawgood went to the telegraph office, taking the superintendent of telegraph with him.

"Tell the despatcher to give us a new schedule with the right of way," he ordered peremptorily.

The operator repeated the order.

While the two officials sat in the office, waiting for their orders, the storm increased. Night came on furiously. The wind jumped at the little building and rocked it. The rain flooded from the black sky.

"I'm going on if it storms like this all night," said Hawgood. "We'll have trouble wherever the old work is still in."

The operator had been repeating back their orders. Suddenly he closed his key with a snap and leaned forward over his sounder. Something in his attitude brought Hawgood and the telegraph superintendent to his side.

Houston was sending a message to the despatcher. The bridge there, the message said, had gone out. A freight train was in the river. The river was rising fast. The storm was terrible. Hawgood might have guessed the femininity in the choice of that word, but he was too engrossed.

As the operator at Houston stopped sending, Hawgood leaned over the operator's shoulder, shoved his hand from the key, and called the despatcher. The despatcher answered. Hawgood asked what the further danger was. For answer the despatcher began to call the first station east of Houston. The operator there "O.S.'d" Number 6, a passenger which had been let out as soon as the wreck had been reported cleared.

Hawgood saw at a glance what the situation was. The bridge at Houston was out, and Number 6 was speeding toward Houston. The despatcher, his mind apparently grasping the peril as quickly as Hawgood's, began calling Houston. There was no answer.

"HX, HX, HX, HX—" The sounder hummed with the call.

Hawgood shoved his dripping cap back from his forehead.

"That's your ham, Matthews," he said to the telegraph superintendent. "He's lost his nerve and beaten it."

Hawgood knew his big moment had come. His teeth clicked together. In his mind he calculated every chance.

"Come on," he said.

He ran from the office and gained the private car, carrying the special's orders with him.

"Can we get by?" he asked the engineer, who leaned from his cab window; the engineer nodded.

To him Hawgood briefly explained what had happened.

"Open her up," he said. "It's us against that trainload of passengers. There's one chance in ten million we can beat Six to Houston and flag her beyond the river. . . Got your nerve?"

"Get on board," said the engineer tensely, as man to man.

The engine and its single car crept over the repaired track and gained the solid one beyond. Then they began their perilous flight through the night.

"I'll kill that operator if ever I lay my hands on him," said Hawgood between his teeth.

Maud Daniels had been sitting in her office, her hand on the key, when the bridge had gone out. She had heard the freight whistle beyond the bridge and she was waiting to "O.S." it. She could not see the bridge because of the slithering storm.

Her first hint of disaster was when the engine's wild cry came to her. Then there was a sound of rending timbers. She heard the engine strike the stone of the abutment, and the cars follow it. There was the hiss of the engine as it struck the water, and the noise of cars piling down upon it. She knew what had happened.

She forgot her telegrapher's cramp as she rushed her message to the despatcher. She heard Hawgood break in, and then heard the despatcher call the station east of her. Then she picked up a red lantern and ran out into the storm.

She forgot the cast approach of the bridge. Except for one rail which held like a thread at each end, the bridge was gone. Fifty feet below her was the wrecked train. She stepped from the track and stood a moment on the brow of the steep hill which led to the river's edge.

Slowly, whipped by the wind and buffeted by the rain, she made her way down the hill. At the water's edge, she stumbled against something soft. She put the light of her lantern on it. It was the body of a man.

She knelt beside him. He turned his head so that he could look at her. She saw he was the train's head brakeman. He had been trying to drag himself up the hill, pulling a broken leg after him. He began to speak in a whisper:

"I guess the boys are gone, if that's what you're lookin' for. . . . Don't mind about me. . . . I was tryin' to get up the hill, but I guess I couldn't 'a' made it. . . . Six'll be here soon."

His face dropped to the clay ground, and he lay still. He had passed his impossible duty to another and had fainted.

Maud Daniels stood up, gasping for breath. Her heart was pounding. She made a swift mental calculation of time. Six must be due now, she figured. She had one chance. The storm must have held the passenger train back. If it had, she might yet be in time. She climbed the bank on her hands and knees. Several times she slipped. Rough stones cut into her hands. But she gained the summit. Stooping, she took her breath there and then she ran down the track.

Past her office she went, one ear away from the wind to catch Six's whistle. But there was only the noise of the storm. After a while she looked back. The block lamp which she had lighted despite the storm was only a red eye in the night. She had gone far enough.

Standing in the middle of the track, she began to swing the lantern to and fro in front of her, half mechanically. Her senses seemed strangely deadened. She had only one thought: To keep on swinging the lantern till she stopped the train.

When she had begun to wonder dully whether she had not been mistaken about Six's time, a speck of light appeared far down the track. With the lightning playing across the sky, the thunder breaking and rolling, and the rain beating down on her in a torrent, she kept up her methodical swinging of the lantern. Would the engineer see it? she asked herself.

Then she had a sense of unreality. Her nerves stretched to the breaking point. The light came nearer, nearer. It was almost in front of her. But she had not the will to spring from harm's way. . . . Then the engine's blast rose above the storm.

She opened her eyes to find herself looking into the engine's headlight. It dazzled her, so that she could not see. Some one took her arm and led her from the track.

"What is it?" a man in overalls asked.

She looked into the face of old Jim Callahan. He had been her father's friend; she had known him since she was a little girl. His touch, his kindly face, his quiet, controlled voice, restored her.

"The bridge has gone out," she said. "A freight is in the river. I flagged you. Help me back to the office, Mr. Callahan."

Dripping, she seated herself at the table and called the despatcher.

"Where's Six?" the despatcher asked, and his sending was worse than hers had ever been.

"Up the track a ways," she said. "I flagged it."

"I—I—I—I—" said the despatcher, for no words came to him to express the joy which swept through him.

Hawgood's special was flagged before he got to Houston, and he was informed that Six was safe. The special went over to Houston under control. Their flight over unsafe rails had momentarily tamed Hawgood.

The special crept up to the wrecked bridge, and Hawgood and Matthews crossed the swollen river in a boat.

"They say a woman stopped Six," said Hawgood to the superintendent of telegraph. "I guess they're so up in the air they haven't time to give us details."

He entered the telegraph office with the superintendent at his heels. A bedraggled young woman was giving way to the night operator. Hawgood took off his hat and stood before her.

"I apprehend you are the young woman who flagged Six," he said. "The company will not forget what you have done. . . . If you will give me your name—"

"Daniels is my name," she said.

The superintendent started as he remembered the letter he had written to one Daniels.

Hawgood opened his lips to speak, but Maud Daniels had had enough for one day.

"It was nothing," she said. "It was only my work. I guess under the new management the employees are expected to do their duty."

"The employees?" Hawgood asked.

"Why, I'm the operator here," she said. . . . I'm going home now."

He stepped aside and she went out into the rain. Hawgood and the superintendent of telegraph did not look at each other.

They worked all that night and the next day without resting. At dusk, when the storm had blown itself out, Hawgood and the superintendent of telegraph went to the country hotel. While they were waiting for their supper, the superintendent of telegraph began to nod. He awoke with a start. He was ashamed of nodding in the presence of Hawgood. But Hawgood, the great, only said, his eyes on his plate:

"That 'ham' at Houston deserves everything we can do for her. I—I'll need a girl in my office—a sort of secretary. The job would pay ninety dollars a month—to her. She seems capable enough."

But the superintendent of telegraph began to nod again. He was dead tired, and he felt that if Hawgood was going to be as human as all that he could get away with a five-minute nap.



Head Winds

An amusing little comedy of the New England coast: a sea-cook becomes smitten of a fair damsel and to win favor in her eyes pretends to be the skipper himself. Whereupon sundry surprising things happen.

By CASPAR JOHNSON

FOR fully a half hour, Owen Rand had been watching the little boat pulling out from the shore with high-lifted and deep-dipped oars. It was only, however, when he realized that the boat was headed for the schooner upon the rail of which he sat, and that the oars were plied by a couple of very pretty girls while another sat at the tiller, that he suddenly remembered the over-prominent patches on the trousers he wore; that his flannel shirt would be better for washing and that he had a three-days' growth of stubble on cheek and chin.

"Humph! Summer boarders at one of the houses on the bank, most likely," Owen mused, all attention now. "Like enough they're comin' aboard. They're always pokin' out to look us over whenever we lay here. Yep, they are headed this way."

The three girls in the boat were singing gaily. The sound of their voices drifted pleasantly over the water to the listening Owen. He slid off the rail and made a hasty dive for the galley.

For a week now the schooner had been lying here in the lee of Round Island, waiting for more favorable winds before she put to sea and started

southward with her cargo of cut stone from the quarries up the bay.

Owen was quite alone at the time, for the skipper, after dinner that day, had taken the four men of the schooner's crew and gone up to the flats on George's Creek for clams.

The thought of that oncoming boat and the three pretty prospective visitors in it made Owen flax about with unusual vigor. Off came his greasy cook's apron; off came the flannel shirt. Out came his shaving kit; and before the cracked mirror above the galley locker he was soon lathering and scraping away vigorously, pausing now and then to judge the boat's approach by the sound of the popular ditty which came floating down the galley companion to him.

Never had Owen Rand made a more hurried toilet. By the time the boat was alongside he was just knotting a gorgeous plaid tie over the lavender-striped shirt. The damp dish-cloth, hanging just above the range, was pressed into service to wipe the dust from his shiny patent-leather shoes; the galley broom whisked the bits of lint from his blue serge clothes, which generally lay undisturbed in the locker from one trip's end to another.

Then he heard a grating bump, as the bow of the boat struck the schooner's side; three distinct feminine squeals followed by much laughter, and then a hail: "Ahoy there, aboard the schooner!"

Owen had just time to snatch up a smart blue cap which matched his suit, and adjust his trousers so that the creases would hang straight, before the hail came again.

Throwing back his narrow shoulders and stepping impressively, he mounted the companion steps and crossed the deck.

"How d'ye do, Cap'n? May we come aboard?" one of the girls at the oars greeted him.

Owen's shoulders went yet farther back. His bearing took on a yet more important dignity. Plainly his toilet, hurried as it had been, had not been wasted.

"Come aboard most certainly," said Owen. "Let me have your painter. Yes, thank you. Will you wait till I get the side ladder? No? Then allow me!"

Gallantly he stood at the rail, and, reaching down, helped the three visitors, one after another, to the deck.

"We're staying at the Bayview House on the bank," one of his guests announced with a comprehensive wave of a shapely arm shoreward, "and we did so want to see a real ship ready for sea. It wont bother you too much to show us about, will it, Captain Tomes?"

Owen started slightly.

"You see we asked your name of the storekeeper at that little store down by the pier before we started out," another of the girls explained.

Owen bowed low.

"It will give me the greatest pleasure, I assure you," said he.

"I want to learn the name of the sails and the ropes," said the third of the trio. "That's the bowsprit, isn't it—that long stick out ahead?"

Owen led them, chattering, forward. It would have filled his vain little soul with joy to have been mistaken by anybody for the skipper; but to be taken for the skipper by three such divinities as these filled his cup of happiness to overflowing. Lucky thing for him, he thought, that the skipper had chosen

this particular afternoon for his clamming.

It was a wholly delectable hour he spent while his visitors remained aboard. He showed them the schooner from stem to stern; he uncovered a hatch and took them onto the cut stone in the cavernous hold; he showed them the cabin, the galley, the forecabin—even the lazaret.

And at their repeated requests, he told them several hair-raising experiences—invented on the spur of the moment, of course—that he had while master of this and other schooners.

Tactfully he let drop the facts that he was a single man and not so ill-fixed for this world's goods as he might be.

And when finally the three had climbed back to their boat, it was with the assurance from Owen that he would come to the dance at the Bayview House that evening.

Then, swinging the oars absurdly high, they went pulling shoreward, while Owen, standing on the rail, waved his cap until they were lost to view behind the breakwater.

Looking at the galley clock, he was a bit surprised to find that it was nearing five. As he slid into his old flannel shirt and his greasy apron once more and began peeling the potatoes for the supper stew, his mind was wandering not without a certain satisfaction, over the events of the afternoon, and he was chuckling to himself, every time he remembered the way the three had called him Captain Tomes.

"I guess I made a hit with them dames, all right," he told himself. "Skipper, hey? Sure I'm the skipper—to them—so long as we stay here. I only hope these head winds hold on for a week or so longer. I'll hire an automobile and take 'em down to Gray's Harbor, and maybe I'll git Charlie Latham's knock-about and give 'em a bit of a sail outside some day when there aint too much of this casterly wind. I'll have to hit the old man up for a little advance when he gits back from his clammin' to-night. I'll need some more money than what I've got. I couldn't spend it better, though. Them three is sure some queens. And they take me for the skipper of this craft. That blonde said I looked young

to be a skipper. Wa'n't it lucky the old man took it into his head to go clammin' to-day!"

At half-past eight that night, after the supper dishes had been washed and stowed in the locker, Owen Rand, clad again in the striped lavender shirt, the patent-leather shoes and the blue serge suit, waited patiently at the rail until he heard the chugging motor of one of the lobster boats, headed seaward.

Cautiously he sent out a hail, whereat the lobster boat drew in under the schooner's rail. There ensued a brief conversation between Owen and the man in the boat, at the end of which the lobster fisherman agreed, for a certain stipulated sum there and then placed in his hands, to set the cook ashore and to bring him back to the schooner soon after midnight. Owen was humming softly to himself as the boat went chugging shorewards. It was something about a "light of his life" but just which one of the three it was, Owen Rand himself was not fully decided at that moment. They were all three mighty nice girls, and they thought he was skipper of the schooner! Well, no harm done in that, and it certainly did make matters easier. The lobster fisherman was asking him if he wanted to land at the pier, and Owen gave instructions to be left as near as possible to the Bayview House.

Four days longer the head winds held on, with never a shift nor sign of it, and the schooner swung idly at anchor behind Round Island. Owen Rand had asked for an advance from the skipper and had got it. Every night, by previous agreement, the lobster fisherman slid up to the schooner's rail at about half-past eight and set Owen ashore. Owen sang continually through his waking hours about that "light of his life." By now he was quite decided it was the blonde young lady.

Then one night, as Captain Tomes lay sprawled comfortably on the couch of the after cabin, reading a six-months old magazine, there came the strident puffing and chugging of an unmuffled engine alongside. It was followed by the sound of some awkward person being boosted to the schooner's deck.

The skipper slid off the couch, but even before he could reach the after companion, a very stout and very angry woman in black came waddling down it.

"Head winds!" she choked, shaking a rolled umbrella at the startled skipper. "Writin' me that head winds was holdin' you here at the mouth of the bay! Aint you ashamed of yourself, at your age of life! Aint there a dance to-night, or wouldn't they go joy-ridin' in a hired automobile with yer, or have they found out about *me*? Which is it?"

The skipper stared at her in dumb-founded astonishment.

"Martha, for the love of heaven, what are you talking about?" he demanded. "What are you here for, anyway?"

"Well may you ask what I'm here for?" she snapped savagely. "Don't try to come no innocence with me! I heard about your goin's-on and I come here as fast as I could get here. I've been travelin' for twelve hours steady. I started as soon as I got the letter."

The skipper merely stared open-mouthed. Words seemed at the moment quite beyond him.

"I always said *my* husband was above suspicion, even if he did go to sea," she sniveled. "Maybe this serves me right for boastin' too much. Men is all alike, after all, I guess."

"What in time you talkin' about?" the skipper demanded at last, blurting out the words and thumping the desk in front of him.

"Read that, if you wanten know," said she, pulling a letter from her handbag and almost throwing it at him.

Dazedly the skipper pulled from the envelope the scrawled and badly-written sheet. He began to read; his brows knitted in perplexity; then he turned abruptly to the signature.

"Ben Hammond! The store-keeper ashore here!" he gurgled.

"He's my mother's distant cousin, if you'll remember," said his wife. "I guess he thought I oughter know. I'm glad I found you out, even if I was late in findin' of you. You might 'a' known you'd git caught up sooner or later."

The skipper was reading again, and, as he read, his eyes began to blaze.

"What's this!" he howled, prancing about and shaking one doubled fist threateningly. "Has he clean lost his mind? What's he mean—this stuff about my bein' very attentive to three young women at the Bayview House, and takin' 'em sailin' and joy-ridin' in a motor car? He's crazy!"

"I asked you not to try to come no innocent business," said Mrs. Tomes coldly. "And rantin' around like that don't convince me a mite. I guess—"

The skipper wheeled on her with a glance that made her quail. There was something in the righteous indignation of that glance that convinced her as no words could ever have done. Without a word the skipper caught up his cap and made for the companionway.

Mrs. Tomes reached the deck just as he was ordering the longboat away. Indeed, it swung flush with the taffrail and the skipper was just about to step into it.

"Wait a minute! Where are you goin'?" she asked.

"I'm goin' over to cram this pack of lies down Ben Hammond's throat," said he.

"Lemme go with you," she urged, clutching at his coat sleeve.

He pushed her aside almost roughly.

"You stay here! It aint goin' to be no fit place for no women," he said shortly.

Then the longboat shot downwards, and struck the water with a mighty splash. She heard the creak of oars. Also she caught her husband's voice urging the two men on the thwarts to their best efforts.

"John," she called into the darkness. "I don't believe a word of it! I guess Ben must have been mistaken. Come back, and lemme go over there with you."

The more strident creak of the oars was her only answer.

A man with a metal star displayed conspicuously on his coat lapel came up to the piazza of the Bayview House. In the long dining-room, now cleared of its chairs and tables, gliding couples whirled to and fro to the strains of an orchestra behind the screen of imitation palms.

"I hear Cap'n John Tomes is here to-night?" said the man with the star to a group of young people who were laughing together on one corner of the piazza. "I want a word with him."

"Captain Tomes?" inquired a girl in white. "Yes, he's here. I'll show him to you. There he is—that man in the blue serge, just passing this window."

The man with the star grunted his thanks and entered the dining-room. He made an odd figure as he shuffled through the maze of dancers, dodging this way and that to avoid the whirling couples.

Straight to the man who had been pointed out to him he made his way, and just then the music ceased. With a mild ripple of applause the dancers made for the seats about the edge of the room.

The man with the star tapped the other man on the shoulder.

"Come outside with me quiet, young feller," said he. "Don't make no fuss about it, and I wont."

"Huh? Whatter you want? Who are you, anyway?"

The newcomer ostentatiously displayed his metal star.

"I'm the constable of this town," said he with pride. "I want you for the beatin' up you jest went and give Ben Hammond down to the store."

"Me?" piped the other shrilly.

"Assault and battery of him," explained the constable. "At least that's the charge now." He seldom had a chance to act in his official capacity. He liked to make the most of it. "Maybe the charge'll be more serious bimeby," said he. "Of course that depends on whether Ben gits over it or not."

"Me?" said the other incredulously again, while his face blanched.

"Sure!" said the constable. "Haint you Cap'n John Tomes of the schooner *Effie Ladd* that's layin' out here behind Round Island?"

Owen Rand took a long breath. Slowly the color surged back into his pale cheeks. He wiped his forehead with an air of infinite relief. Then, despite the fact that a certain blonde young woman at his elbow was listening to every word, he made his confession:

"Oh no. I aint the feller you want. I'm Owen Rand, the schooner's cook."



The Queen's Mandate

She was an unique character—ran the roulette wheel in a mining-camp gambling-house and yet was “straight as they make ’em.” She was queen of that camp too; and then came the man who made her see things in a different light.

By OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

NELL TYRRELL paused in her work of polishing the nicked arrow of the roulette wheel, and glanced speculatively at Sierra Jack Thomson.

“And furthermore,” she announced convincingly, “I aint goin’ to stand for no sky pilot locatin’ hereabouts. If this blonde person thinks he’s goin’ to stake out a claim here and start a church goin’ in opposition to the Double Eagle, he’s very much mistaken.”

“Which,” endorsed Sierra, “is my sentiments exactly; an’ I b’lieve I’m the mouthpiece of the rest of the boys in assertin’ that it’s just naturally against our most cherished principles to be reformed.”

“Have you spoke to him yet?” queried the girl.

“I most dee-cidedly have—an’ if I do say it as one who shouldn’t, I am a most convincing talker. But he’s locoed. He calls Silver River ‘fertile territory f’r a minister of the Gospel’ an’ opines that he’s goin’ to stay here f’r some time to come.”

“Which he most certainly is wrong,” she interjected.

“Exactly; an’ in my most polite manner I tried to make him understand that he is *persona non grata*, but he couldn’t

seem to savvy. I must admit that this territory *is* fertile for reform, but it ’pears to me that the worthy inhabitants of this here place are not just what you would call especially responsive to that form of educational uplift.”

“An’ he says he’s goin’ to stay?”

“He mos’ emphatically does.”

“D’yer think he means it?”

“Yep.”

She scrubbed the arrow vindictively, then placed it carefully back on the pivot-point. She turned to the side shelf and rearranged the lines of bottles which stood in alluring array, their many-hued labels extolling the manifold charms of a dozen brands of whisky. Finally she spoke, and her voice rang with determination:

“He’s goin’!”

“Yep. Reckon he is. But not just now.”

“He’s got to go. This here hole is so all-fired dead that the boys’ll welcome a church, an’ first thing you know they’ll all have religion an’ be givin’ me the go-by. He looks to me like the kind of a man who’ll reform ’em if he has to get ’em drunk to do it.”

“Which I agree with you entire,” chimed Jack.

"And," she asked interestedly, "I suppose he asked about me—me bein' the on'y woman in camp?"

"Yep. He asked 'bout you."

"An' you tol' him—"

"The usual. I tol' him that ev'ry man in this here would-be municipality had tried to get fresh with you, an' that you weren't that kind. Also that every one, includin' me, on various and frequent occasions, had proposed that you enter the holy state of matrimony with him as the other half—an' that you weren't that kind either. I mentioned that there is a partly confirmed suspicion percolatin' through our craniums that there's a chap not more'n a thousand miles away from here who looks pretty good to you—"

She flushed crimson:

"You didn't mention Pete?"

"Skeercely. He's not just w'at you might call a casual topic of conversation with us just now when strangers is aroun'. They say that ol' She'iff Carter has uncommon long ears."

"He has," she said briefly. And then: "What else did this here person want to know?"

"Your life hist'ry. I tol' him you was the lone child of poor but honest parents, born in the ef-fect east an' brung to the wild and woolly when yet a squallin' infant. I tol' him that you're generully conceded to be queen of this here camp, an' about the on'y decent thing in it."

"An' I s'pose he couldn't see how any woman who runs a liquor joint an' gamblin' den can be decent?"

"Well," he agreed doubtfully, "them may have been his idees; but he didn't make it none too plain."

"He's got to leave here," she repeated.

"What kin the boys do? Can't shoot up a parson."

"N-o-o-o; but—"

The door swung open, and the Reverent Stephen Lyon, six feet in height, broad of shoulder and square of jaw, strode in. He approached the bar confidently and respectfully doffed the round felt hat which bespoke his calling.

"I'm the new minister," he announced cheerfully. "My name is Stephen Lyon. Home, Boston."

"This," declaimed Sierra Jack grandiloquently to Nell, "is the sky-pilot we was just discussin'."

Her full, red lips curled to a distinct sneer and she turned her back to the two men, occupying herself by industriously polishing an array of very small glasses.

"You don't appear eager to welcome strangers," remarked Lyon easily.

"Not your kind!" she retorted.

"And what's the matter with 'my kind?'"

"No good; Ministers aint *men!*"

"S-o-o! And you?"

"I'm more of a man than you." She faced him squarely. "An' so long as you come in here uninvited, I'll ask you kindly to git out of the Double Eagle *pronto*—an' out of the town."

"Thanks!" he said dryly. "But I don't think I'll avail myself of your most cordial invitation."

"I'd advise you—"

"I didn't ask for advice," he retorted somewhat sharply. "I asked a welcome, and, at least, expect politeness from a lady!" There was a slightly sarcastic inflection to the last word, and Sierra interrupted gruffly.

"Looky here, parson," he said. "You'd better be a mite careful. This here *lady* runs Silver River, an' w'at she says goes!"

"There are exceptions to every rule," he smiled.

"You aint one," flared Nell. "An' you've got just about twenty-four hours to pull stakes an' git. Aint no parsons welcome here."

"So you remarked before. But I'm not leaving town just yet. I had a proposition to make to you—"

"Which was—"

"To rent the Double Eagle on Sundays for use as a church—"

She broke into a rich, throaty laugh; and Sierra Jack grinned broadly.

"Good Lord," he chuckled, "wait'll I tell the boys that this here parson wants to turn the Double Eagle into a ticket office f'r Heaven—"

The tips of Lyon's ears reddened.

"I suppose my proposition is rejected?" he inquired quietly.

"Rather," she laughed. "An' so are you."

"I'll have to find another place," he said slowly. "But I am rather of the opinion that we'll be having services in Silver River before very long. I hardly think the boys will disrespect the cloth sufficiently to resort to force."

"Hidin' behin' the Bible f'r protection?" she inquired sneeringly.

He opened his lips to answer, thought better of it—and walked from the place. As the door closed behind him, Nell looked at the solemn-visaged Sierra Jack and laughed uproariously.

"Services on Sunday!" she rippled mockingly. "Aint that rich?"

Jack opined that it was, and prophesied that the Reverend Stephen Lyon would leave shortly, discouraged by the inevitable absence of results. The young minister did nothing of the kind!

The first Sunday of his stay came and passed uneventfully; the minister, it was reported, spending the day in Coyote Canyon with a book as his companion. He was living in a broken-down shack just at the edge of the little settlement, and interfered with no one, so that the task of getting rid of him was decidedly harder than had been anticipated. It was not an easy thing to pick a quarrel with a man who persisted in minding his own business, and who, withal, had a genial smile for all. Many a night the Reverend Stephen Lyon helped a reeling drunkard into his bunk, and the boys quite unconsciously determined that while they would adhere to their original plan of "freezin' the parson out," they would not and could not use force.

His continual presence in camp angered the girl. For the first time her subjects had neglected to obey her mandate, and the very sight of the big blond minister brought the red of anger to her cheeks and the light of bitter antagonism and thwarted desire to her sparkling brown eyes. Deep down in her heart, she admitted reluctantly that she rather admired his persistence, but outwardly she was contemptuous and haughty, refusing to listen when the stranger was discussed, and affecting the most supreme indifference as to his presence in Silver River.

As for the minister, he went his way serenely—apparently unmindful of the

coldness of his fellow-townsmen, seemingly oblivious to the presence of the girl, yet set in purpose and fired with unalterable determination. The girl had attracted him from the first, and he told himself that it was primarily for the sake of "reforming her" that he stayed in Silver River. The fact that she disliked him lent zest to the undertaking.

He saw only enough of her to realize that she was not of the clay of the average woman of the old-day Western camp; she was inherently a lady; not a word was ever breathed against her character, even when the "bad men" of the camp were most drunk—and that of itself argued well for her. Her speech denoted lack of education, but her wit was ready and her repartee caustic. Physically, she was good to look upon; the minister, being one hundred per cent masculine, arrived at that conclusion the very first time he laid eyes on her, and every subsequent sight of her strengthened the belief. Yet had one ventured the assertion that she aroused in him a deeper sentiment than mere curiosity, he would have smiled indulgently—and denied it, even to himself. Yet he did feel something slightly akin to jealousy at the constantly recurring memory of the vague allusion made by Sierra Jack to the "feller out yonder in the hills" to whom she was reported to be engaged, according to far-Western ethics. The minister felt the man-desire to meet this invisible fiancé and to inspect him. The desire developed into an obsession—and one night it was gratified!

Lyon had been living his hermit life for over a month when Pete Worrell arrived in the village to the accompaniment of revolver shots and halloes—in true bad-man fashion. This, then, thought Lyon, was what had attracted the girl to him—this devil-may-care, blatant manhood, the rowdy, loud-mouthed, noisy bravery which commanded the respect of the rough-and-ready residents of Silver River.

Pete leaped from his spent cayuse in front of the Double Eagle, and posed in the doorway for a minute or two, obviously for the especial benefit of the girl behind the bar. It was then that Lyon glimpsed him for the first time.

He saw a man of middle height, broad of shoulder and deep of chest, well muscled and of fine figure. The man's face was at the same time attractive and repellent; the face of a man, who, in the city, would have been a dry-goods clerk, with neatly pressed trousers and well-polished finger-nails, but who, where roughness was the style, persisted in affecting the extreme. His "chaps" were of the whitest and silkiest; his neckerchief was of silk, his spurs of silver, his wide-brimmed hat cocked slightly at the front. He was decidedly the Westerner of the stage.

The Double Eagle was crowded when Pete arrived; the men had recognized him by his mode of entry into the settlement. As he stood in the doorway, bowing and smiling, the girl behind the bar gazed at him eagerly—and wondered at the absence of the thrill which his presence usually excited. She nodded, and Pete, in the manner of a man to whom a woman belongs, stepped forward to join her.

The Reverend Stephen Lyon, his curiosity thoroughly aroused, had approached close to the door, where he commanded a good view of the interior. He saw the fellow step confidently behind the bar and rudely try to kiss the girl, quite as though it were the usual and expected thing.

The feel of his arm about her supple waist awakened Nell. She experienced at sudden, inexplicable feeling of repulsion, and without thought of what she was doing, pushed him violently from her.

The man was surprised, and had been caught off his balance. He staggered awkwardly against the bar and knocked over a bottle. It crashed to the floor. The men, grouped about the walls, stared, dumfounded. Then the temper of the bad-man rose.

"What in — does this mean?" he demanded, seizing her by the arm.

She felt relief at having repulsed him, in feeling that she was free from this man to whom she had formerly been so strongly and so unaccountably attracted, and she pulled loose from his rough grasp.

"Leggo!" she ordered, curtly. "You — you hurt!"

"Oh, I do, do I?" he sneered. "An' s'pose I do? Y'r mine, aint y'r?"

"No, I'm not!" she breathed angrily. "I never was—an', since you want to know it, I never will be!"

One or two of the men grinned. The sight of their mirth infuriated Worrell and he grabbed the girl roughly in his strong arms. Three of the onlookers leaped forward, but in shorter time than it takes to tell it, Pete had whipped out a six-shooter, and stood with his back against the wall, the helpless girl in his arm, and a waving revolver covering every man in the room.

"The first man," he said evenly, "who tries to butt in on this here little domestic squabble will shuffle off pretty quick! Sabe?"

They knew Pete and stood motionless. She was his, anyway, they reasoned prudently.

"An' now," said the man evenly, "I reckon I'll get my kiss!"

She struggled ineffectually. He slid his left arm up about her neck and slowly forced her chin back. He leaned forward to kiss her, eyes glittering—

"What's the trouble?"

The rumbling bass voice was very calm. All eyes turned in a flash toward the door from whence it came. Pete swung in an instant and covered the Reverend Stephen Lyon with his revolver.

"Who in — is this?" he demanded profanely. "An' what in — do you want?"

The men eyed each other intently; neither moved. Finally the minister spoke.

"You have not liberated the lady," he remarked evenly.

"No, I haven't," sneered Pete, "an I aint a-goin' to!"

"You are mistaken. You will release her, or I will make you."

The men watched with breathless interest. The minister was foolhardy; only the fact that he had no weapon visible, they knew, saved him from instant death. Pete tightened his hold on the girl and insolently surveyed the man in the doorway.

"I asked you who you was?" he repeated. "You look like a—sky-pilot."

"I am!"

"Good thing you are," retorted the outlaw sarcastically. "'Cause you'll be travelin' that route in a minute."

They continued to hold each other's eyes. Then the inevitable conclusion forced its way into the slow-moving brain of the Westerner, and his face crimsoned while his trigger-finger crooked dangerously.

"So this is the answer?" he rasped. "So this is w'y me girl wouldn't lemme kiss her? So she's thrown me over for a psalm-singin' hypocrite, eh?"

The girl, helpless and fascinated, watched the tableau with widened eyes—and understood! She knew that the minister was aware of the fact that he was facing certain death. Lyon spoke:

"You have not released the lady!"

"I tol' you I wasn't a-goin' to!"

The issue had been forced!

"And I said that if you did not, I was going to make you!"

Without the hesitation of a second the minister strode forward, teeth tightly clenched, forehead slightly furrowed, indomitable purpose written on every feature. His long, muscular arms swung easily at his sides, and on his lips a half-smile played.

Pete cursed, turning purple with rage. He well knew the unwritten law against shooting an unarmed man; but his blood was boiling through his veins. He was torn with jealousy: this man had stolen from him his woman!

He fired!

There was a scream from the girl. At the instant the shot rang out four other revolvers spoke at split-second intervals and the outlaw dropped in his tracks. The girl covered back against the wall, staring, terrified.

Lyon had stopped; and through the heavy cloud of sulphurous smoke the girl saw a tiny blotch on the minister's forehead; it widened slowly, and lengthened. Then it stretched and trickled downward like a long, red snake.

When the Reverend Stephen Lyon regained consciousness he looked around in bewilderment. He lay on a tiny brass bed; soft linen sheets were over him. The faint aroma of femininity pervaded the snow-white room,

and on the tiny dresser was an array of intimate feminine toilet articles.

It all came back to him: Pete, the girl, the shot—and then he realized that he was in her room, occupying her bed!

The sun streamed valiantly in through the window. He must have been unconscious a long time, he reasoned. The whole affair had occurred the night before. He moved his arm; it was a trifle stiff, and his head ached. He felt his forehead gingerly and found that it was heavily bandaged.

"Narrow escape," he mused. "He just creased me."

The door opened, and Nell Tyrrell entered on tip-toe. She walked very softly, not knowing that her patient had recovered consciousness. Then she saw that he was awake and they stared at each other a long time. Slowly her wide-open eyes dropped before the directness of the look in his blue ones, and a dull red stained her face.

"I'm all right again, you see," he smiled wanly. "I reckon I'd better be getting out of here."

"No," she hastened to reassure him; "I—I'm sleeping in the front room now. I—we—want to thank you for—"

"Don't mention it," he said gruffly. "What about—"

"Dead!"

"I'm sorry—for your sake."

They gazed steadily at each other for several minutes; and this time her eyes did not drop.

"I'm sorry he's dead," she said evenly. "But all *that*—was over—before the shooting!"

The minister felt strangely glad.

"I—I—wonder—" he stammered, "if—if—you—"

Her heart was beating like a trip-hammer and her face was scarlet. She walked to the door in a panic. Yet she understood!

"Don't say anything," she pleaded. "Not now—please! I—I—understand." She was speaking very fast, and her cheeks were very, very red, and her eyes suspiciously bright. "But—but—if—you—want—to, you—you can have—church here on Sunday!"

The Reverend Stephen Lyon smiled happily.

He too understood!

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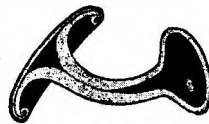


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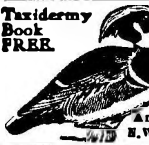
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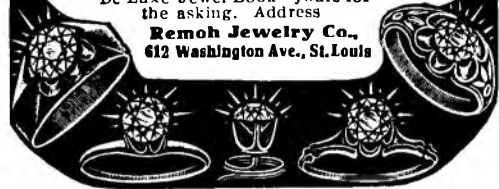
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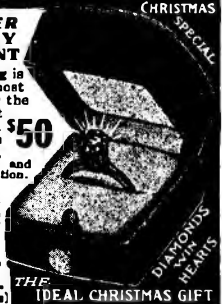
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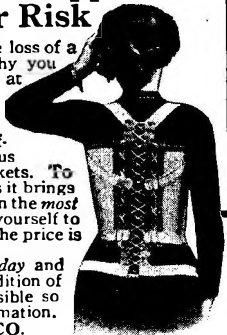
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SONG POEMS WANTED: I've paid writers thousands in royalties. Send me samples of your work for free criticism, or write for valuable FREE BOOKLET and most liberal, legitimate proposition offered. Absolute protection. Est. 16 years. Numerous successes. JOHN T. HALL, Pte. S, Columbus Circle, New York.

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Send us \$2 with your order as first payment. We send you the Watch express prepaid. You have 30 days to carry the Watch and compare it with other Watches before you decide to keep it. If the Watch does not suit you, send it back and we will return your \$2 in full. We sell under an absolute irrevocable agreement of satisfaction or every cent paid is refunded.

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WALTHAM SALES CO.,

143-145 W. 40th Street, New York

This fancy BRACELET WATCH, the latest fad in New York, is as reliable as it is handsome. FULLY GUARANTEED FOR 25 YEARS.

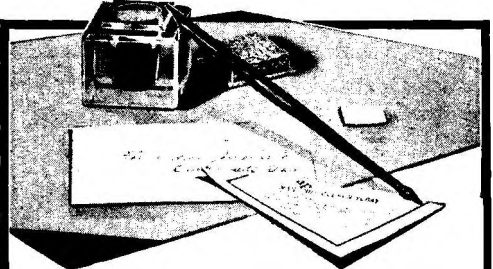


No. 245

Price \$14.50

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Men's 12 size
Genuine THIN
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Mail the coupon below today

for one week's treatment with this famous skin soap

If your skin is not the healthy, radiant skin you would like it to be, mail the coupon below today. By return mail we will send you a trial size cake of Woodbury's Facial Soap, enough to last over a week—and tell you how it can aid you to correct or prevent the most common skin troubles.

Unless you have used this famous skin specialist's soap you do not know how beneficial a soap can be. For thirty years, John H. Woodbury made a constant study of the skin and its needs. He treated thousands of obstinate skin diseases, made countless skin tests, until he evolved the formula for the now famous Woodbury's Facial Soap.

Mail the coupon below today, and begin at once to get the benefits of Woodbury's Facial Soap for your skin. The first time you use it you will feel the difference—a promise of that finer texture and better color which the steady use of Woodbury's always brings.

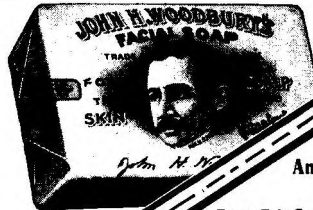
Woodbury's Facial Soap

For sale by dealers throughout the United States and Canada

Write today for samples

For 4c we will send a sample cake. For 10c, samples of Woodbury's Facial Soap, Facial Cream and Facial Powder. For 50c, a copy of the Woodbury Book—67 pages, cloth-bound—and samples of the Woodbury preparations. Write today to the Andrew Jergens Co., Dept. E-9, Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati, O.

In Canada, address the Andrew Jergens Co., Ltd., Dept. E-9, Perth, Ontario.



The Andrew Jergens Co.

Dept. E-9, Spring Grove Ave. Cincinnati, O.

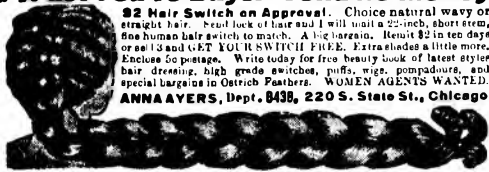
I enclose postage as per sample offer.

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I Trust You 10 Days. Send No Money



22 Hair Switch on Approval. Choice natural wavy or straight hair. Head lock of hair and I will wait 22-inch, short trim, fine human hair growth to match. A big test. Result \$2 in ten days or send GET YOUR SWITCH FREE. Extras add a little more. Enclose 5c postage. Write today for free beauty book of latest styler hair dressing, high grade switches, puff, wig, pompadour, and special bargains in Dutch Fashion. WOMEN AGENTS WANTED. ANNA AYERS, Dept. 8438, 220 S. State St., Chicago

Send 20c for Sample Bottle

Send today for a sample bottle of the rare and exquisite new Flower Drops (extract). Enclose only 20c to defray packing and postage. One of the very latest creations. Comes in many odors.

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We are making this offer of a large sample bottle for only 20 cents to introduce Rieger's Flower Drops (extract) every place. Most dealers carry it but if your dealer does not have it, send today for the large sample bottle of Rieger's Flower Drops (extract). You will realize it is something new and entirely different.

Write Now enclosing only 20c for large sample bottle of this perfect perfume creation.

Paul Rieger & Co., 242 First St., San Francisco

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If you desire a larger bottle of this superb perfume, style of bottle shown here holding full ounce, enclose \$1.00 coin, stamps or money order, or go to your dealer. Odors: Lily of the Valley, Rose and Violet. Money back on request.



The Man Who Can!

There are but two kinds of men in the world—men *who can* and men *who can't*. Men who *can* are *trained* and men who *can't* are *not*. No matter what his occupation, you will find that the man who does things has been *thoroughly trained* in his particular line of work. Just compare him to the fellow who continually “falls down”—he’s the man who can’t hold a good job because he failed to get the training he needs.

Success today depends upon the amount of time and energy you spend in fitting yourself for your life work. No matter how strong, or intelligent, or willing you are, if you aren’t *specialty trained* you will be held back—you will see other men promoted over your head—you will not get the money you would like to earn. Successful men may have no more brains than you, but they do have the one thing you lack—*training*.

Resolve, then, to become specially trained. Decide today to fit yourself for a trade or profession and make your mark in it. Remember, it all depends on *you*. If you have the *determination* to get ahead, *reasonable ability* and a *willingness* to learn, training will start you on the road to success—a better job—bigger pay.

Your Opportunity Coupon

Mark the position you want and mail the coupon now

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| ... Structural Engineer | ... Business Manager |
| ... Concrete Engineer | ... Fire Ins. Inspector |
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Blue Book 1-14

How you can become a trained man and earn more money

The *American School of Correspondence*, an educational institution chartered under the same laws as your state university, stands ready to help you. It will train you, in your spare time and in your own home, in any branch of *Engineering, Business or Law*, or will prepare you for entrance into any resident college. You can get the training you need without leaving home or giving up your work and the *American School* will arrange for you to pay as best suits your needs.

Fill in and mail the coupon today—*now*. It's the first step toward becoming a *trained man—a man who can*.

American School of Correspondence. Chicago. U.S.A.

This school has no connection with any other school using the name “American”



Six O'clock!

and Your Mirror Terrifies You!

YOUR face is haggard. Your cheeks are pale. But you can pull yourself together in a hurry.

Six Minutes After Six

You Can Have a Natural Complexion

It takes just six minutes to massage A. D. S. Peroxide Cream (Trademark Peredixo) into the skin with the tips of the fingers. But that six minutes works marvels.

A. D. S. Peroxide Cream

(Trademark Peredixo)

helps to iron out the careworn, haggard expression.

The little blood veins underneath the skin are stimulated by the gentle friction. The sluggish blood circulation starts and brings

the glowing pink of health to your skin. The dead, dry cells go too.

Look again in your mirror and see what a transformation. Peredixo Cream has helped you regain a lasting, natural color.

Once a day use A. D. S. Rolling Massage Cream also. Rub it in—then rub it out. Every particle of skin dirt is rolled out along with the massage cream.

Get a jar of A. D. S. Peroxide Cream to-day and

be ready for every occasion. Get a jar of A. D. S. Rolling Massage Cream, too. They cost a trifle.

If you spend 1c for any other face cream you'll never know how far your money might have gone

Then no other woman will have a beauty advantage over you. You can always look your best. For 25c and 50c you get twice as much as usual, and you'll agree that Peredixo Cream is better than any imported or other American Cream or you can have your money back. It does not grow hair.

Peredixo Cream is on sale at 17,000 A. D. S. drug stores. But if there is none in your town you will be enabled to get a jar by sending 25c to the A. D. S.



\$250 to 10,000 REWARDS FOR GENIUS

Seventeen thousand druggists, comprising the A. D. S.—the largest co-operative Society in America, will pay amounts between the above sums, for any practical improvement in the formulas of A. D. S. Peroxide Cream or other leading A. D. S. preparations. This offer is open to all Manufacturing Chemists and their employees, College Professors, Students, Nurses, Druggists and their clerk, Physicians and Technical Chemists.

Samples will be sent without charge upon special request from leading colleges and laboratories.

Any reader can have a sample of Peredixo Cream who fills out this coupon and mails with a 2c. stamp.

American Druggists Syndicate
Laboratories, Greater New York
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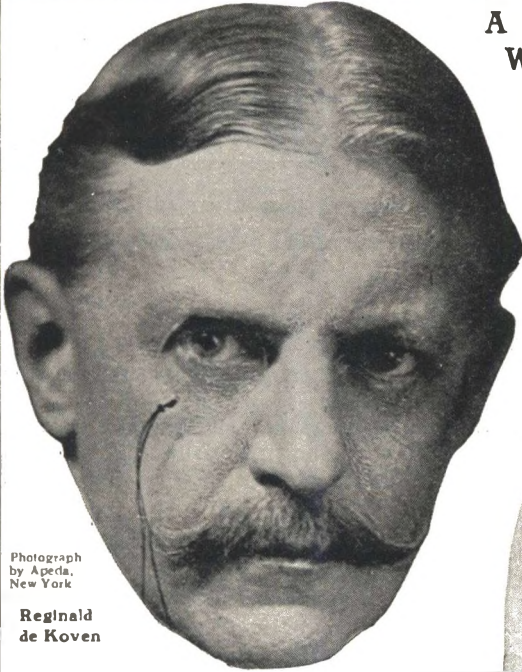
The A. D. S., 200-240 Borden Av.,
Long Island City, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Send me sample of Peroxide Cream for which I enclose 2 cent stamp.

Name _____
Street No. _____ City _____
State _____

**A Composer Who Has a Million,
Wears a Monocle, Owns a Mansion,
and Never Wears the Same Suit
Twice—**

That's Reginald de Koven, who wrote the music for "Robin Hood" at the age of twenty-five and had a hard time getting it produced ("Robin Hood" has since paid him more than \$500,000 in royalties) and has been writing successes ever since. You feel as if you really know the man, after reading Rennold Wolf's article about him in the December Green Book Magazine—and he likes those who do know him to call him "Reggie."



Photograph by Apeda, New York

Reginald de Koven

**A Voice That is Worth \$300,000
a Year—**

It belongs to Mme. Schumann-Heink. Archie Bell has written for the December Green Book Magazine an article about her and her voice, which gives you a real conception of why she receives such a fabulous income.



Photograph by Hall, New York

Mme. Schumann-Heink



Photograph by Mishkin Studio

Mona Limerick

**George Bernard Shaw
Considers This Girl**

**THE GREATEST EMOTIONAL ACTRESS
OF OUR DAY**

Mona Limerick is now in America for the first time. All her life she has wanted to come, and she is getting some clear-cut impressions of us. You'll be interested by her talk with Walter Reynolds in the December Green Book.

December Issue of **The Green Book**

"MANHATTAN MAD"

By W. CAREY WONDERLY
 Author of "The Calcium Moon"

A novel of life in that charmed district
 around Forty-Second and Broadway

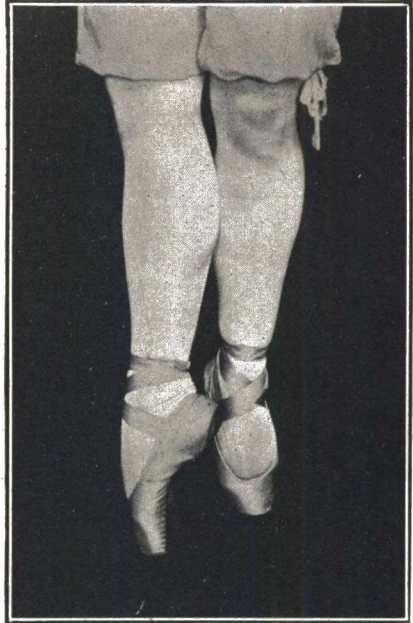
BEGINS IN THE
DECEMBER GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE

"We will never, never marry each other, Dick," says the girl, in the beginning of the story. "All our lives we shall love each other, but we will never marry. You have your career to think of and I have mine, and each will flourish best where there is no matrimonial undergrowth. It isn't just money with us. As for me, I—well, I'm glad I'm pretty and twenty, more thankful for that than I am for the voice which was my pride and joy. Beauty and youth will go further in New York, you know, and I've determined to-night to take all the Gods give while I'm young."

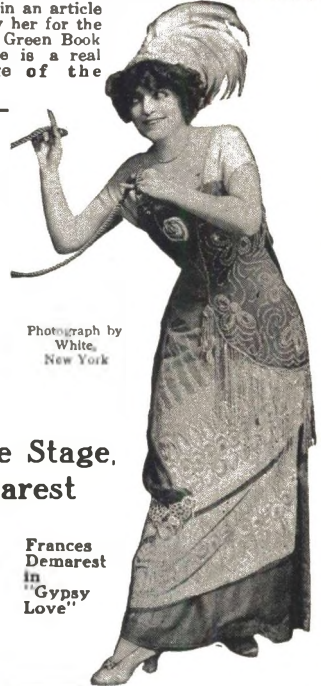


**Lew Fields Has Had Lots
 of Chances to Become
 a Serious Actor**

In an article full of down-to-the-ground facts and anecdotes he tells readers of the December Green Book why he stays in burlesque. He declares David Warfield had to work harder when he was in burlesque than he does now. He gives you a new insight into the business.



One of the photographs posed especially by Bessie Clayton, the dancer, to prove the theory advanced in an article written by her for the December Green Book that there is a real "Language of the Feet."



Photograph by White, New York

Frances Demarest in "Gypsy Love"

A Complete Novelization
 by George Vaux Bacon of
"The Family Cupboard"

By Owen Davis

Considered by some critics the strongest drama of the season, is one of the many big features of the December Green Book.

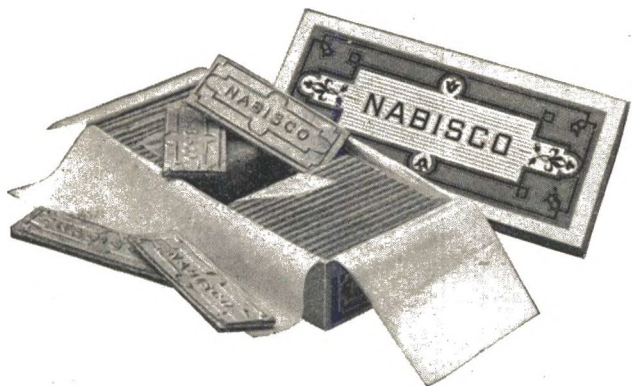
**Some Bits of Life on the Stage,
 Told By Frances Demarest**

is one of the most entertaining contributions to theatrical literature of recent years. It is a frank story of life back of the footlights.

**Other Unusual
 Features—**

- A short story by Ralph Herz.
- "Ready-Made Plays," by T. Daniel Frawley.
- An article on "Clothes" by Lois Ewell.
- "Writing Plays for the Movies."
- A study of the man who wrote "Damaged Goods."
- An article about the most successful Woman Press-Agent.
- Complete Little Stories of all the New Plays.
- George Jean Nathan's "Chronicles."
- An article by George Bronson Howard on "Can Play-writing Be Taught?"
- And Channing Pollock's Review, the best review of the new plays that is written.

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NABISCO Sugar Wafers

A tempting dessert confection, loved by all who have ever tasted them. Suitable for every occasion where a dessert sweet is desired. In ten-cent tins; also in twenty-five-cent tins.



ADORA

Another charming confection—a filled sugar wafer with a bountiful center of rich, smooth cream.



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An ever-popular delight. An almond-shaped dessert confection with a kernel of almond-flavored cream.



CHOCOLATE TOKENS

Still another example of the perfect dessert confection. Enchanting wafers with a most delightful creamy filling—entirely covered by the richest of sweet chocolate.

**NATIONAL BISCUIT
COMPANY**

"Swift's Premium" Calendar for 1914

The four subjects reproduced in this beautiful four leaf art calendar are painted in a new strong style.

"The Outdoor Girl" in Summer

The calendar pages are exact replicas of extraordinary paintings of four beautiful girls in graceful poses amid seasonable surroundings. The illustration here gives but little idea of the delicate harmonious blending of colors in the "Outdoor Girl" picture. "Swift's Premium" Calendar was never before so novel and attractive.



Sent to any address for—10c in coin or U. S. stamps (in Canada 10c extra on account of duty),
Or—Trade-Mark end of five "Swift's Premium" Oleomargarine cartons,

Or—Parchment circle in top of a jar of "Swift's Premium" Sliced Bacon,
Or—Ten Wool Soap wrappers,
Or—Six Maxine Elliott Toilet Soap wrappers.

"Swift's Premium Ham"

Do not parboil "Swift's Premium" Ham before broiling or frying. It will be mild flavored and tender if parboiling is omitted.

Swift & Company, 4163 Packers' Avenue, Chicago



Drunk On Coffee

About 15 centuries ago an Arab herder of goats driving the flock through some new country was alarmed at the antics of the animals and thought they were "possessed of the devil."

Each day the same thing occurred after the goats had eaten of a certain kind of berry. The goatherd thought he would eat a few to try the effect.

That was the discovery of coffee.

Arabs learned to brown the berries and boil them, drinking the liquor, which was then and now recognized to have a direct action on the heart, and of course the reaction and depression later on.

Coffee sets up a partial congestion of the liver; dulls the brain; wrecks the nerves, and interferes with digestion.

Anyone can easily prove whether it be coffee that causes the periodical headaches, sick stomach, bowel troubles, weak heart, kidney complaint, weak eyes, neuralgia, rheumatism or nervous prostration.

Simply leave it off entirely for ten days and have a rich, piping hot cup of **Postum**.

If you find, in a day or two, that you are getting better, that's your cue, follow it straight back to health, comfort and the power to do things.

Postum now comes in two forms:

Regular Postum — must be well boiled.

Instant Postum is a soluble powder. A spoonful dissolves in a cup of hot water, and with sugar and cream makes a delicious beverage *instantly*.

"There's a Reason" for POSTUM